

Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau



Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Report

Message from the President

This past year, I have had the privilege of serving as the president of the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors. I'm proud to report that your Board of Directors and our Mat Su CVB staff has had a very productive year, not only in marketing and attracting visitors to the Mat-Su Valley, but also in funding large projects such as the Gateway Visitor Center and South Denali development.



FY2013 saw the third consecutive year of increased collection of the bed tax for the Mat-Su Borough, a great sign that the marketing the organization is doing is paying off with more visitors, which helps us all. Take a look at this annual report as we highlight the many different ways we reach potential visitors – from weekend visitors from Anchorage to the international audience. Our organization uses a highly targeted marketing plan that maximizes each and every dollar to leverage the best possible return.

Our membership is strong – this year, we had a retention rate of 96 percent, which is above industry standards. Member support is important to the board, and a sign that our members are engaged.

This year also saw a \$1 million appropriation from the Alaska Legislature for land acquisition for the Gateway Visitor Center. This project has been years in the making, and the appropriation was a huge step forward. We've worked hard behind the scenes to build community partnerships, promote the project to our elected leaders and make this project become a reality.

As a board, we look at these past successes as a strong foundation for the future. This year, we'll continue to market the Mat-Su Valley as a premier destination, and we'll be working harder than ever on the Gateway Visitor Center project solidifying partnerships. You can be proud of the successes the organization made during the past year, and even more importantly, you can be excited for what the future holds.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Craig Saunders, *President*
Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours

Cheryl Metiva, *Vice President*
Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman

Nicole Bendle, *Treasurer*
First National Bank Alaska

Steve Zadra, *Secretary*
Princess Cruises and Tours

Dee Dee Kay, *Past President*
Grand Denali Lodge

Mark Austin, *Executive Committee*
Palmer Musk Ox Farm

Karen Harris
Alaska Garden Gate B&B

Darlene Hunter
Susitna River Lodging

Mabel Wimmer
Mendeltna Creek Lodge

Ruth Kimerer
Alaska Railroad



Membership Report

MEMBERSHIP HOLDS STRONG

A STRONG MEMBERSHIP IS AT THE HEART OF THE MAT-SU CVB OPERATIONS

In FY13, the CVB welcomed 24 new members, with a total of 253 member businesses. The CVB had an outstanding 96 percent retention rate, well above industry averages. The membership took advantage of numerous cooperative marketing programs. Membership events included a successful annual meeting, monthly luncheons and community roundtables.

MEMBER ADVOCACY

UNIFIED VOICES SPEAK LOUDLY

We are advocates for our members and work to develop a unified membership. This summer, the Mat-Su CVB was proactive in communicating the need to keep the park gate open seven days a week at Independence Mine State Historical Park, and was instrumental in finding the solution.

EMPOWERING MEMBERS

COOPERATIVE MARKETING GIVES MEMBERS THE TOOLS TO EXCEL

The Mat-Su CVB strives to give members the tools they need to market their businesses. In FY13, we teamed with the Mat-Su Bed & Breakfast Association to offer an online availability system. We continued to add cooperative marketing programs such as discounted ads in Alaska Magazine and Fish Alaska Magazine. Online, we continued our successful leads generation system, which has been copied by CVBs around the country. Putting qualified leads in the hands of our members ensures their success.

NETWORKING FOR SUCCESS

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS ARE VITAL FOR CONTINUED PROSPERITY

The Mat-Su CVB hosted monthly luncheons during the winter season where members learned about a variety of issues, trends and topics. The annual meeting and awards luncheon in the fall and the open house in May gave members an opportunity to network, learn about each other's product and build partnerships.



Reaching the In-State Market

TARGETED PRINT AND DIGITAL

ALASKANS MAKE UP A LARGE PART OF OUR TARGET MARKET. REACHING THEM IS IMPORTANT.

