

MAT-SU CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
FY2011 ANNUAL REPORT
“LEADING THE WAY FOR 25 YEARS”



Mission statement

The purpose of the Mat-Su CVB is to strengthen and cultivate a vibrant tourism industry.

2010-2011 Board of Directors

- | | |
|---|---|
| Dee Dee Kay
President
CIRI Alaska Tourism | Karen Harris
Alaska Garden Gate B&B
and Cottages |
| Jason Votruba
Vice President
Deshka Landing
Outdoor Assoc. | Ruth Rosewarne
Alaska Railroad |
| Steve Zadra
Secretary
Princess Tours | Craig Saunders
Alaska Backcountry
Adventure Tours |
| Nicole Bendle
Treasurer
National Bank Alaska | Mark Austin
Palmer Musk Ox Farm |
| Dan McDonough
Lifetime Adventures | Bethany Buckingham
Dorothy Page Museum |
- Elections are held each November for the board

Message from the president

This year has been an exciting one for the Mat-Su CVB, as we are in the middle of celebrating 25 years of marketing the Valley. Much has changed since a group of volunteers got the organization started in 1986, but one thing remains constant – the organization’s commitment to marketing the Mat-Su Valley, and your businesses, as a premier destination.



We’ve heard “flat is the new normal” many times coming out of this national recession, but I’m proud to report that isn’t the case locally. In FY11, the bed tax revenue in the Mat-Su Borough increased 4.7 percent. While we still aren’t back to the peak we achieved in 2008, we are getting there. And, perhaps the best news of all, is that we’re getting back to that historic level faster than other Alaska destinations are.

The board and staff work hard to maximize our marketing efforts with an efficient and targeted approach. You can be confident we are working hard to build on the successes we have enjoyed in the last quarter century, and paving the way for future success.

Dee Dee Kay, President

Marketing Report

VISITOR GUIDE

The 2011 Mat-Su Visitor Guide included new images, including an impressive view of Denali. Distribution: 100,000, including 50,000 high-potential visitors identified by the Alaska Travel Industry Association.

IN-STATE MARKETING

Local residents and their visiting friends and relatives are important to the Mat-Su visitor industry. The Valley Values campaign continued targeting Alaskans, and proved to be very successful both in the fall and in the spring.

Consumer shows

Oxygen & Octane Winter Recreation Show (Anchorage), Great Alaska Sportsman Shows (Anchorage), Fairbanks Outdoor Show and the Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show.

Advertising

- Ad placements in the Anchorage Daily News, The Frontiersman, Valdez Star, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner and a variety of Alaska visitor guides.
- New in 2011, a 12-week campaign in Anchorage and Mat-Su Valley, including print and radio, to drive traffic to the Mat-Su Visitor Information Center.
- Year-round radio spots in the Anchorage market keep awareness high on visiting the Mat-Su Valley.

Frontline employees

Published bi-weekly summer newsletter, "The Compass," with up-to-date information on events, activities and attractions. In 2011, The Compass also published once a month during the winter months.

NATIONAL MARKETING EFFORTS

- Continued Visitor Guide distribution through the Alaska Travel Industry Association at Florida RV SuperShow, New York Times Travel Show and new in 2011, a booth share at L.A. Adventures in Travel Expo.

www.alaskavisit.com

- New member listings launched in March 2011. Larger member photos, a more appealing look and coupon redesign took place.
- Basic mobile site launched in July, 2010.

Advertising

Ad placements targeting domestic audiences appeared in Alaska Magazine, AAA, Alaska Highway Angler, The Milepost and Alaska Airlines Magazine.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

International Pow Wow

- Continued presence in the international arena at the



Mat-Su CVB staff meet with a travel writer during Alaska Media Roadshow last October. Roadshow is a great way to generate media coverage for the Mat-Su Valley.

