



# **QUARTERLY REPORT OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2017**

Submitted to  
**MENDOCINO COUNTY TOURISM COMMISSION**  
**COUNTY OF MENDOCINO**  
**MARCH 20, 2018**

# quarterly activities report

october – december 2017

*Mission: Visit Mendocino County stewards and amplifies the total Mendocino County experience*

## executive summary

Perhaps the most significant event of the second quarter was the wildfire that struck the communities of Redwood Valley and Potter Valley in the early hours of Monday October 9. The PR team made a rapid response to the situation by going quiet on social media, posting hard facts about the situation on the VMC website, and preparing outreach to internal partners and the media. These actions reflected those of our tourism partners in Napa and Sonoma Counties who were also devastated by fire. Coverage of the wildfires by the press was extensive and there was a corresponding bump in the number of print and online articles about the county.

The second quarter saw significant progress made towards rebranding and a new website build. The VMC marketing team worked closely with TheorySF to finalize the “look and feel” of the creative that will drive the website design.

Staff continued to work on the Hotel Adoption Program, the results of which will be recorded in the new Filemaker database, which is designed to be the go-to resource for information about partners, festivals, contacts, and media.

## action plans

The Action Plans contained within the Visit Mendocino County (VMC) 2017/18 Marketing Plan define the goals and measured outcomes for each area of VMC’s responsibility to its stakeholders. These areas are defined as:

- Public relations
- Advertising and marketing
- Social media
- Partner Relations
- Sales
- Visitor Services
- Festivals and events
- Operations and administration

This report outlines the steps taken and the progress made in each area of responsibility for the second quarter of the current fiscal year (October 1 through December 31, 2017). Please refer to the Glossary at the end of this report for destination marketing terms and definitions.

## public relations

*The fiscal year stated goals, quarterly progress, and year-to-date figures for PR.*

- **150 million impressions**  
PR saw more than **444 million impressions** from stories and features generated from media visits to the county and in response to outreach via press releases, hot sheets, etc. **Fiscal YTD impressions are more than 790 million**, well beyond the projected goal. A portion of this can be attributed to stories about the fires and recovery efforts.
- **\$6.6 million ad equivalency**  
In terms of advertising equivalency, VMC would have spent over **\$30 million** to purchase the equivalent print and digital media space. Numbers for the **fiscal year to date are just under \$48 million**.
- **300 articles (“hits”)**  
**Over 500 articles** appeared in print and in online outlets during the quarter. Reportage on the wildfires produced coverage in 86 outlets in October and November. **YTD, Mendocino County has appeared in 676 articles**. All our media articles are stored in a digital archive. Please call our Fort Bragg office if you would like to review any of them.
- **11 press releases and hot sheets**  
The PR team issued **4 press releases** during the quarter: a long lead for each of the Crab and Mushroom Festivals; wildfire update; experiential travel release. This puts the **YTD total at 7**.
- **19 FAM visits**  
For the quarter, PR hosted **17 media visitors**. Along with the 19 hosted in the previous quarter, this puts PR well ahead of its stated goal of 19 for the entire year; **YTD is 36**. Visit California, in response to the wildfires, put their muscle into inviting writers from Mexico and Canada. PR also hosted individual writers from luxury travel publications and websites, *Sunset* magazine, and others.
- **1 media mission**  
Representing VMC, Koleen Hamblin attended the **Visit California media mission in Seattle, WA** where she connected with writers and journalists. She is currently following up to obtain media visitation. This trip is the first of two media missions for the fiscal year. The second will be in April 2018 to Los Angeles.
- **2 trade shows**  
To date, PR has not attended a **trade show** but anticipates being part of the media day at IPW in Denver in May 2018, and attending the Cal Travel Summit, also in May.