In FY2013, we launched a new print and digital advertising campaign, “Put the U in Mat-Su.” These ads appeared in both local and statewide newspapers, as well as online at several media outlet Web sites. The ads highlight the Mat-Su Valley as a destination for Alaskans by showcasing popular activities. The ads are targeted during the “shoulder” seasons of the spring and fall.



TELEVISION AND RADIO

A MULTI-FACETED MARKETING CAMPAIGN THAT WORKS

In FY2013, the Mat-Su CVB increased its investment in television advertising in the Anchorage market. An all-new, 30-second high-definition commercial began airing regularly in the spring featuring the highly effective, “Yahoo-Mat-Su!” message. It contains many of the sights and activities that attract visitors to the Mat-Su Valley. We also continued our radio campaigns on stations around the state. Research shows that consumer awareness of the Mat-Su’s radios ads are well above industry standards! These targeted radio ads feature the popular jingle, as well as timely information about events happening in the Valley.



SOCIAL MEDIA

REACHING ENGAGED USERS IS IMPORTANT IN TODAY'S DIGITAL AGE

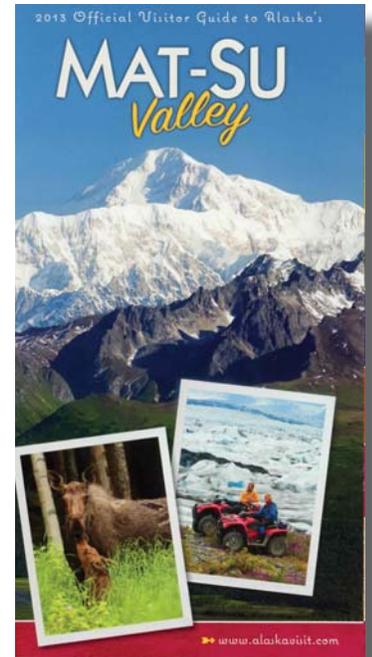
We accomplish that through a Facebook page, a Twitter account and new in 2013, an on-line blog. The "Visit Alaska's Mat-Su Valley" Facebook page continued to grow, reaching 6,500 likes, while @VisitMatSu tweeted out deals, events and more. The launch of a blog on our Web site also allowed us to connect and engage with users in ways we never have before. And it's all connected to our social media hub.



VISITOR GUIDE

THERE'S STILL A PLACE FOR A PRINTED VISITOR GUIDE

The 2013 Visitor Guide featured a cover shot of Denali, and new photography throughout. The Mat-Su CVB distributed 100,000 copies through targeted direct mailings to high potential visitors via the state of Alaska, to tour operators and travel agents, placement in Alaska visitor centers and more. With low-cost advertising opportunities available to members, it's an important part of the overall marketing plan.



WEB SITE

ALASKAVISIT.COM REMAINS THE TOP MARKETING PRIORITY

www.alaskavisit.com is our No. 1 marketing tool, and continues to reach visitors from around the world. In FY13, 70,500 visitors stopped by the site to get information about the Mat-Su Valley, representing more than 170,000 page views. In FY13, the Mat-Su CVB invested in pay-per-click advertising, search engine advertising that points to the Web site, launched a social media hub on the Web page and introduced a blog. The mobile Web site continued to perform well, recording 8,000 visitors and more than 20,000 page views.



Groups, Media and the International Market

GROUP TOURS

REACHING GROUP TOUR BUYERS HELPS BUSINESSES BIG AND SMALL

The group tour market is very important, and the Mat-Su CVB takes great measures to reach these key buyers. Attendance at the American Bus Association Marketplace and the National Tour Association Travel Exchange is just a start. The Mat-Su CVB also partnered with the state of Alaska and Visit Anchorage organizing familiarization tours that brought more than 50 operators to the Mat-Su Valley. Also in 2013, the Mat-Su CVB participated in the state of Alaska's travel agent mailing program, sending Mat-Su Valley visitor guides to 3,000 of the top-producing agents in the country.