Travel Industry of America (USTA) International Pow Wow Exchange held in May. Continued successful partnership with Valdez and the Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council, creating themed itineraries focused on similar activities offered in each region.

- ATIA Japan Sales Mission cancelled in March due to natural disasters.

MEETINGS AND RETREATS

- NEW! Designed and published 1,000 meeting planner guides, to be distributed to planners throughout Alaska.
- Staff answered inquiries and assisted meeting planners with conferences and small groups throughout FY11.

DOMESTIC TRADE, GROUP TOURS & MEDIA

- Participated in the National Tour Association Convention, meeting one-on-one with more than 40 domestic operators.
- CVB staff hosted nine NTA tour operators on a FAM in May, 2011.
- Participated in the Alaska Media Roadshow, setting advance appointments with some of the most influential travel media in the U.S. and Canada. More than 40 major travel writers registered.
- CVB staff hosted more than 10 travel writers from around the world, generating stories in the Wall Street Journal, the New York Post, the New York Times and at numerous online publications.
- The bureau consistently provides information and assists with FAM tours of the Mat-Su Valley to travel writers, Alaska wholesalers, travel agents, television producers and media.

Membership Report

Totaled 248 members, with a retention rate of 89 percent. In FY11, the Mat-Su CVB welcomed 19 new businesses to the membership.

Hosted monthly membership educational luncheons throughout the year, updating member businesses on current tourism issues and providing tools for continued success. New in FY11, hosted membership roundtable discussions at outlying communities, including Lake Louise and Talkeetna.

Assisted members with online presence at www.alaskavisit.com, including a 170-character narrative, two images and the ability to post coupons for free.

Hosted a successful mini-convention featuring an educational seminar on fishing's impact on the tourism industry. Also hosted the "Stars of the Industry" awards luncheon in conjunction with the "Voice of the Membership" meeting in November 2010.

Teamed with the Alaska's Mat-Su B&B Association to manage the Mat-Su Online Vacancy Report. Members have indicated this Web site is an important tool in filling last-minute vacancies and has helped generate additional revenue.

Hosted the annual Visitor Information Center Open House



Peter Schadee of Knik River Lodge speaks during the open house in May.

in May, with approximately 50 members in attendance. Also hosted 25th CVB anniversary community barbecue with attendance at more than 150.

Coordinated a highly successful travel auction and wine tasting "ExTRAVELganza," which serves as the largest fund-raiser for the Mat-Su CVB. The April 2011 event sold out and continued a long-standing tradition of being a successful event.

Communicated regularly with members through newsletters, biweekly E-bulletins (which inform members of upcoming events and marketing opportunities) and site visits throughout the year.

Administration report

Thanks to an amendment in FY10 by Mat-Su Borough Assemblywoman Cindy Bettine, the Mat-Su CVB received additional bed tax funding in FY11. The FY10 funds were distributed in August of FY11 and the board of directors allocated the additional funding to increase in-state marketing efforts. The boosted Valley Values campaign strengthened awareness of visiting the Mat-Su Valley in print, radio, television and Internet markets.

The Mat-Su CVB board of directors also continued its focus on advancing the Mat-Su Valley South Gateway Visitor Center. On May 11, the board of directors hosted a "Gateway Gathering" event at Matanuska Lake Recreation Area shuttling interested residents to the top two potential sites. The project is currently in Phase III which includes securing partnerships and local support, building organizational structure, and raising capital.

Staff attended meetings of local chambers and business organizations to communicate bureau announcements and events. These organizations included the Alaska Travel Industry Association, Alaska State Fair, Alaska's Mat-Su Bed



The Mat-Su CVB board and staff hosted a "Gateway Gathering" to educate the public about the Gateway Visitor Center project.

& Breakfast Association, Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway Partnership Board, Palmer and Wasilla City Council and Mat-Su Borough Assembly.