## advertising & marketing

### Advertising

This item is mostly on hold pending the completion of rebranding and website rebuild; however:

- To support the Mushroom Festival in the month following the wildfires, **TheorySF developed a digital ad campaign** that produced more than 720,000 impressions, 60,234 clickthroughs, and 211 visitors digging down to lodging listings.
- The **click-through cost (per click) for the campaign was 17 cents** with the industry average running between \$1-\$1.50/CTC.
- TSF began development of a **marketing campaign for the Crab Festival** similar to that of the Mushroom Fest. Results of that effort will be reported in the Q3 report.
- VMC hosted the PBS travel show host and crew of **Family Travel with Colleen Kelly** who filmed in locations around the county. The show will be aired in spring 2018.

### Rebranding and website

- **TheorySF (TSF) completed the final creative** for advertising and marketing purposes. The Board approved the creative look and feel on October 25, 2017.
- At the same meeting, the Board also **approved the proposal to completely rebuild the VMC website** and allocated funds for the project.
- **TheorySF presented the website page tables, sitemap and timeline** for the Marketing Committee's approval. These documents will serve as roadmaps for design and development of the new VMC website.
- The website team reviewed and revised the website comps; **website development began in December 2017.**

## social media

*The stated goals for social media and outcomes for the quarter are:*

- **Total Facebook Fan Base: 65,000**  
While Likes are one way to measure success with **Facebook**, a more accurate picture emerges when engagement and reach are taken into consideration. For the quarter, we recorded:  
  
316,759 Impressions  
  
10,827 Engagement  
  
561 Clicks

27 Posts

11,731 Impressions/Post; 401.0 Engagements/Post

56,870 Fan Base

- **Total Instagram Followers: 8,500**

Followers: 7,263 (+26%)

Comments: 100 (+4%)

Avg. Likes per Post: 346 (+19%)

## partner relations

*Goals and progress for the quarter include:*

- **Reinstitution of a monthly Executive Director report sent to partners and posted on the MendocinoTourism.org website**  
In October, the Executive Director **instituted a bi-monthly partner newsletter** titled “Visit Mendocino County: All The News That’s Fit to Know.” To date, the newsletters have not been posted on the MendocinoTourism.org website.
- **Quarterly columns in local media regarding tourism and its benefits to the community**  
In the future, the partner newsletters can be repurposed for a **quarterly column** in local press.
- **Continue the “hotel adoption program” whereby VMC staff will visit lodging properties to gain a contact, gather information, and learn about the property**  
**Staff visited 17 properties** in the quarter to establish contact and to gather detailed property information to be added to the Filemaker database that’s been newly instituted as a company resource. The former Executive Director visited a number of properties but the precise number is unknown.
- **Complete design on partner brochure to help business owners and community members better understand the mission of VMC**  
A **draft of the partner brochure** has been created. Layout and printing of the brochure is suspended until the new branding has been launched.
- **Attend Chambers of Commerce meetings, city promotional meetings, and events to gain and share ideas, and show community support**  
Staff continues to strengthen **ongoing regional tourism relationships** with Chambers of Commerce (Ukiah, Willits, and Mendocino Coast) and Visit Ukiah by attending monthly meetings and supporting events. Staff is also on the Board of the **Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association** and attends their monthly meetings.
- **Explore and research the future promotion of recreational cannabis use throughout the County and region by being a leading entity to capitalize on this potential new market**  
In December 2017, the MCTC Board of Directors transferred **management and coordination of cannabis tourism** to the Mendocino County Promotional Alliance (MCPA).

## sales

*For FY 2017/2018, VMC's sales goals are to:*

- **Book 5 new meetings in the county**

**Quarter - 0 YTD - 0**

Note: **5 RFPs responded to** but all were rejected by the requestor due to lack of transportation options, inadequate meeting space, lack of requisite rooms, distance from major airports and lack of a coordinated database.

**Luz Harvey contributes:** To date we have not booked any new meetings in the county. Reason being: a crucial part of 'sales' is having an up-to-date inventory list to 'sell' and currently, no such list exists. Even though Brent initiated the 'hotel adoption program' (HAP) during his tenure here, little headway has been made with regard to documenting the inventory of meeting facilities since then. Reasons for this include spotty leadership (i.e. in-house staff is now working under third ED in 16 months!) and not having a database all agreed would serve our purposes. The latter issue has been dealt with by the implementation of Filemaker as our new database. Meeting inventory information is being added as it is gathered.