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS SPEND MORE TIME IN ALASKA, AND SPEND MORE MONEY THAN DOMESTIC TRAVELERS

Creating awareness to include the Mat-Su Valley in their itineraries is important. In FY2013, the Mat-Su CVB participated in the Alaska Down Under Sales Mission in Australia, which became Alaska's top international inbound country last year. The CVB participated in the Icelandair Mid-Atlantic Seminar, where appointments with European tour operators yielded great results. At International Pow Wow, staff met with tour operators and media from around the globe. In FY13, we provided training for more than 50 international tour operators and agents while they visited Alaska.



PUBLIC RELATIONS/MEDIA

EDITORIAL COVERAGE IS VALUED AND TRUSTED BY CONSUMERS

The Mat-Su CVB works with the travel media throughout the year. In FY13, we hosted more than 25 travel writers and journalists from around the world on familiarization trips. These efforts resulted in coverage in outlets including Alaska Magazine, industry journals such as Travel Weekly and Travel Age West, national radio travel shows and various online travel blogs and publications. Locally, the Mat-Su CVB also contributed regularly to the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman for tourism-related business articles.



Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position (as of June 30, 2013)

Assets

Current assets:	
Cash	\$129,565
Memberships and grants receivable	\$75,419
Inventory	\$1,875
Prepaid expenses	\$25,943
Total current assets	\$232,802
Property and Equipment	
Furniture and equipment	\$121,178
Accumulated depreciation	(\$118,424)
Net property and equipment	\$2,754
Total assets	\$235,556

Liabilities and net assets

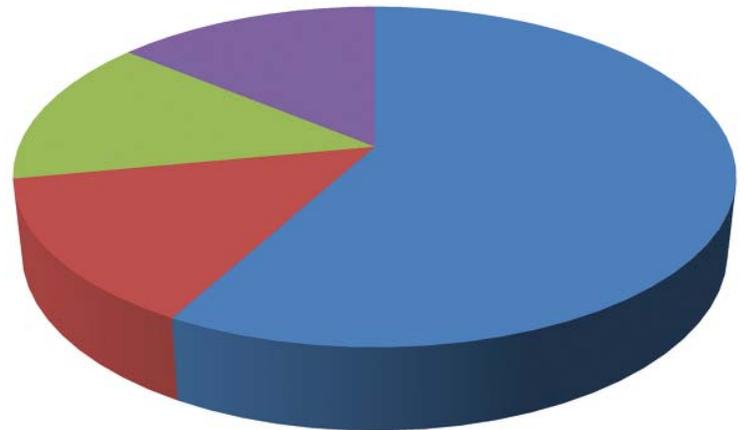
Current liabilities:	
Accounts payable	\$44,488
Payroll liabilities	\$13,420
Deferred revenue	\$47,616
Total current liabilities	\$105,524
Unrestricted net assets	\$130,032
Total liabilities and net assets	\$235,556

Per board policy, Mat-Su CVB's financial statements, accounting practices and reporting methods are audited every third year. The FY13 financial statements have not been audited.

FY13 Revenue Detail - \$878,513

Bed Tax Grant Revenue	\$714,196
Membership Dues	\$39,460
Advertising Sales & Marketing Programs	\$55,905
Special Events & Fund-raisers	\$28,125
Gift Shop	\$4,904
Interest	\$113
Other	\$1,410
In-Kind Contributions	\$34,400
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$878,513

FY13 Expenses by Division



Marketing	\$487,003	58%
Administration	\$122,099	14%
Membership	\$120,710	14%
VIC/Operations	\$120,700	14%



Envisioning the Gateway Visitor Center

Gateway Visitor Center Project Timeline

Phase I	Pre-planning	Year 1	Complete
Phase II	Project assessment		
	Feasibility Study	Year 2	Complete
Phase III	Project Action Plan	Year 3	Current
	Secure partnerships/local support		
	Raise capital		
Phase IV	Site control/business plan	Year 4	Current
Phase V	Design Development	Year 5	
Phase VI	Construction and Move In	Years 6-7	