Statement of Financial Position (as of June 30, 2011)

Assets

Current assets:	
Cash	\$131,546
Memberships and grants receivable	\$2,871
Inventory	\$3,153
Prepaid expenses	<u>\$22,167</u>
Total current assets	\$159,737
Property and Equipment	
Furniture and equipment	\$126,329
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(\$122,901)</u>
Net property and equipment	<u>\$3,428</u>
Total assets	\$163,165

FY11 Revenue Detail - \$836,149

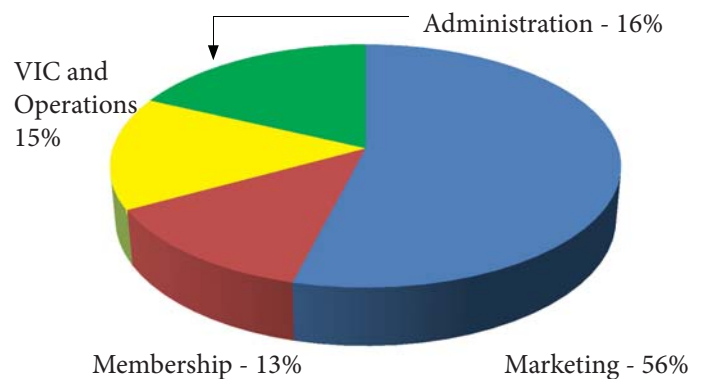
Bed Tax Grant Revenue	\$683,403
Membership Dues	\$31,618
Advertising Sales & Marketing Programs	\$55,773
Special Events & Fundraisers	\$22,774
Gift Shop	\$7,627
Interest	\$216
Other	\$338
In-Kind Contributions	<u>\$34,400</u>
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$836,149

Liabilities and net assets

Current liabilities:	
Accounts payable	\$32,243
Payroll liabilities	\$10,947
Deferred revenue	<u>\$27,508</u>
Total current liabilities	\$70,698
Unrestricted net assets	<u>\$92,467</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	\$163,165

Mat-Su CVB's financial statements, accounting practices and reporting methods are audited every third year. The FY11 financial statements have not yet been audited.

FY11 Expenses by Division



Mat-Su CVB staff background and project focus

Bonnie Quill

Executive Director

A 27-year veteran of the Alaska tourism industry, Bonnie came to the Mat-Su CVB in 2000 from Bradley/Reid Communications, where she was the public relations account manager for the Alaska Tourism Marketing Council. She has also worked for the Alaska Visitors Association, Princess Tours and MarkAir. Bonnie was elected to the ATIA Board of Directors in 2005, serves on the Alaska State Fair Board of Directors and is the president of the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway Partnership Board. She lives in Palmer with her Westie, Tiger.



to market the Mat-Su Valley to visitors, tour operators and the media. An avid fly fisherman, Casey and his wife Tracy have an 11-year-old daughter, Madison. They live in Wasilla.

Casey Ressler

Marketing & Communications Manager

Casey joined the CVB in November 2006 after spending 11 years as an editor and reporter at the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman. He has lived in Alaska for 29 of his 37 years. He works

Justin Saunders

Membership Manager

Justin joined the Mat-Su CVB team, in January 2010. Justin works to recruit new members, develop member benefits and organizes membership events. Justin and his wife, Erin, have two young sons, Jacob and Ryan,

and live in Palmer. He is a lifelong Alaskan with a genuine passion for the outdoors.

Neil Campbell

Administrative Manager

Neil moved to Alaska from Arizona in 1970 and lives near Wasilla with his wife, Kelly. He started at the Mat-Su CVB in 1996 and is responsible for all infrastructure, as well as accounting and office management. He has experience in construction, surveying, archaeology, the air transport industry and conference planning.

Lorraine Jallen

Visitor Center Manager

Since 1997, Lorraine has managed the visitor center and trained the information staff. She winters in Tucson, Ariz., where she hosts many visiting friends and relatives. She enjoys interacting with visitors to the center, and points them in the right direction for fun.