- **Increase international visitation in terms of dollars spent by 6% to 8%**

Visa Vue indicates **year over year increases in international visitation of 10.2%**, about twice that of domestic.

- **Facilitate 10 new contracts between county hotels and receptives**

**Q- 2 - YTD - 8.** Have created at least 25 contacts between hotels and receptives/tour operators. Actual implementation is subject to negotiations. Mostly due to activities of the North Coast Tourism Council

- **Promote Mendocino County to 1,000 retail travel professionals**

**YTD - 600** in UK, Ireland and Canada, due almost entirely to activities of the North Coast Tourism Council.

- **Promote Mendocino County to 150 tour operators, receptives and OTAs**

**Q- 50 - YTD - 150**, again almost entirely due to activities of the North Coast Tourism Council.

- **Promote Mendocino County to 10-20 international media**

**Q - 0- YTD - 25**, due almost entirely to activities of the North Coast Tourism Council and Visit CA Austrian and Japanese FAMs.

- **Promote Mendocino County to all 14 international offices of Visit California**

**Done at Visit CA Outlook Forum** and other events. Representatives of offices in Canada, Japan, Korea, Canada, UK and Germany were personally visited.

- **Conduct 8 FAMs**

**YTD- 3**

- **Attend 6 consumer trade shows**

**YTD - 4**

- **Add 10,000 names to our consumer database**  
**2,726 added YTD.** More are expected from the Bay Area Travel and Adventure Show in February.
- **Facilitate the creation of 10 new packages that include Mendocino County**  
**YTD- 4**  
Working with Visit Oakland and various tour operators to include Mendocino in north coast packages.

## visitor services

*Goals and outcomes for the fiscal year to date are:*

- **Complete and distribute new tear-off maps for both Willits and Ukiah (100,000 for each city) to area hotels and businesses**  
**Willits complete;** Ukiah has a few details to complete.
- **Continue to distribute North and South Coast tear-off maps**  
**Distributed** at various events, in-county businesses.
- **Investigate placement of a third gateway sign on Highway 128**  
**This project has stalled** and it is not anticipated it will occur this fiscal year.
- **Distribute festival guides and other festival collateral**  
Distributed **15,000 brochures each** for the November 2017 Mushroom Wine & Beer and January 2018 Crab Wine & Beer Festivals.
- **Provide 10,000 updated visitor guides to out-of-county locations**  
**10,000 guides were printed** and distribution has begun. 3,000 were drop shipped to Certified Folder.
- **Begin updating the popular Mendocino County pet guide and continue distribution**  
**The pet guide is complete,** marketing has been approved and print bids are being solicited.
- **Dissemination of the mini visitor guide at events**  
The **mini guide continues to be a great alternative** to the larger visitor guides, particularly internationally.
- **Participate in various in-county mixers, festivals and events**  
During the quarter, **staff co-hosted** the Mendocino Coast Chamber Mixer with Noyo River Inn; hosted a Mushroom Festival open house at VMC's Fort Bragg office; attended Visit Ukiah/Ukiah Chamber December Mixer, and attended AVWA's Taste of Anderson Valley in San Francisco), the Inaugural Homebrew Festival.  
The Marketing & Communications Coordinator and staff attended the 2017 Harvest Celebration in Hopland and the Fire Relief Fundraiser at Ukiah Fairgrounds.
- **Assist in driving website visitation and increasing unique visitors**  
Everything we do is towards this end. [AdeG: direct quote from staff input.]

