

# Lake County Economic Development Marketing Strategic Plan 2011-2013

Prepared by Strategic Advisory Group  
and the Lake County Tourism Industry



Funding provided by State of California, Department of Housing and Community  
Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, Planning and Technical Assistance Grant

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Overview .....	2
Goals for the Tourism Marketing Program .....	5
Overall Structure and Governance of the Marketing Program .....	7
Governance .....	7
Summary of the Structural Changes.....	13
Funding Strategies .....	14
Dedicated Transient Occupancy Tax .....	14
New Funding Streams .....	16
Revenue Summary .....	19
Demand Generators – Marketing Focus .....	20
Tourism Assets – Development Opportunities .....	23
Front-Line Hospitality Training - Workforce Development .....	25
Marketing Initiatives .....	26
Database Management .....	26
Direct Marketing .....	26
Website Development – Online Marketing.....	28
Centralized Calendar .....	29
Package Development.....	29
Social Media .....	32
Communications and Public Relations .....	32
Additional Online Opportunities .....	33
The Group Sales Concept .....	34
Lake Communications Plan .....	36
Budget Review – Current Allocations .....	39
Marketing Activity Recommendations .....	41
Chamber of Commerce Agreement.....	44
Industry Reporting – Stakeholder Communication Plan .....	46
Quarterly Dashboard.....	46
Quarterly Visitor Survey .....	46
Lake County Film Industry support .....	49
Planning – Community Development .....	50
Timeline .....	52
Conclusion.....	58



## Introduction

The Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) is pleased to present our recommendations for the Lake County Marketing and Economic Development Program. While we use the term “our recommendations”, it is important to note that these recommendations have been either suggested by or are now supported by the leaders within Lake County’s tourism industry. Over the past three months we have met or spoken with nearly 150 leaders in the Lake County tourism industry. SAG believes that a vital part of the success of a strategic plan is the need for stakeholder support. SAG also presented a draft report to the tourism stakeholders. There were numerous supportive comments and suggestions that have been incorporated in this final draft report. We have also worked closely with the County Administrative Officer and his team to create these recommendations.

SAG began the engagement with Lake County by meeting with key industry leaders. This is one of the most important phases in our process. We met with over fifty members of the tourism industry and listened to their thoughts on how to move Lake County Tourism Marketing forward. The names of the participants in this process are listed at the end of this report. We have recommended specific strategies for how these participants might be engaged in the future. We have found that there is significant support for the Lake County Tourism Marketing Program from the industry and a sincere willingness to participate. We have proposed new governance and communication models designed to maintain a high level of participation from tourism leaders. The ongoing support and participation of the

industry is imperative as part of evolving the tourism marketing program. Many of the recommendations in this report have either come directly from stakeholders or are fully supported and have been enhanced through stakeholder input.

In our initial meetings, we met with leaders from the following tourism segments:

1. Lodging
2. Restaurant/Catering
3. Wineries
4. Attraction and Events
5. Venues
6. Business Associations

We also met with officials from the City of Lakeport and the City of Clearlake. These conversations were critical as we have proposed greater synergy with and support from the two municipalities within Lake County.

Industry leaders who were not able to attend the initial meetings were encouraged to speak with us directly. We had several individual discussions and site visits as part of the process. We have made sure our contact information was readily available if participants had additional thoughts or input. We received several additional emails and phone calls that have been factored into this report.

The overall input we received from the tourism stakeholders and the support we have received from Kelly Cox, Debra Sommerfield and their teams, as well as several key County department heads, made it possible to develop these realistic and achievable recommendations.

## Overview

Our overall assessment of the Tourism Marketing Program and the tourism opportunities in Lake County is that the future can be very bright. It goes without saying that Lake County has natural scenic beauty and newly developed assets that combine to have great tourism appeal. The opportunity is to determine how to maximize the effectiveness of the marketing program within the current resources and how to create a sustainable funding plan.

The other positive aspect of the dynamics of Lake County is the interest, willingness and ability of the tourism stakeholders. Initial meetings and ongoing discussions have introduced us to tourism leaders who want and need to be an integral part of the future. They are eager to participate, which is an important part of long-term success.

The combination of industry and public sector support, with effective collaboration creates a solid foundation. We are confident that with this in place, the following recommendations can be accomplished. The recommendations that have come from the stakeholders will take a unified public and private sector effort. To have a collective positive platform will be vital to moving the overall efforts forward.

### The State of Lake County Tourism

We believe the foundation for success is in place for Lake County. That being said, it is important to reflect on the current real challenges with Lake County Tourism.

#### a. Funding

The closure of Konocti Harbor Resort and Spa had a significant impact on tourism funding. This coupled with a challenging economy has reduced the marketing resources.

#### b. The Lake

While Clear Lake is an important asset to the Lake County visitor experience, it has some challenges. The natural eco-system can produce an odor as well as problems for boaters and has contributed to a negative perception. The challenges with the Lake should not be understated. Even with creative strategies from Tourism leaders,

visitors have been lost due to the current condition. SAG met with lodging owners who were compelled to suggest to prospective guests to postpone their visits to Lake County due to unfavorable Lake conditions.

#### c. A Department of the County

Currently the Tourism Marketing Program is housed in the Office of Economic Development and operated as a program of the County. Due to the current leadership at the County there has been support. The challenge is without formal industry engagement, there is no natural process for tourism advocacy. Engagement of the tourism industry is an important component of long-term success.

The other opportunity is the need to support the current staff as they migrate towards the new marketing direction. The current team

has a positive outlook, but a new direction will require training and understanding. SAG has met with members of the county tourism team and reviewed the recommendations.

The nature of the recommendations within this plan creates the opportunity to permanently move the structure and functionality of the tourism program. There is also an opportunity to evolve the organization into becoming a separate entity in the future. The implementation of these recommendations will create a framework to accomplish this.

### **Tourism is Vital for Lake County**

As an overall economic generator, as well as an industry that can have a growing workforce in the future, tourism is a high priority. With the largest fresh water lake within California, a growing wine industry, and great opportunities for outdoor activities as three opportunities and much more, tourism must always be high on the list of overall priorities. Our conversations with the tourism stakeholders, including large investors, clearly indicated an interest in furthering tourism development. These recommendations are designed to create a three-year road map to increased tourism results with a stable and growing infrastructure.

### **The Challenges Are Real!**

The challenges that need to be addressed are substantial and some of these initiatives will require a unified effort, specific advocacy, and a change in focus. We have made bold recommendations, particularly in the areas of

funding, governance, staff functions, metrics and goal setting. To use a cliché, there will have to be a “will” for these to be implemented. With successful implementation, the entire marketing program and the overall industry will transform into a more impactful economic engine for Lake County.

### **Effective Marketing Must Evolve**

The vehicles to affect a traveler’s buy decision have changed over the past few years and this will continue. The amount of influence that the online space as well as social media platforms has on the consumer’s decision is growing every day. The Lake County Marketing Program must target its resources in these areas.

The current trends in tourism advertising and information are away from printed material. Destinations are skipping the expensive four-color ads and instead using sophisticated software to create a bold online presence. The number of potential Lake County visitors that will make their entire vacation decision from a mobile device is growing exponentially. This trend was also supported in our conversations with key stakeholders.

The other trend that has been apparent for several years is the decline in consumers going to travel trade shows to make their vacation decisions. The reason for this is obvious. They can get an up-to-date, virtual trade show anytime through online vehicles. A traveler can book everything needed for a fully planned vacation on a travel site like Expedia or Travelocity. A case in point was one of Lake County’s inns, which recently participated in a promotion on Living

Social and was able to track 200 room nights booked.

The opportunity is for Lake County to be positioned more competitively in the online space. We have proposed shifts in resources and training with the current staff to move in this direction.

The overall areas of the recommendations are:

1. Overall Structure and Governance of the Marketing Program
2. Funding Strategies
3. Marketing Recommendations
4. Stakeholder Communication
5. Community and Economic Development

## Goals for the Tourism Marketing Program

SAG heard consistently from the stakeholders the need to increase the direct bookings from the program. It was also very important to develop effective “experiences” that could be sold to visitors. There was concern that it was challenging to understand the full Lake County experience if you drove into the county and picked up a visitor guide. We have proposed a shift in resources, a new overall structure and a new direction for the internal staff that will move the program in this direction. It is also consistent with the direction that will be most effective in raising awareness and driving more visitors to Lake County.

These are the measurable results that will be realized with the recommendations in this plan. These are goals to be achieved over the next three years. We are confident with the collective will of industry and county leadership, these goals can be achieved.

### 1. Database Management

The goal is to have 50,000 visitors in the database that are past or future targeted visitors.  
A minimum of monthly unique offers sent to this database.

### 2. Direct Marketing

The goal is to book over 3,000 rooms annually by 2013.  
A minimum of 12 unique package offers on an annual basis.

### 3. Website – Online Activity

The goal is to have over 50,000 visits per month to a new content-rich web experience.

### 4. Community Calendar

The goal would be to have a minimum of 500 events, on average, in the calendar.

### 5. Package Development

The annual goal would be to sell 5,000 County tourism packages through multiple channels between hotels, wineries, and the newly developed County Concierge.

### 6. Social Media

The goal would be to increase “friends and followers” to over 1,000 in the first year and over 10,000 by year three.

### 7. Communications

There will be annual activity goals of a minimum of one new press release each week and an overall targeted ad equivalency goal of \$250,000 in the first year and over \$500,000 by year three. Ad

equivalency is one way to measure the “value” of the stories that are generated in the context of the dollar value of equivalent advertising space – essentially, how much it would cost to purchase the equivalent ad space for the article the tourism program generates.

#### **8. Group Sales**

The new group sales effort will have an annual room night goal of 2,600. This will grow to over 5,000 room nights in year three.

There will be other quantitative measures within each of the marketing areas. These are the overall goals related to the marketing activities. This demonstrates that there will be substantial results when the marketing activities are all in place.

The following sections outline the key areas of change needed to achieve these goals. We encourage you to think about your role when reading these recommendations.



## Overall Structure and Governance of the Marketing Program

In our many discussions with tourism industry leaders, it was apparent that the overall marketing program would benefit from consistent industry engagement. The value of an engaged industry is significant in many areas. We recommend forming a Tourism Advisory Board to be actively involved in the ongoing success of the Tourism Marketing Program. The formation and support of this advisory board can take place in the near future and the impact will be felt within three to six months. This advisory board would be appointed by the County Administrative Officer and would be asked to play an active role in advocacy, the annual marketing plan, and annual budget.

### Governance

The governance model for the Lake County Tourism Organization marketing program would consist of a nine member board that would be representative of the industry in Lake County. The board would be “advisory” in nature but function as close to a “fiduciary” board as possible. On an annual basis, the advisory board would be responsible for the following:

- ❖ *Review and Approval of the Annual Marketing Plan*

- The internal team would create a calendar that ensured the advisory board was involved and worked within the County budget process

- ❖ *Review and Approve the Annual Marketing Budget*

- This would also be done in coordination with the overall annual County process.

- ❖ *Approve All Quantitative Goals*

- The internal team would present quantitative goals as part of the annual planning process
- The goals would include:
  - Impressions generated from all sources

- Room night goals from the group sales efforts
- Transactions from all of the visitor centers
- Activity level in the online areas

- ❖ *Attend Quarterly Advisory Board Meetings*

- Attendance requirements would be set to be a member of the advisory board

- ❖ *Attend the Annual Board of Supervisors Meeting to Approve the Tourism Marketing Budget*

- The Advisory Board Chair would speak at the Supervisors meeting to advocate for ongoing support for the tourism efforts

The makeup of the advisory board would be reflective of the tourism industry. Its composition would be as follows:

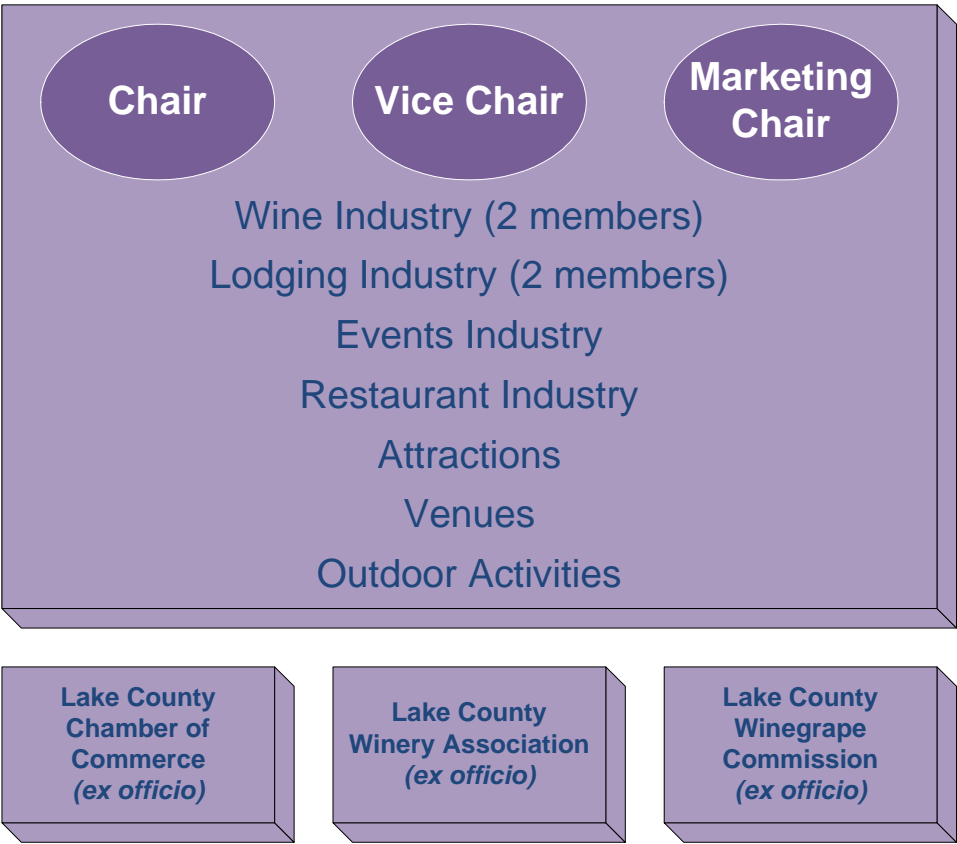
- ❖ Two members from the Wine Industry
- ❖ Two members from the Lodging Industry
- ❖ One member from the Events Industry
- ❖ One member from the Restaurant Industry
- ❖ One member from the Attractions area
- ❖ One member from the Venues area
- ❖ One member from the outdoor activity area

The following organizations also would be invited to participate as ex-officio members:

- ❖ The Lake County Chamber
- ❖ The Lake County Winegrape Commission
- ❖ The Lake County Winery Association

An ex-officio member is vital to the overall input and support of the Tourism program. The ex-officio members would not be “voting” members of the advisory board.

*Advisory Board*



The Advisory Board would have officers. Our recommendation is for three: Chair, Vice-Chair, and Marketing Chair.

The officers would run the board meetings, as well as be the key spokespeople for the industry in the media and in overall advocacy.

This Advisory Board will play a vital role in the overall future of Lake County tourism. They will be asked to advocate on issues such as sustainable funding. The advisory board needs to be very involved in the annual planning and then communicate this, with their support, back to the overall industry.

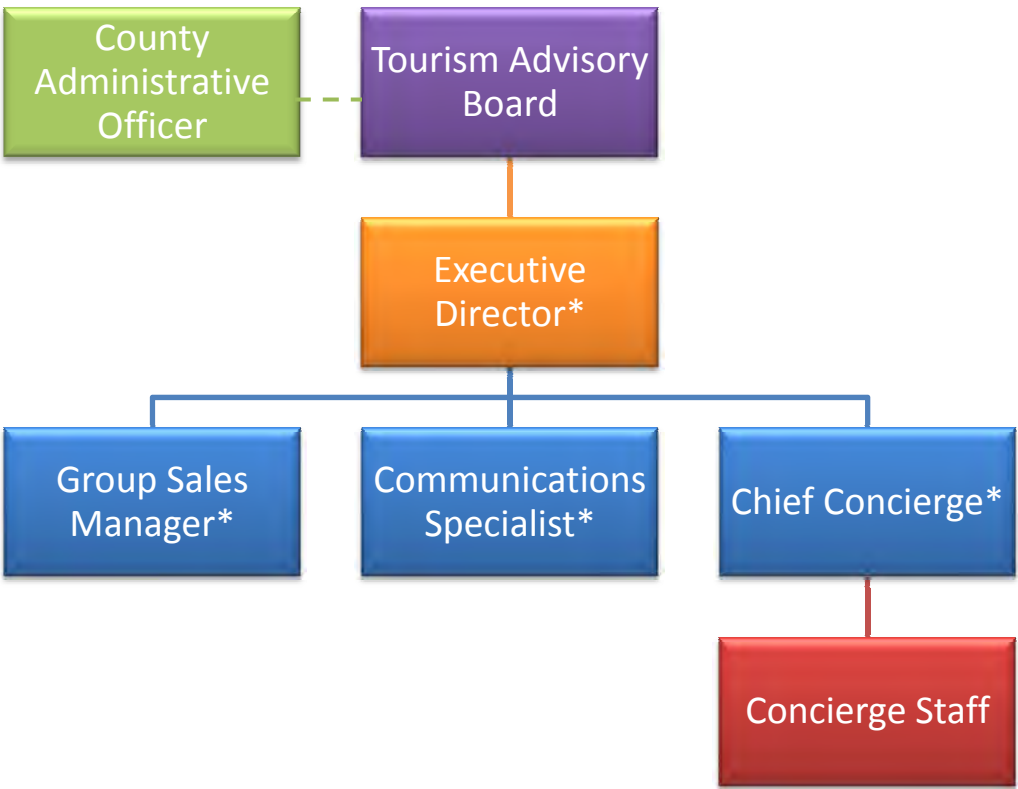
The new governance practices will be vital in advocating for new funding streams as well as the investment in and development of new tourism assets.

**Executive Director**

SAG recommends that the Deputy Director’s title also include Executive Director of the Lake County Tourism Organization or the eventual new name of the organization. This will give a clear indication to stakeholders, customers, media and the community that there is a Senior County Official focused on tourism.

The support of the advisory board as well as the oversight of the tourism organization is a key responsibility of this position. It is also recommended that the Executive Director have clear supervisory responsibilities with the three key tourism management positions. The advisory board and County Administrator will evaluate the resource implication for this position and make adjustments needed to maintain the highest level of focus on evolving the tourism marketing efforts. Due to the level of current resources, a clear delineation of the Executive Director duties and a determination for how to support the new governance model is needed. The Executive Director will focus time on the communication and support of the new advisory board to ensure its effectiveness.

*Proposed Lake County Tourism Organizational Chart*



*\*these will all be “working titles” used in conjunction with the tourism responsibilities.*

## Key Positions – Tourism Marketing Leadership

In our meetings and discussions with key stakeholders, it was apparent that the Marketing Program has an opportunity to evolve the responsibilities and deliverables of the current team. We have outlined those opportunities, as well as proposed a new targeted group sales effort. We have met with the County Human Resources leadership to collaborate on achieving the recommended changes. SAG has also met with the county staff within these positions and reviewed the future responsibilities. The overall response from the current staff members was very positive.

### *Group Sales Manager*

SAG recommends that resources be reallocated to support a new Group Sales Manager position. This position would take the form of an independent contractor to ensure flexibility. This position will be responsible for developing a new group market and delivering qualified leads to the venues in Lake County. This will be an important initiative for Lake County Tourism. We recommend that the recruitment should begin immediately to allow sufficient time to locate a qualified candidate. SAG will work with the Executive Director to provide the support in developing the position. In conjunction with the Advisory Board Directors, we will establish activity and room night production goals for this position. (See page 34 for further details.)

### *Communications Specialist*

SAG recommends a refocusing of duties in the existing Senior Administrative Analyst position to a Communications Specialist position that would be responsible for executing and developing a proactive internal and external marketing communications plan. This would include resources to proactively communicate key messages. One of the most important messages and programs will be the communications plan for Clear Lake (see section on the Lake

Communication plan). Since Clear Lake is one of the top attractions for the county, this position will submit and execute an annual Lake communication plan. Another example will be to expose the public to the unique attributes of Lake County as a wine region. This is an area that would also have quantitative goals related to ad equivalency and overall activity. The Communications area can be challenging to measure. The concept of ad equivalency is to value the space that is utilized when the media acts on one of the ideas presented by the communications team. We recommend a combination of ad equivalency and overall activity in assessing the success in this area.

As support for this position and the communications function, SAG is proposing an effective advisory function through a small Public Relations (PR) contract. The concept would not be to engage a PR firm in the traditional manner, but have access to guidance as strategies are being developed. The PR firm would provide guidance in how to create successful “angles” as well as media sources for specific target audiences. This could be a very small budget item, but create an invaluable resource in this area. The Communications Specialist will also be responsible for the support and management of the newly created PR roundtable. This will be a quarterly forum where many communication



leaders will get together to brainstorm on potential future stories and PR strategies.