## festivals & events

*Fiscal year 2017/2018 goals and outcomes for the quarter are:*

- **Build upon and enhance existing post-festival survey methods to gauge stakeholders' experience by using quantifiable criteria that can be used for yearly comparison purposes**  
**This has proven to be difficult** since percentage of participants responding to surveys is dismally low. Staff has created various short forms that can be completed in a few minutes, and consistently receives only a handful of replies. However, when staff asks participants for feedback one on one, via email or in person, participants seem eager to share their experiences.
- **Collaborate with stakeholders to create unique signature events supported by a variety of tangential offerings whose goal is increasing attendance by visitors and participation by partners at existing festivals and events.**  
**Ongoing effort.**
- **Develop a new signature event for the Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival.**  
Worked with the Good Farm Fund to **create inaugural Homebrew Fest.**
- **Continue to encourage lodging owners to offer incentives for extended stays during festivals.**  
Staff has **done this for our umbrella festivals** and results are listed in our festival brochures.
- **Work with local non-profits and wine regions to encourage larger tourist attracting events such as Mendocino Coast Hospital Foundation's Winesong and Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association's Pinot Noir Festival.**  
**Staff serves as hospitality representative on AVWA Board** and has worked with them in the Aromatic White Wine Festival, the Taste of Anderson Valley, and the Pinot Noir Festival relocation to Camp Navarro. Additionally staff regularly volunteers for Winesong and will explore ideas for VMC presence at next 2018 Winesong event with their new event director.
- **Increase partners' buy-in by developing new ideas for festivals and events.**  
**Ongoing effort.**
- **Work with the Festival Committee to brainstorm ideas for working with partners to create new and exciting festival events that will attract VMC's target audience of Millennials and Gen-Xers.**  
Staff has made some headway by outreaching to Ukiah tattoo legend, Lyle Tuttle. At 86, his main focus is finding a home for his extensive collection of tattoo art, equipment and ephemera, however he is willing to explore ways to merge his mission with ours of growing tourism.

## operations & admin

- **Maintain a visitor center that serves the public by providing information, brochures, and assistance, as well as an art exhibit space.**  
The **Fort Bragg office hosted artists during the quarter** and in December opened a pop-up store featuring local products for sale. No information regarding the results of the latter item.

- **The office will continue to be open on Saturdays from Memorial Day to Labor Day to provide visitor services; staff will also continue to hold First Fridays events in conjunction with other galleries and businesses in the downtown area to strengthen community relations.**

The **office was open on Saturdays** for downtown Fort Bragg foot traffic. First Friday events are on hold as of December 2017.

- **Review and continue to enhance operational strategies such as telephone systems, conference calls and locations, file sharing, database development, back-up systems.**  
The **Marketing and Communications Coordinator worked with a local Filemaker expert to create a resource database** for internal use. Staff and contractors will use the database to record Contacts, Businesses, Festival participation, Media Visits and results of those visits, and Sales. The status of other items is unknown.
- **Train all staff on website usage and best practices.**  
Concurrent with the launch of the new VMC website, **all staff and contractors will be trained on back-end functionality** so each person on the VMC team is able to use the site to add events and other limited functions. Staff will each be assigned a user role concomitant with their responsibilities. VMC will instigate a system whereby every site entry will require two sets of eyes to ensure consistency of voice, accuracy, and ensure that information is visitor-facing.
- **Attend key travel industry conferences to provide access to industry trends and successful examples of best practices, furthering internal knowledge and benefiting the VMC program of work.**  
Key industry events tend to be scheduled in spring/summer. VMC will attend those that most fit our mission such as **Cal Travel Summit (June 2018)** and **Visit California Outlook Forum**.
- **Maintain accreditation from the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program, offered by Destination Marketing Association International.**  
DMAI certification is **currently active until July 2018**. The Marketing & Communications Coordinator will contact DMAI to determine VMC's status and any steps necessary to maintain accreditation.

## glossary of terms

This glossary is included to explain terms used in this plan and in other reports and documents issued by Visit Mendocino County. While staff and contractors are familiar with the terminology, some of the terms need a brief explanation.