### *Chief Concierge*

The current Visitor Information Center Manager function would evolve into the “Chief Concierge.” The real change here is the focus of the Visitor Centers and online services to go beyond providing information and also make specific recommendations and “convert” business. This will include package development and package sales. The Chief Concierge would be responsible for all County-operated Visitor Centers and also provide oversight and ensure consistency for those Visitor Centers that do not have County volunteers or personnel as part of their staff. The goal would be to create a consistency in service across all Visitor Centers. The tourism stakeholders were very supportive of achieving consistency of service within all of the visitor centers. There would be an opportunity to report on activities and also on hotel rooms booked, tickets sold, or restaurant reservations. The Chief Concierge would also work closely with the Web Support Team to develop models to make the web a more effective area to convert a visitor inquiry into a stay in Lake County. As in the other key areas, there would be annual goals for activities as well as room nights and other sales opportunities. We have researched the technology that is needed to support this effort and factored this into our budget recommendations.

### **Leadership**

The Executive Director, Groups Sales Manager, Communications Specialist, and Chief Concierge are the Management Team for Lake County Tourism. SAG will work with the Executive Director on the adjustments that are needed to create the job descriptions for these positions. It is important that these leadership positions are designed to create the flexibility needed to serve an industry that has different needs at different times. This team, with refined duties, will be poised to move the organization in a new direction.

### **Leadership Structure–Budget Implications**

The key new budget item is the addition of the Group Sales Manager. We have estimated the total cost associated with this new initiative at \$75,000.

## Summary of the Structural Changes

The Lake County Marketing Program with an active advisory board and the four leadership positions in place, as described previously, is poised to evolve to an aggressive booking operation. This includes the addition of a key sales position and the evolution of the other key leadership positions. Over the past three months, we have worked with the Lake County Marketing Team on specific examples of how this new focus can be obtained. We have worked on specific communications concepts as well as evaluated how to begin in the online area.

The goal for full implementation of the structural changes should be by the end of the 2011–2012 fiscal year. This would include implementation of the budgeting and marketing plan processes. For the proposed timeline, see page 52.

### *An Opportunity: Rename the Tourism Marketing Organization*

We would recommend naming the tourism marketing organization to signify our commitment to the visitor experience in Lake County. Examples of organizational names are:

*Visit Lake County*  
*Experience Lake County*  
*Lake County Rising*

The new advisory board in conjunction with the tourism industry should finalize a new name within this fiscal year.

## Funding Strategies

New funding strategies will be vital for the future of Lake County Tourism. The proposed Tourism Advisory Board should work closely with the County staff leadership to set funding goals on an annual basis. The levels of TOT revenue are certainly the major driver, but there should be overall goals and strategies for revenue enhancement every year. The success of creating new funding streams is dependent upon stakeholder support. The involvement of the stakeholders in the annual planning process will help in gaining broad-based commitment. The following are recommendations for stabilizing current funding and creating new opportunities:

### Dedicated Transient Occupancy Tax

The current state of tourism funding in Lake County is concerning as compared to other destinations. One area that is traditionally an important and consistent source of funding for tourism is the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), or hotel “bed tax.” In Lake County, there has been a consistent history of utilizing the TOT for marketing activities and it is vital that this continue. In reviewing the history of the TOT, we found that there were “agreements” with the lodging industry on specific areas of spending. These included allocations toward signage, pathways, as well as overall marketing. These directions have been followed and modified to produce the most effective marketing results. Over the years, the Lake County Board of Supervisors has passed several resolutions to memorialize the intended use/allocation of TOT revenues.

We recommend exploring how to formally secure the long-term use of the TOT. We have investigated the concept of presenting the Board of Supervisors with an updated resolution to reaffirm that the primary use of the TOT be allocated to tourism marketing. In many counties,

this tax is dedicated by ordinance to go to tourism promotion.

Over the years, the Board of Supervisors has revised its allocation of TOT revenues.

As background, in 1991, at the recommendation of the then-active Lake County Resort and Restaurant Association, the Board amended the Lake County Code with Ordinance 2033, which increased the TOT rate in the unincorporated areas of Lake County from 6 percent to 9 percent, and simultaneously approved Resolution 91-195, which allocated 6 percent of the 9 percent tax rate to the County Marketing Program for advertising and promotion, one-ninth to parks, one-ninth to highway signage, and one-ninth for multi-use pathways. In 1992, the Board amended the code with Ordinance 2124 to expand TOT collections to include private campgrounds.

Then, in 1995, the Board established Resolution 95-189 that rescinded the previous resolution, and allocated 7 percent of the 9 percent tax rate to advertising and promotion, one-ninth to parks, and one-ninth to multi-use pathways.

In 2004, the Board revised the allocation policy with Resolution 2004-105, which allocated 1 percent of the 9 percent tax rate to the aquatic

weed program, 1 percent to parks, \$150,000 to law enforcement, up to \$95,000 to the County museums, and the balance to advertising, promotion, and general economic development activities, such as signage, tourism infrastructure, and operation of the County's Visitor Information Center; this resolution also established that the allocation of TOT revenues be reviewed annually during the County's budget hearings.

This is what is in place today.

We suggest that the tourism stakeholders, led by the advisory board, work with the Tourism Marketing Staff to support a resolution by the County supervisors supporting the use of the TOT for tourism marketing. For the most part, the reason Hotel owners agree to these taxes is with the understanding that they will be used for tourism marketing. The past two years have demonstrated the volatility of the TOT revenue stream with the 2009 closure of Konocti Harbor Resort and Spa and the challenging economy. The risk of TOT funds in a challenging economy being utilized for non-tourism-related activities is high.

There are great examples of tourism partners participating in tourism funding without an ordinance that directs them. For example, the tribal governments of Big Valley Rancheria, Middletown Rancheria, and Robinson Rancheria each have agreements in place and pay into the program; Habematolel also has an agreement with the County to support tourism marketing

once the tribe's lodging facility is built and in operation. This is a great example of the industry stepping up and supporting marketing. Another example of this is Harbin Hot Springs. They have supported the tourism efforts through a voluntary commitment.

We have noted in our budget review that currently there are some uses of the TOT that are more traditionally considered to be general fund expenditures. The resolution of support related to the TOT allocation will demonstrate the continued commitment of these funds exclusively for tourism marketing.

### Lakeport and Clearlake

The next area that warrants review and change is the minimal amount of TOT funds contributed from the City of Lakeport and City of Clearlake dedicated to tourism marketing. Tourism stakeholders expressed strong support for increasing the collaboration from Clearlake and Lakeport. This has been added to the timeline as an important advocacy initiative. If this were rectified over time, this could mean significant funds annually dedicated to driving tourism results. We would reiterate the original intent of these taxes was to support "reinvestment" in marketing that supports the tourism industry. We had preliminary meetings with representatives from both cities and there is an interest in continuing to explore opportunities in the future.

The task of successfully creating solid funding streams from the County and two cities may seem challenging but can be achieved with a unified, organized tourism community. We have coordinated these efforts and experienced elected officials being supportive even during challenging economic times. This is an advocacy initiative that should begin with a goal of political and organizational advancement by the end of the current fiscal year.

## New Funding Streams

### Tourism Business Improvement District

Another opportunity to grow the current levels of funding is through the formation a Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID). There may be an opportunity to create a TBID within Lake County. There are many forms of districts that should be contemplated. Due to the diverse industries involved in tourism activities, we would recommend exploring an inclusive model. This would include the lodging industry, the wine industry, and possibly restaurants. SAG has met with County Counsel to discuss the implementation. County Counsel is currently researching what is needed to successfully create a TBID.

To form a TBID, it first takes support from the stakeholders. The lodging industry will need to see the benefit of adding an amount per occupied room to their guest folio that would go to tourism marketing. Our experience is that this type of charge is now fairly common and accepted by travelers. **If \$1.00 per occupied room was added, Tourism Marketing funds could increase approximately \$150,000 annually.** These funds would be governed by the industry and managed by the County Tourism Marketing program. The other feature of a TBID is the flexibility that the stakeholders can vote to adjust the fund annually and increase the amount invested if there was a compelling reason to do so.

The wine industry is a very important partner of tourism in Lake County and we recommend exploring a mechanism for this industry to support the TBID and create a new revenue stream.

The restaurant industry should also be explored as an opportunity to contribute to a TBID. The restaurant industry has participated in other destinations (recently in Denver Colorado) and this should be investigated. In other destinations, this has taken the form of a small “tourism fee” added to the restaurant check.

Depending on the methodology, the formation of a comprehensive TBID can raise an additional \$250,000 annually and become a new opportunity to extend the marketing efforts for the benefit of the entire tourism industry of Lake County. The first step in this process is to demonstrate tangible results from the new tourism plan. This would include successful communication and participation of industry leaders. One concept that was raised by a Lodging stakeholder was to create a “matching” program for new dollars raised.

The advocacy effort to implement a TBID would focus on the Lodging, Wine, and Restaurant industries. Our recommendations related to increasing direct booking of groups and individual travelers will be important in unifying support for the TBID. SAG will work with tourism management to propose tangible results that would come from the increased funding.





### Fees and Licenses

Recreational activities are another potential source of funding for tourism. There is a strong correlation between the success of the marketing activities and increased recreational use.

We recommend exploring opportunities for funding with boating and fishing activities. These could be additional fees added to licenses and permits. The analysis would include understanding if raising these fees will have a detrimental effect on increasing tourism activity.

There is a natural connection between these activities and the need to invest in tourism marketing. These could also be another metric to gauge the success of the Tourism Marketing Program. The correlation of effective marketing to these target audiences and the overall level of activity should be measured. The new County Concierge could create an entire database program for those who have purchased licenses to encourage them to come back more often.

This opportunity can be explored in the current fiscal year to determine the process for implementation.

### Partnerships

In an effort to maximize resources and extend the overall reach of the Tourism Marketing Program, we recommend exploring specific partnerships within Lake County. The goal of the partnership is to determine where marketing resources are currently spent that should be part of the overall county program. This benefits the partner because their reach is extended. These partnerships would take a form of formal agreements and have mutually agreed upon goals and deliverables. The other opportunity with strongly aligned partnerships is to leverage activities to increase the overall tourism. One fact that needs to be considered is whether the activity is supporting the core marketing goals of the tourism program.

The partnerships that should be explored would include:

1. The Wine Industry Associations
2. The Casino Industry
3. The Lake County Chamber of Commerce
4. The City of Lakeport
5. The City of Clearlake
6. The Lake County Fairgrounds

Each of these partnerships can be an important resource for collaboration as well as for the creation of a long-term alliance. An effective marketing program seeks to leverage dollars when possible, especially when the target audiences align.

### State Park Campgrounds

One additional opportunity that should be explored is the collection of TOT in the state park campgrounds. This would take a change in the current state law. The tourism stakeholders were very supportive of researching how to create a revenue stream from the county visitors who stay in the state park campgrounds.

### Single Unit – Vacation Rentals

SAG had discussions with owners of vacation rental units in Lake County. There is a current revenue stream from TOT paid from vacation rentals. There is an opportunity to create experiences that can be promoted to potential vacation home renters that could stimulate increased activity. This would provide support to the vacation rental as well as grow the TOT collected.

### Transactional Revenue

We recommend a plan be developed to receive transactional revenue for packages that are booked through the County Concierge efforts. This would take the form of a fee that would be paid when a reservation was made through the County's website or the County Visitor Centers. These fees would help in cost recovery for the resources that are needed to support the overall package efforts. There is programmatic work needed as part of the implementation, but conceptually it can become a consistent revenue stream. The packages that would be coordinated by the County Tourism Marketing Organization and would have small fees included that will support the overall program.

### Merchandise

The other opportunity for revenue is Lake County merchandise. Currently, Lake County merchandise is sold through the County operated Visitor Centers. There is an opportunity to expand this program throughout the county in Visitor Centers and in conjunction with private retailers. This is a program where goals could be set and plans could be implemented to grow annual sales. This would also have the benefit of extending the Lake County Brand. We recommend potentially engaging an independent retail distributor to support this effort.

## Revenue Summary

The County Tourism Marketing Program will benefit from a comprehensive revenue plan. We have outlined strategies to approach both of these and we believe this is a high priority. This is an opportune time as the industry has a very supportive County Administrator along with a motivated County staff. The combination of a supportive, unified, and engaged tourism industry and County leadership are the key ingredients to improving the revenue challenge.

With all of the initiatives in place, over time, the overall budget could be well over \$1 million and be sustainable for years to come. This would greatly increase the results of the program and give the industry a new outlook on planning for the future. The above revenue concepts can be accomplished in the next three years.

## Demand Generators – Marketing Focus

In determining the most effective use of marketing resources and delivering the largest return, we recommend that there is agreement amongst the stakeholders on the top “demand generators” for visitation to Lake County. This creates focus for the overall marketing efforts. A commentary described destination demand generators this way:

*Ultimately, demand generators are how we build our presence in the Destination marketplace.*

Destination “Demand Generators” Require Partnerships, Not Agendas, by J. Ragsdale Hendrie)

The concept of demand generators is to assess those significant attributes of a destination which drive the greatest interest and create the highest level of awareness for Lake County tourism.

The commentary goes on to say:

*The landscape may be punctuated even further with reasons to visit – fine restaurants, theater, attractions, even eco tourism.*

The effective marketing of the key demand generators with the enhancements of other activities in Lake County is the recommended overriding strategy.

This will help guide the strategies for the annual marketing plan. This does not mean that these “demand generators” would be the only experiences marketed, but the focus of the marketing resources would be on leveraging

those assets to the benefit of all stakeholders. In other words, the demand generators would be utilized to increase activity throughout the county.

These main tourism “generators” will drive the activity to other Lake County opportunities. If efforts and resources are focused on promoting these activities as part of a Lake County experience, the highest return for all tourism stakeholders will be created.



Two key Demand Generators are Clear Lake and the Wineries. If promotions and offerings are focused around these two experiences, hotels, restaurants and other attractions and activities can be significantly impacted. Resources would be put into developing experiences that center around the Lake and the Wineries.

### The Lake County Wine Industry

The recent history of the Lake County wine industry creates a new opportunity. In 1995, there were 4 wineries in Lake County, which wouldn't have created a significant tourism experience. By 2007, there were 15 wineries in Lake County. This would begin to create an opportunity to market and leverage the wine industry for tourism purposes. Today there are 36 wineries in Lake County, of which 30 operate tasting rooms. This is a relatively new opportunity for Lake County and should be a focus of driving visitors to hotels, restaurants, and other tourism activities. Another feature of a thriving wine experience is that it doesn't have the seasonality of other outdoor activities.

### Clear Lake

The Lake has been impacted for recreational purposes by the growth of aquatic weeds as well as the increased presence of odor causing algae. SAG has proposed proactive communication concepts to mitigate these challenges with Lake County visitors. The County Supervisors approved a \$1.3 million investment in mitigation measures. The combination of proactive communication and the investment in short and long term solutions will maximize the tourism opportunities with the current challenges. The lake provides a great opportunity for boating and fishing activities. Focusing on activities in and around the Lake will also generate broader tourism impact. In conjunction with promoting Clear Lake, other lake opportunities such as Blue Lake will be part of the marketing plan.

While these are the primary demand generators, there are other potential demand generators. One area that has been mentioned consistently is

the variety of other outdoor activities in the county. These include hiking on the newly created trails, bird watching, and others. SAG recommends engaging the new Tourism Advisory Board and stakeholders in a working session on the topic of demand generators for the county. These would be defined as those assets that could create the most overall activity for the Tourism Industry.



As mentioned, the Wine Industry and Clear Lake are two important demand generators for the tourism community. We recommend focusing the communication efforts in these two areas. This will also guide the creation of packages that involve these experiences in our overall booking effort.

Another area of demand generation is major events. It is important to focus on those events where there is an opportunity to drive additional spending in the county. While there are many wonderful events that certainly can enhance a visitor's experience, many of these are primarily important for Lake County residents. This type of event would not fall into this category.

In our discussions and observations, we identified exciting support activities that would enhance an



overall experience in Lake County. One example of this was the ability to feature and promote Lake County artists to the visitors. There could be activities with artists that visitors could experience as part of spending a few days in the County.

Other developments or experiences that should be included in this analysis would be:

1. Casino Gaming
2. Golf Courses
3. Mount Konocti and New Trail Systems
4. Harbin Hot Springs
5. Fishing Activities
6. The planned Hoberg's development
7. Blue Lakes and other alternative Lake experiences

SAG recommends the key "demand generators" be reviewed as part of the annual planning process. This will inform many of the programmatic elements of the marketing efforts.

## Tourism Assets – Development Opportunities



Holiday Harbor



Re-opening of Konocti Harbor Resort and Spa

In our conversations with key stakeholders and County staff, combined with the desire to expand the tourism experience in Lake County, it became apparent there are areas that need focus for future development. Tourism stakeholders are concerned about the lack of dining and lodging choices for potential visitors. SAG is engaged in assessing specific strategies for higher profile opportunities. These include Konocti Harbor Resort and Spa, Holiday Harbor, Hoberg's, Clear Lake transportation and higher profile activities, and the new opportunities with the acquisition and opening of Mount Konocti to public access. We are in conversation with leaders in the Lodging Industry about exposing the opportunities for development in Lake County.

We recommend continued focus on how to stimulate development in a few key areas. These are some key industries and venues:

### 1. Lodging

Lake County is fortunate to have some innovative lodging properties. There are aggressive entrepreneurs who have developed successful unique Inns and other wonderful places to stay. The focus over the next three years needs to be on stimulating further development of hotels and inns.

We are working with the Economic Development Team on a plan to inform the national lodging community of the unique opportunities in Lake County. These opportunities are both for new projects and the revitalization of current lodging operations. This effort is consistent with the Resort Master Plan concept in the Community Development section of the County's General plan. Our research showed that there is a need to drive more awareness about the lodging opportunities and the ease of doing business in Lake County.

## **2. Restaurants**

As with Lodging, there are some successful restaurants in Lake County. This is an important support sector for the overall visitor experience. Visitors who come to the Wineries or the Lake expect a variety of quality dining options. The overall offering needs to improve in terms of quality and diversity over the next three years. We are engaged with restaurant industry leaders to convey the willingness and interest of the county to support restaurant investment.

SAG has also discussed the strategy of reaching out to restaurant companies who might be interested in working with developers on new projects.

## **3. Venues for group activity – Conference Space**

Group business can be an ideal complement to the individual leisure traveler as there are opportunities to bring groups during the middle of the week. The county has reviewed opportunities to create new conference and meeting space. We recommend continued review of possible future conference space in the county. This is an important future opportunity as the group sales effort develops. We also recommend looking at current facilities like the Casinos and the County Fairgrounds to determine how to support improvements designed to convert more group business in the near term. The development of this “group product” is an important part of Lake County’s future.

## **4. Lake Attractions**

In conjunction with the County’s aggressive approach to improving the Lake experience, we have looked at possible Lake Transportation opportunities and overall attractions. We have researched the possibility of a unique Lake Transportation model that would serve as a functional method for visitors to experience the Lake and also function as an overall attraction.

## **5. Wine Experience – Transportation**

The Lake County Wine experience is clearly an emerging and significant part of the tourism experience. The other important feature of the wine experience is that it is not seasonal and can be promoted the entire year. As part of packaging and creating a visitor experience, we recommend studying the possibility of providing transportation between the wineries. This has been recognized by lodging industry leaders as a high priority. This would be marketed directly through the new County Concierge and also through the Lodging Industry. The full development of the Wine experience will be a key marketing initiative in the coming year.

## Front-Line Hospitality Training - Workforce Development

In our discussions throughout Lake County, there was consistent interest in the development of a program to support the front-line employees who serve the visitor. There was concern that the overall information flow was not effective and that front-line teams at privately owned businesses were not well-equipped to inform visitors of the positive attributes of Lake County or to respond to questions and comments.

SAG has researched concepts on how to approach the opportunity of supporting and training this extremely vital segment of the workforce. We believe it is important to find a current program that provides support on how to plan and execute effective workforce development. We have initiated conversations with the workforce development organizations in Lake County and received a significant amount of interest in supporting this effort.

SAG has evaluated a program that can be utilized to recognize excellent service in the county and become a platform for an ongoing training plan. This program entails a certification plan that would recognize those employees who made the commitment and “graduated”. The program is currently being evaluated by potential partner organizations. The goal would be to get a group of organizations involved in the initial support. The County Concierge would act as the on-going coordinator. The program has the potential to overhaul and significantly improve service levels while providing a new opportunity for Lake County front-line employees to improve their skills and their overall professional knowledge.

This program will take six months to become operational. This time is needed to create significant industry buy-in to the overall training and agreement to participate. Employers would be asked to participate by sending their employees through the program. We are confident that with industry support this program will have long-term positive implications for both the tourism industry and for the local workforce.