<b>Advertising equivalency</b>	This dollar figure represents the amount of money it would take to purchase the equivalent in advertising space in a print publication or digital equivalent. The VMC PR team uses a 1:1 ratio unlike many PR firms who use a multiplier to boost numbers.
<b>Impressions</b>	The number of views a print or digital article is estimated to reach based on circulation and subscription data.
<b>Media Placement</b>	A story (print or digital) about an aspect of Mendocino County that arises from PR efforts.
<b>Media Mission</b>	A trip by the PR team to a particular market, e.g., Vancouver BC, to meet local journalists and writers and inspire visitation to and coverage of Mendocino County.
<b>Releases</b>	This can either refer to a press release or a “hot sheet,” which is distributed to the press and highlights new and upcoming businesses and openings in the county.
<b>FAM</b>	Familiarization tour or trip. Media FAMs involve members of the media who are vetted by the PR team prior to a visit. Sales FAMs apply to tour group operators who are visiting the county with the aim of including Mendocino in tour packages.
<b>Millennials</b>	The segment of the population born between the early and the mid-1990s to early 2000s. Also known as Generation Y, they are the children of baby boomers and older Gen Xers.
<b>Gen-Xers</b>	The population segment born between the early-to-mid 1960s and ending birth years ranging from the late 1970s to early 1980s. Children of the Baby Boomers.
<b>Baby Boomers</b>	Those born between the early-to-mid 1940s up to about 1964.
<b>Content marketing</b>	Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.
<b>Google Analytics</b>	A reporting tool provided by Google that can be used to analyze traffic, ad words, digital marketing campaigns, demographics, etc. for VisitMendocino.com.
<b>Facebook Insights</b>	A reporting tool for analyzing traffic, advertising campaigns, and other activities on Facebook.
<b>Activity Provider</b>	A person located in a tourist destination who provides a unique, local activity for a visitor to do while on vacation. Examples of such activities include kayaking, bike riding or arts and crafts, among others.
<b>Free Independent Traveler (FIT)</b>	A person or a couple that is not traveling with a group; usually references foreign travelers out on their own (Foreign Independent Traveler).
<b>Inbound Tour Operator</b>	Someone specializing in providing tours to overseas travelers to a destination, either operating the tour themselves or working through established partnerships with local suppliers.
<b>Receptives</b>	In effect, “middle men” between tour operators and hotel/lodging owners, chiefly in overseas markets. Receptives obtain contracts with hotels for booking arrangements and offer these to tour operators looking to satisfy tourist demand.
<b>Search Engine Marketing</b>	A marketing tactic using paid advertising services so that interested clients and customers can reach a business quicker and easier while searching online.

<b>Block</b>	A number of rooms, seats, or spaces reserved in advance, usually by wholesalers, tour operators, or receptive operators who intend to sell them as components of tour packages.
<b>Conversion</b>	Getting “heads in beds” or otherwise closing the sale. Differs from “hospitality.” Hospitality is being warm, friendly and helpful. Conversion is active selling.
<b>Demand generators</b>	Strategies and programs developed by DMOs and suppliers to generate destination demand. Examples include festivals, events, cultural tours, and consumer promotion.
<b>Engagement</b>	On Facebook (and other social media platforms), engagement is when people perform actions on your Page. They may like a post, click on a link, or comment on an image for example. With Facebook Insights, engagement is measured as the number of times a post is clicked, liked, shared, or commented on.
<b>Reach</b>	A measure of the range of influence of any content; it is the measurement of how content is spread across various social media channels. Think of it as the number of eyeballs a piece of content is getting. On Facebook, for example, “total reach” is the number of people that have seen a particular post.
<b>Selected Key Industry Associations</b>	
<b>DMA West</b>	Destination Marketing Associations West, a membership organization of visitor bureaus throughout the western United States.
<b>Visit California</b>	The tourism marketing agency for the state.
<b>California Travel Association</b>	Membership organization offering education and advocacy for state tourism operators.
<b>U.S. Travel Association</b>	National, non-profit organization representing and advocating for all components of the travel industry.
<b>Destination International</b>	Global association of travel industry agencies and groups, offering education and advocacy for members. Visit Mendocino holds a certification from the globally recognized Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP); this serves as a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management.
<b>Brand USA</b>	Agency chiefly responsible for marketing the USA as a destination to the rest of the world.