## Marketing Initiatives

In reviewing the current marketing expenditures, there is an opportunity to reallocate expenditures to focus on those areas that are measurable and highly targeted. There are opportunities to build an aggressive program targeted at current and future visitors to Lake County. The focus of this evolution would be in the “online” space and have many components. The overriding goal would be to not just generate awareness, but to convert overnight and day visitors through direct marketing initiatives. These initiatives will also be enhanced via social media platforms. With the level of resources available and the trends of how potential visitors learn about a destination, we recommend shifting resources from mass market vehicles such as print advertising to direct marketing efforts for both groups and individual leisure travelers.

### Database Management

The goal of this initiative is to create a “one-to-one” marketing strategy with current and future Lake County visitors. We would recommend that the County Marketing Team create a database made up of all of the current visitors that have requested information through the various channels. This would be complemented by a request to all of the key stakeholders to share their current databases with the tourism organization solely for the purpose of promoting tourism opportunities. There would also be budget dollars for purchasing lists that fit the target demographic for Lake County. The typical cost for a list is under \$1,000. We would recommend moving resources from the current traditional advertising budget and increase the resources in this area.

The technical aspects of a successful program will be an early focus during implementation. It is recommended that technical support is engaged in this area to determine the most effective approach in database management and one-to-one marketing.

The database would be managed out of the “County Concierge” offices. There would be an annual goal for booking from this database as well as a goal for the overall growth of the qualified list. We think it is possible to grow this list to over 50,000 names in the next three years.

### Direct Marketing

The focus of marketing resources would be on direct marketing through online vehicles. There would be a minimum frequency of monthly outreach to the targeted database. Each communication would have a specific call to action and a link to fulfill the particular offer. Examples of offers would include wine and lodging experiences and lake activity packages. To track these efforts, there would be a monthly report for all the stakeholders of the offerings for that month and the booking of those packages.

There would need to be an investment in database software that would monitor the effectiveness of each outreach piece and maximize the overall effectiveness. We have recommended a minimum of twelve unique promotions to the database annually. We would



set goals for the growth of the database and the booking of room nights and other activities. When the database is increased and the marketing team delivers compelling packages and offers, this database and online marketing efforts will produce significant and *measurable* results. We have set goals of booking 3,000 hotel rooms on an annual basis through direct marketing efforts. It is important to note that we recommend developing packages that work for a wide range of potential visitors. We recommend creating very affordable price points for a broad base of households.

## Website Development – Online Marketing



The current metrics for the Visitor site show approximately 15,000 visitors per month. We recommend an ongoing effort to manage the site content and optimize the search opportunities as well as drive activity through the direct promotions. The goal should be to get the unique visitor traffic to over 100,000 visits per month. This involves active content management and monthly analysis of the site analytics. We are not recommending a re-design of the website because there can be significant improvements through a new approach to site management.

## Centralized Calendar

A comprehensive centralized calendar can be a useful tool for tourism development. The need for a one singular, robust, centralized events calendar was supported consistently by the tourism stakeholders. It is recommended that the County Tourism Program to take responsibility for delivering the content for a countywide comprehensive calendar of events. This would be in conjunction with the Lake County Chamber of Commerce. Several disparate calendars exist today. There is currently software that has been developed in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, which should be supported as part of moving this initiative forward. The tourism program should work collaboratively with the Chamber to support increased content as well as increased traffic to the calendar.

Once a comprehensive calendar is available, all tourism stakeholders would be encouraged to utilize the content of this calendar. The goal would be to have over ninety percent of the stakeholders linked to the countywide calendar. This will dramatically increase the visibility of activities and events in the county and bring consistency to the promotion of events. The calendar will also prompt the visitor to click onto package information and drive package booking.

## Package Development

In our discussions with tourism stakeholders, it was apparent that there was a need to “create” the county experiences for potential visitors. There is a strong feeling that Lake County has some unique visitor experiences but the visitor needs to be guided in how to take advantage of the county attributes. With that in mind, we

recommend that the County Marketing Program develop packages for a multitude of experiences in the county. The main focus of the packages would center on the larger demand generators and how to create a broader experience that would cause a traveler to evaluate many multiple-day Lake County experiences.

An example of a package would be a multiple day “Lake Experience” that included permits/licenses, rental boats, skis etc, hotel stay, and maybe a restaurant for a very affordable price. This package would be promoted widely. It would be sent out to the database list and promoted through communication channels with one website or phone number to fulfill the package. This would create a multiple-day, high value experience for a visitor. (See following page for sample packages.)

The traveler would have the ability to pay for the package through the County Concierge. There would potentially be a small service fee added to support the concierge services needed for package fulfillment.

The County Concierge team would coordinate with all of the stakeholders involved so the guest could come to the County Concierge desk or get the fulfillment online. This gives the tourism community the opportunity to promote an experience that will show the many opportunities available in Lake County.

This program should be operational by January of 2012. The first year goal for packages sold would be 250. This could rise to over 2,000 packages per year over the next three years.

The second phase of this program would be to create a system for the lodging industry to book these packages through their websites. This could

also include the wine industry. **With all of these “channels” in place, it is possible to convert over 5,000 packages in a year.** A conservative direct spending estimate would be \$2.7 million of direct spending in the county through the package sales and additional spending from these visitors.

## Packages

The concept of creating dynamic packages that deliver a “Lake County Experience” with one click or one phone call, gives the County Tourism Organization the ability to proactively sell to visitors. For purposes of illustration, these are two draft examples of packages that could be promoted by the newly formed County Concierge.

### The Family Lake Experience

Two days of activities brought to you by Lake County Concierge. Visit one of our five Concierge locations and we will be your personal concierge for the weekend. You will have a 24-hour hotline you can call for anything while you are having fun in Lake County. We can deliver this entire weekend for under \$500.



This package includes:

- ❖ Hotel Rooms for two for one night at a participating Lake County Inn
- ❖ Two Lake County Commemorative Wine Glasses for your tasting experience
- ❖ Two “I reached new heights” on Lake County Wine T-shirts slung by wineries
- ❖ Guided trail through Lake County
- ❖ and a “Tour of the highest and proudest of Lake County”
- ❖ personalized “passport” from Lake County Concierge – visit six wineries of your choice during your tasting experience
- ❖ Two days of activities included
- ❖ Two days at a participating restaurant, including
- ❖ County Concierge
- ❖ commemorative guide to the Lake County Wine region

- ❖ Jet Ski Rental with training
- ❖ “Keep Lake Pristine” stickers for your boat
- ❖ “Keep Lake Pristine” whole family that say: Clear Lake is Pristine – I
- ❖ thirty
- ❖ That’s
- ❖ participating restaurants that celebrate kids eating
- ❖ free
- ❖ Morning Family Fun Fishing outing with Breakfast and a Lake County Fishing Guide
- ❖ Sunday Brunch at participating restaurants where kids can eat free

### The “Highest” Wine Experience

In Lake County, we pride ourselves on our height. Vineyard elevations are the highest in the North Coast wine region. Book your package with the Lake County Concierge and stop by our five locations or we will have everything ready for you at your hotel. When you finish this wine experience you can say “I reached new heights” on Lake County Wine, the highest and proudest wine region in Northern California!

You can “reach new heights” with us for \$600 ... and take home a case of Lake County Wine!

This package includes:

- ❖ Hotel Rooms for two for one night at a participating Lake County Inn
- ❖ Two Lake County Commemorative Wine Glasses for your tasting experience
- ❖ Two “I reached new heights” on Lake County Wine T-shirts slung by wineries
- ❖ Guided trail through Lake County
- ❖ and a “Tour of the highest and proudest of Lake County”
- ❖ personalized “passport” from Lake County Concierge – visit six wineries of your choice during your tasting experience
- ❖ Two days of activities included
- ❖ Two days at a participating restaurant, including
- ❖ County Concierge
- ❖ commemorative guide to the Lake County Wine region



## Social Media



In reviewing the current social media activities, it is our recommendation to utilize an outside contractor to support a social media strategy designed to drive activity and awareness of Lake County. This contractor would work closely with the County Concierge in creating a dynamic social media program. This is an area that requires on-going effort to “cut through the clutter” and build an audience. The county currently has 268 followers on Twitter and 166 fans on Facebook. Our goal is to see this number reach over 1,000 in the first year with a three year goal of cresting 10,000 “friends” in our Social Media Community. We would have exclusive offers for our “followers and friends”. This would be done through a strategy of increasing the relevance and interest in what we post. The key to a successful social media program is frequent engagement and generating interest through unique approaches and offers. Tactically speaking, this could consist of a very affordable agreement with a local social networking expert who could assist with consistent and interest-getting posts and also provide training and guidance to the concierge team to understand the techniques for growing activity in this space.

The ultimate goal in the social media space would be to create loyalty and the ability to do short-term promotions and drive activity. This would tie to the major events and special short-term offers.

## Communications and Public Relations

This is an area in which we hear and see significant opportunity to increase the exposure of Lake County. We recommend that the communications team have access to expertise in this area on an on-going basis. To be clear, we are not recommending retaining a firm to do any implementation in this area; rather, for the communications team to have access to expertise which would be familiar with Lake County and would provide guidance to improve effectiveness. This would give the communications team a resource to work with on specific ideas and messages. Tactically, this would be an hourly, not-to-exceed agreement and the time would be utilized only with specific requests from the communications team. An example of the type of input available would be to evaluate proposed stories in terms of potential media interest and to provide suggestions on the “angle” that would generate the most interest with the media.

Currently, PR resources are focused on event announcements. The goal would be to have the website be the comprehensive source for all Lake County events and the PR team would then be focused on newsworthy stories about Lake County.

The other key part of this plan is to create an active “PR roundtable,” a group that would meet for an hour each quarter and strategize on newsworthy stories and angles. The group would be comprised of, but not limited to:

1. Chamber of Commerce
2. Winemakers Association and Winegrape Commission
3. Stakeholder PR directors



4. City of Lakeport and Clearlake communications
5. Business Districts

As part of the planning for each fiscal year, there would be a communications plan with specific frequency goals and a strategy on how to support the major demand generators. We have mentioned earlier a specific Lake communication plan designed to proactively deliver a positive and informative message related to Clear Lake.

Effective PR and Communication effort can be measured in terms of Advertising equivalency. It will be important to create quantifiable goals in this area.

The target for the new program would be \$500,000 in advertising equivalency for the first year and a three year goal of over \$1 million. This goal would be created in conjunction with projected overall activity level.

### **Additional Online Opportunities**

The opportunities to drive additional online awareness should be explored as part of effective implementation.

These include:

1. Blogs
2. Posting YouTube Videos
3. Exploring other platforms beyond Facebook and Twitter.

## The Group Sales Concept



After discussions with tourism stakeholders, it is recommended that the County and tourism stakeholders create a new group sales operation. This is based on the feedback received as well as our understanding of the need to centralize resources in this area. It is recommended the following steps be taken in creating a successful group sales effort.

1. Create an inventory of venues in conjunction with stakeholders. In the first year of operation the group sales effort would be focused on a smaller subset of venues. The purpose would be to develop the sales process fully before reaching out to the entire county. There would be an inventory of all of the available venues in the county with the specifications, proposed pricing and any other details as a resource.
2. Determine goals for Group Sales that would be set in conjunction with key stakeholders in the following areas:
  - a. *Sales Activity*

There would be a minimum number of calls made each week as part of this effort. In the beginning these numbers would be set very aggressively. This could be as high as 125 calls per week.

b. *Lead Generation*

In conjunction with the stakeholders, there would be goals set for number of leads generated. A lead would be defined as a group that had expressed interest and had indicated which venues they might be interested in. The group sales manager would be trained in how to qualify a lead before it was sent to the appropriate stakeholders. The initial goal for lead generation would be five per month. This could grow over the next three years to 20 leads per month

c. *Conversion – Booked Room Nights*

There would be a goal for leads that converted to actual bookings. This creates a team approach to converting leads. The group sales manager would stay engaged with the leads and help in booking. For purpose of potential goal setting, it is estimated that an effective first year group sales effort could book two groups per week on average. It is also assumed that the average group would have 20 room nights associated with their meeting or activity. This would mean that the new group sales desk would generate **2500 room nights in its first year**. If a \$100 room rate is assumed for the groups that are booked that would equate to \$250,000 in new rooms revenue and approximately \$25,000 in direct TOT. This demonstrates that the program could be at cost recovery in a few years. When you calculate the economic impact of the meetings booked this could conservatively reach \$375,000 in new direct spending in the county in its first year.

3. Stakeholder Communication Plan

A communication plan with the stakeholders is critical and would include a monthly report summarizing all measurable results of the sales efforts. All of the activity would be recorded and there would be an overview of the successes and challenges. This report would also include the reasons for businesses or organizations choosing not to bring their group so everyone could give input and suggestions that would help drive future bookings. The tourism organization would eventually, in conjunction with the Advisory Board, create a sales committee to review the activity on a quarterly basis. Minutes and action items from the committee meetings would be forwarded to all stakeholders

4. Marketing

Through the online vehicles and our communications teams we would announce the new feature in Lake County. We would work with publications that are focused on the meetings industry and gain as much initial awareness as possible. The effective “launch” of this in the trade media will be very important. When the group sales effort is announced, we suggest an opening promotion that would include incentives for groups if they booked within a certain timeframe after the opening of the group sales desk. This could help to promote the effort and likely jumpstart group bookings.

5. Database

A database would be created from industry lists as well as current prospects of the stakeholders. This list would be developed prior to hiring the news sales leader and

would give them a starting point to begin the sales activity.

6. Incentive Plan Development

An incentive plan would be created to reward the sales leader for generating activity and booking business. This plan would create the opportunity to earn as high as 40 percent additional compensation in addition to the base contract.

7. Target Markets – Research

In discussions with tourism stakeholders, SAG gained insight on potential target markets in group sales. These included small corporate retreats, family reunions, incentive opportunities, book clubs, and other social clubs. There will be an initial focus on testing interest in these areas.

It is projected the cost to start this program will be approximately \$70,000. As noted elsewhere in this plan, areas within the current budget have been proposed that could be reallocated to create the resources to launch this initiative. There would also be potential partner funding from some of the venue operators as well as the opportunity to investigate a commission structure for business booked.

The group sales operation should be fully functional by April 2012. SAG has access to a database of potential sales contractors to support engaging a qualified dynamic sales leader for this position.

The first year’s room night goal for the new sales operation would be 1,000. This will increase to 5,000 rooms over the next three years.

## Lake Communications Plan

### *Let's stay on the offensive*

As was mentioned earlier, Clear Lake is a significant tourism asset. The lake has a natural eco-system that can be challenging from a marketing standpoint. The presence of algae can create an odor and the seasonal growth of weeds in the lake can inhibit its usability for recreation. This has proven to be difficult in promoting tourism, particularly since these challenges generally impact the lake in the summer, the traditionally high tourist season.

We have discussed with the Director of the County's Water Resources Department, Scott De Leon, specific actions that are underway to combat these natural challenges. The Water Resources Director and his staff have identified several initiatives in this area and are aggressively implementing several, while researching and testing other potential solutions.

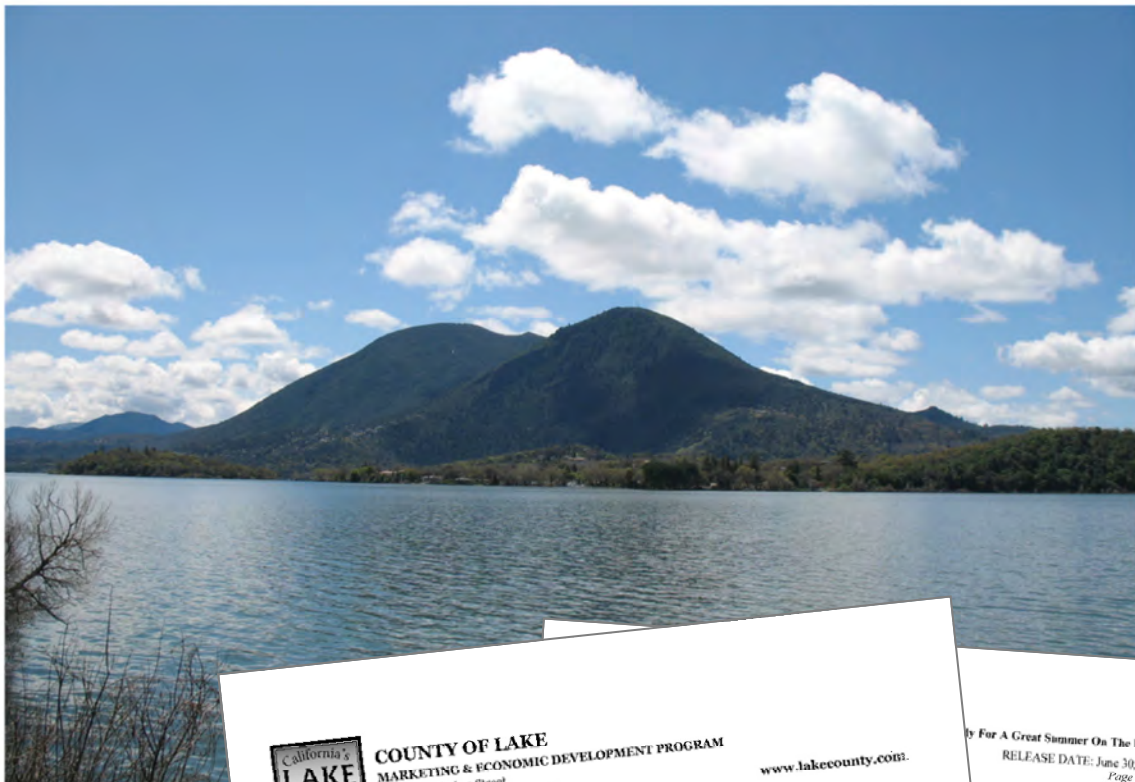
The opportunity exists to create a pro-active communications plan to educate the public and specific target audiences that the Lake is still a wonderful experience and dispel the perceptions of year-round challenges.

It is recommended a message be sent on a quarterly basis to key regional media, specific

travel trade publications and through all of the social media and online channels on the condition of the Lake, while highlighting activities where the Lake is a great experience. This is another example where leveraging the partnerships would be vital. There would be a distribution to key partners who would agree to forward this through their respective distribution channels.

The key to success of this initiative is the consistency of the outreach. There must be a commitment to a quarterly proactive message at a minimum. Examples of these messages would include the real statistics of when the Lake may have some type of odor and why the odor is part of a very natural process and part of the eco-system. Others might be why the Lake is a great place for particular activities. For example, why there are great fishing and bird watching opportunities and what makes the Lake a great place for this type of activity.

Another key message is the proactive steps the county continues to take to make sure the Lake is a great recreational experience. The County has invested \$1.3 million (FY2011-12) for Lake improvements in a tough economy, which is significant.



**COUNTY OF LAKE**  
MARKETING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
255 North Forbes Street  
Lakeport, California 95453-5406  
707-263-9580 FAX 707-263-1012

[www.lakecounty.com](http://www.lakecounty.com)

CONTACTS: Scott DeLeon, (707) 263-2244  
Jennifer Hammond, (707) 263-2580

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 30, 2011

**READY FOR A GREAT SUMMER ON THE LAKE?  
RECREATIONAL AREAS FREE OF AQUATIC WEEDS  
TO ENHANCE EXPERIENCE ON CLEAR LAKE**

**LAKE COUNTY, CA** – Boating, sailing, swimming, fishing, kayaking, jet skiing, wakeboarding, waterskiing – the list of fun activities on Clear Lake goes on and on. To make sure residents and visitors enjoy a great summer on Clear Lake, Lake County's Board of Supervisors recently took a bold step by allocating substantial resources to reduce the summertime growth of aquatic weeds.

Scott DeLeon, newly appointed Director of the Lake County Department of Public Works, also oversees the County Water Resources Division, and along with a new Director comes an aggressive new weed abatement plan for Clear Lake. "This summer we are taking a much more proactive approach to control aquatic weed growth on Clear Lake," DeLeon said. "We are targeting treatment in specific areas such as around public boat launches, resorts, and higher-density residential areas."

DeLeon explained the treatment areas will create a network of weed-free recreational areas that include Shoreline Lanes, Boating Lanes, and Water-Ski Lanes. The Shoreline Lanes are 50 feet wide and will run parallel to the shoreline. The Boating Lanes will be 50 feet wide and from 1,000 to 2,000 feet in length so that boaters may easily access the deeper waters of Clear Lake. The Water-Ski lanes will be 300 feet from shore and run parallel with the shoreline. The creation of these lanes will make Clear Lake more enjoyable for users.

With more than 68 square miles of surface area and 100 miles of shoreline, Clear Lake is the largest natural lake within the boundaries of California, and at an estimated two million years old, it also is one of the oldest lakes in North America. With its vast expanse of relatively shallow, warm water and numerous islands and natural bays, Clear Lake is a haven for visitors who enjoy all sorts of recreational activities.

-more-

Ready For A Great Summer On The Lake?  
RELEASE DATE: June 30, 2011  
Page 2 of 2

...sunlight easily reaches the shallow  
...it challenging for boat propellers,

...create specific recreational areas  
...that makes the Clear Lake

...to the county's economy," said  
...a top priority by unanimously  
...make the lake enjoyable for

...red abatement program,  
...since Clear Lake, and return

...coast, Clear Lake offers  
...distance for most  
...and the wonders of a  
...natural ecosystem.

...types of boats for rent  
...707) 263-2580 or

This was a recent press release designed to deliver a proactive message about the investment the county has made in the Lake.



## Keep the Lake Pristine – A New Approach

Another example of a communication opportunity that can be re-thought and turned positive is the County's Invasive Mussel Prevention Program that requires boaters to have their boats inspected before entering the lake. There should be a positive message or campaign around keeping the Lake pristine and making the "sticker" something to be proud of. One tactic application could be to partner with a local radio station and create some type of promotion with potential prizes for having a visible "Keep the Lake Pristine" sticker.

This communication strategy will take some research and collaboration, but will require no additional resources. We have discussed this

approach with the Lake County Water Resources Director. This will also support the new organizational recommendations and the need to evolve the current communications effectiveness.

The opportunity to implement a new approach to this needed communication entails all aspects of communication. It is recommended that all signage and materials pertaining to the need to prevent the spread of mussels be changed to reflect the new approach. Stakeholders expressed concern over the damage a negative or more authoritarian message can have on encouraging tourism.

These are examples of re-thinking our message.

First, the County Supervisors approved a significant expenditure for improving the weed condition and the communications team created a positive message.

### Enjoy Clear Lake

Lake County's Board of Supervisors recently took a bold step by allocating significant resources to make sure residents and visitors enjoy a great summer on Clear Lake.

With these resources, the County is actively working to minimize the nuisance of aquatic weeds by creating defined recreational areas on the lake to make boating, swimming, and other activities more enjoyable — while preserving fish habitat. As a lakeside property owner, you will see these improvements firsthand.

- **Shoreline Lanes** – 50-foot-wide lanes parallel to the shoreline, extending from the end of piers/docks.
- **Boating Lanes** – 50-foot-wide lanes perpendicular from the Shoreline Lanes out 1,000–2,000 feet for easy access to deeper waters, marked by standard green and red buoys.
- **Waterski Lanes** – lanes parallel to the shoreline at a distance of 300 feet from shore.

#### GOT QUESTIONS?

One of the ways to manage aquatic plants is with the use of eco-friendly herbicides. We want you to know in case you use lake water for irrigation or drinking water. For daily updates of weed spray operations, go to [www.nolakeweeds.com](http://www.nolakeweeds.com). If you have questions, give us a call at (707) 263-2344. We'd be happy to provide further information.

### Keep Clear Lake Mussel-Free

Since 2008, Lake County has been at the forefront of the effort to protect public water bodies from the spread of invasive quagga and zebra mussels, when it launched one of the first inspection-based prevention programs in the state.

The County's ongoing efforts to improve the program — and ultimately, protect our lakes — rely on your support. Recent improvements now require all resident boaters to display annual stickers; the original red-and-white sticker is no longer valid.

**Don't Move a Mussel!** Invasive mussels (and their microscopic larvae) can be spread unknowingly from one water body to another on boats and equipment. A few simple steps can prevent the spread... **CLEAN, DRAIN, and DRY** your boat and equipment every time you exit a water body. These mussels have devastating effects on lakes, boats and docks, water intake equipment, fisheries, and beaches... Please help keep Clear Lake and all Lake County water bodies mussel-free.

#### Be Proud – Show Your Sticker



Resident Visitor Expired

#### GOT QUESTIONS?

Find out how and where to get your stickers by visiting [www.nomussels.com](http://www.nomussels.com) or give us a call at (707) 263-2344. We would be happy to provide further information.

Ordinance 2336

Second, we want to create a positive message about keeping the Lake pristine by giving the boater a reason to be proud of having a sticker demonstrating his commitment. There have been discussions about redesigning the stickers and changing the signage to reflect the new approach.



## Budget Review – Current Allocations

We have presented overall funding recommendations in a previous section, but it warrants re-stating that the overall funding available for tourism marketing is inadequate when compared to other destinations. We believe that this can be improved over the next few years, which is a high priority.

The following are observations related to the 2010–2011 budget:

1. There was \$607,800 available for the overall Marketing Program. From that revenue the County had \$173,405 available for advertising and promotion. This equates to 29% of the total dollars available going to marketing. The goal for the TOT revenue should be 50% of these dollars expended directly for marketing. The other major use of these funds is for staffing the tourism organization. The combination of staff resources, advertising and promotion equates to 75% of the dollars available.

### *Non-Traditional Expenditure*

2. There is \$125,000 budgeted to reimburse the County Sheriff's budget for local law enforcement. This should be reviewed, as this is generally viewed as a general fund expense. Generally, TOT revenue within most counties is not used to fund typical general fund expenditures such as public safety. This could be detrimental to creating sustainable funding sources in the future. Stakeholders need to be confident that the

dollars raised from Transient Occupancy Tax will be completely dedicated to tourism marketing. It is recommended that these dollars are reallocated to tourism marketing in the future.

3. In the area of other professional agreements and special services, we would make the following observations and recommendations:
  - a. The contract with the local economic development service provider, Mt. Konocti Facilitation, is an excellent concept for supporting all Lake County businesses with special emphasis on those smaller business ventures that will benefit from research. We would recommend that there is a regular report on the activity and highlight success stories with current Lake County businesses.
  - b. We have reviewed the benefits of membership in the North Coast Tourism Council and recommend that there is a specific agreement related to lead generation and quantitative reporting. If this cannot be completed, we recommend evaluating whether to remain in the program.
  - c. We have discussed the contract with the Lake County Chamber of Commerce and made recommendations (see page 44). We

would recommend re-allocating the current resources as part of creating the funding necessary for the new group sales effort. There is a great opportunity to realign a valuable partnership with the Chamber.

We have made our recommendations in the Marketing area in a separate section. The overall review of the budget demonstrates an opportunity to evaluate how to increase the net dollars available for sales and marketing in the future. We outlined the major areas and recommended potential realignment of resources. The realignment is designed to maximize return and focus our efforts on key target markets.

## Marketing Activity Recommendations

	Current	<i>Recommended</i>
<b>Web Site / Online Marketing</b>	13,205	<b>25,000</b>

This will be the most important area for marketing outreach in the future. These additional resources will be for increasing social media activity and launching a data base driven program that will feature monthly promotions and offers. There will be resources to purchase specific lists as well as work with all of the stakeholders on a master shared database program. This will give the County the opportunity to enhance the software for database marketing measurement. The goal would be to have over 50,000 qualified names in the database over the next three years. This should produce a significant number of room nights. The other area that would be supported by the County Marketing Program is the county wide online calendar. This should become the official calendar for all tourism stakeholders and the content would be managed with increased resources. This shift will also create the opportunity to look at how we increase our visibility with mobile devices. This is a very recent quote from eMarketer on the rise in use of mobile devices:

*Nearly 25 million US mobile users will research travel information on their mobile devices before making a trip this year." And, close to 12 million will use mobile to actually pull the trigger and book their trips*

The development of appealing Lake County packages made available through an easy purchase process would increase the likelihood of visitors making the travel decision and purchasing via their mobile devices.

<b>Advertising – Print</b>	71,600	<b>20,000</b>
----------------------------	--------	---------------

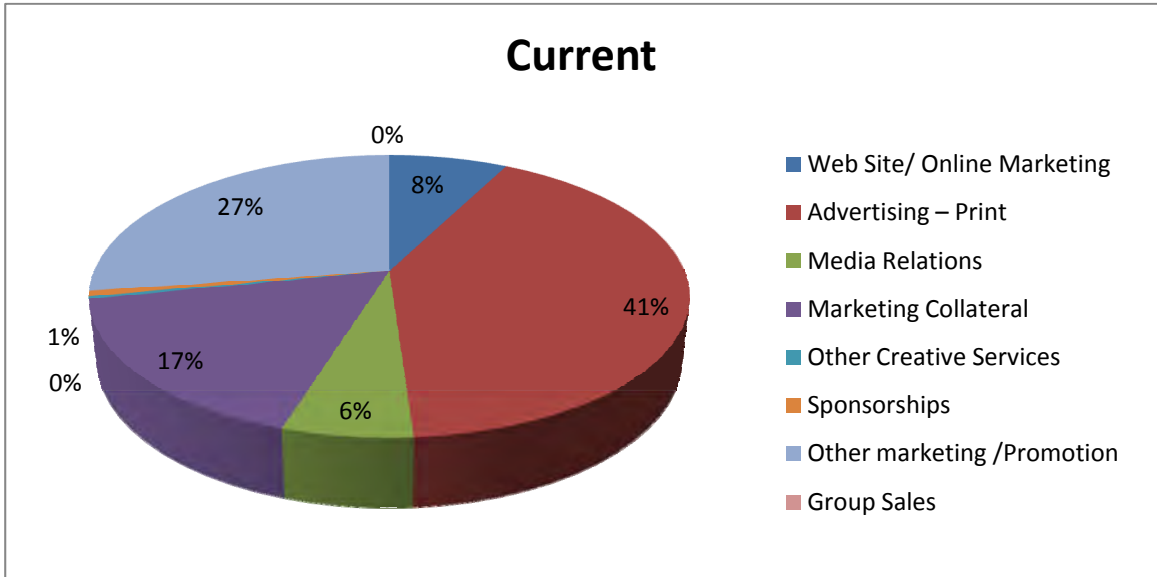
The proposed reduction in this area is designed to focus resources toward agreed-upon target markets. The online strategies as well as the direct sales efforts will be much more focused on a measurable return for the marketing efforts. We recommend the County continue to support cooperative advertising efforts where the target is consistent with the agreed-upon markets. This will also preserve resources that are now going to fulfill general information requests. We recommend that the fulfillment of visitor requests be done online unless specifically requested. The move towards online marketing will reduce the amount of postage being spent today in the visitor centers.

<b>Media Relations</b>	10,350	<b>25,000</b>
------------------------	--------	---------------

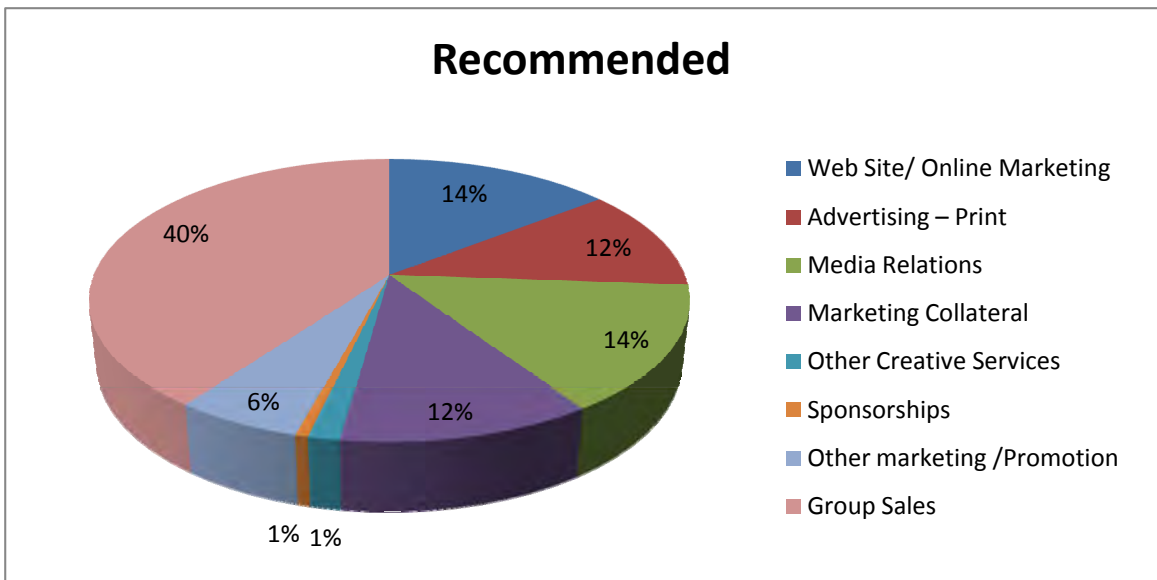
This is a vital area for the future of Lake County. The increase in resources in this area is designed to ensure the County has the level of support needed for an aggressive communication plan. This will enable the communications team to have support both in communications expertise and the ability to subscribe to reporting services. The communications plan will have very specific targets in advertising equivalency and activity level. This will also create the opportunity to utilize additional writers if there is a high volume of communication opportunities.

	Current	<i>Recommended</i>
<b>Marketing Collateral</b>	29,500	<i>20,000</i>
<p>The recommended reduction signifies a shift in how consumers want information delivered. The current printed Visitors Guide should be reviewed for its effectiveness and replaced over the next three years with an online program that delivers information more effectively. There will always be a need for supplemental material, but the costs and current form of the Visitors Guide needs to evolve. We will explore additional cost recovery through sponsorships and advertising. We recommend exploring the option of moving toward an online visitor guide and also exploring a “Lake County App” to effectively deliver up-to-date visitor information to the growing number of mobile users.</p>		
<b>Other Creative Services</b>	500	<i>2,500</i>
<p>The proposed increase in this area is to support the need to have creative support for online promotions. The quality and creativity of the online program will be important in growing the audience for the county and driving bookings.</p>		
<b>Sponsorships</b>	1,000	<i>1,000</i>
<p>The future planning for sponsorships needs to tie back to the overall agreed upon target markets. All marketing dollars should be allocated based on the “return” in terms of business bookings.</p>		
<b>Other Marketing /Promotion</b>	47,250	<i>10,000</i>
<p>The reallocation in this area is to focus the County’s resources on the most targeted strategies for driving room nights and overall tourism spending. This will be important in creating the new group sales initiative as well as focusing our marketing in the on-line and communication areas. This limits the short-term opportunity funds and creates a focused annual plan for the resources available.</p>		
<i><b>SUBTOTAL</b></i>	173,405	<i>103,500</i>
<b>Group Sales*</b>	0	<i>69,000</i>
<p>*There is more detail on the group sales initiative on page 34. This budget would include personnel costs as well as all expenses associated with supporting the sales effort.</p>		
<i><b>TOTAL</b></i>	173,405	<i>172,500</i>

## Marketing Activity Recommendations



This demonstrates the current emphasis on print advertising and a lower allocation for direct marketing.



This demonstrates the recommended shift in resources towards the direct sales efforts as well as increases in online initiatives and an aggressive communications plan.



## Chamber of Commerce Agreement

The opportunity exists to refine the current agreement and realign the opportunity for the Lake County Chamber of Commerce to be a catalyst in making the County a great place to do business. The Chamber has been a willing and supportive partner with the County Marketing Program for many years, due in large part to the vision and dedication of its CEO. The relationship between the Chamber and the County Marketing Program is vital. We recommend an evolution of the partnership that will help focus the Chamber's success by instituting performance measures to demonstrate the effectiveness of the agreement. We recommend an annual overall alignment of resources to create the highest return. The following are specific recommendations related to the current agreement with the Lake County Chamber of Commerce.

### Section 1A – Visitor Center

It is recommended the language be changed to reflect that the county will provide stronger support for the visitor center. This will ensure the continuity and support as all Visitor Centers evolve into a “concierge” style of customer service. The County will have the ability to support the Chamber's Visitor Center moving in this direction. The specifics of this would be that the County's Visitor Service Manager would become active in supporting the Chamber's Visitor Center activities. The contract would state the goal to operate in the same future manner as the County staffed Visitor Centers. There would also be monthly reporting requirements built into the contract.

### Section 1B – Support efforts to increase the TOT

It is recommended the Chamber submit a plan for how it will accomplish increasing the TOT in the County. This would become a supplement to the overall county marketing plan and reviewed by the Advisory Board of the Tourism Marketing Organization. There would be goals set and

measurement plans in place to determine success in this area. This process would ensure that the directions of these efforts were aligned with the overall annual strategy.

### Section D – Various Marketing and Economic Development Projects

#### 1. “Shop Stay and Play”

This program is currently part of the contract and thus should have specific goals set. These goals could include online activity or other measures of traffic that were created as a result of the campaign. This is an example of a campaign that should be reviewed and jointly marketed if it is determined to drive additional tourism activity.

#### 2. Assist in Media Outreach

The Chamber has been and should be a strategic communication partner with County Marketing. This is an area that should have goals. It is recommended the Chamber actively participate in the proposed PR roundtable.



### **Section E – Sportsmen’s Exposition**

It is recommended the decision to participate in this consumer show is factored into the overall annual marketing plan process. The determination would be made if this is a current priority given limited resources. The trends of travel buying are moving away from consumer shows in general.

### **Section F – California State Fair**

This is also an event that should be evaluated on an annual basis as part of the overall marketing plan process. We will review the results of the last State Fair and determine the “tourism value”. This is another example where buying trends are moving away from this type of activity.

### **Conclusion**

The partnership with the Lake County Chamber of Commerce is critically important to the overall success of tourism marketing. With the strong leadership already in place, it is apparent there is a great opportunity to realign joint priorities to achieve more impactful results. As we evolve the partnership with the Lake County Chamber of Commerce, new opportunities to collaborate include the promotion of the ease of doing business in Lake County and how we stimulate investment within the county.

## Industry Reporting – Stakeholder Communication Plan

SAG has worked with the County staff to develop a manageable and informative stakeholder communication plan. The key to success of a goal to increase stakeholder engagement is an effective communication plan. We propose the following as part of that plan.

### Quarterly Dashboard

The quarterly “dashboard” is designed to give tourism stakeholders a snapshot of the key results for the previous quarter and the year-to-date performance.

The “dashboard” will have the following indicators.

1. Lodging Occupancy and Average Rate
2. Visitor Statistics
3. Conversion Statistics – Room nights booked
  - a. Individual (packages and web bookings)
  - b. Group Room Nights
4. Wine Industry Data
  - a. Overall traffic
  - b. Tasting room volume
5. Public Relations/Communication Activity
  - a. Outreach activity
  - b. Key press activity
6. On-line Statistics and trends
  - a. Database activity
  - b. Social media Stats

The focus of this will be on bookings and quantitative results not on general information.

SAG has worked with the internal team on the resource allocation and process for delivering this information.

### Quarterly Visitor Survey

The goal for a quarterly visitor study is to inform the tourism industry on overall visitor trends. SAG worked with our research partners to look at a method for gathering visitor information that is manageable. We will work with the county tax collector to incorporate this into the TOT information that is currently gathered. Every business that reports TOT will get a quarterly report with these statistics that will help them on their overall planning and forecasting. It will also help us determine the overall impact of our marketing efforts.

This approach utilizes data from area lodging properties to populate an equation for estimating the number of overnight visitors to an area. Additionally, it provides the trend data for rates and occupancy that are both useful in strategic planning and for measuring the impact of marketing efforts.

These are the steps that need to be taken to produce this report:

### Step 1: Annual Inventory

Annually, conduct an inventory of available lodging units in the county to include bed and breakfasts, cabins, cottages, campgrounds, hotels/motels, resorts and vacation homes.

### Step 2: Data Collection – Quarterly

Quarterly, send questionnaires to all properties/bed tax collectors in the county asking for their average daily rate for the season, their average occupancy for the season, their average visitor party size for the season, and the average length of stay at their property for the quarter.

The questionnaire can be programmed onto easy-to-use online survey tools.

**SAMPLE FORM**

Confidential Lake County, CA Product Definition Study  
[SEASON, YEAR]

Property: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please indicate the total number of units/rooms you have in Lake County in each of the following categories. (please only include properties within Lake County)

Bed and Breakfasts	_____ units
Cabins and Cottages	_____ units
Campgrounds	_____ units
Hotels/Motels	_____ units
Resorts	_____ units
Vacation Homes	_____ units

2. Please enter your average daily rate in Lake County for [SEASON/YEAR]. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please enter your average occupancy in Lake County for [SEASON/YEAR]. \_\_\_\_\_ %

4. Please enter the average length of stay for [SEASON/YEAR] guests. \_\_\_\_\_ Nights

5. Please enter the average number of persons per party for [SEASON/YEAR]. \_\_\_\_\_ People

### Step 3: Data Processing

Take data from all the returned questionnaires and calculate an average for each measure (rate, occupancy, length of stay, party size) each season (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer).

#### *Step 4: Calculate Number of Visitors*

##### Components:

- Available UNITS (inventory)
- OCCUPANCY (the average of all occupancy numbers for the period)
- Available ROOM NIGHTS (number of calendar nights in a season)
- Average LENGTH OF STAY (the average of all length of stay numbers for the period)
- Average PARTY SIZE (the average of all party size numbers for the period)

##### Formula:

$$(((Units \times Occupancy) \times (Room \text{ Nights})) \div (Length \text{ of Stay}) \times (Party \text{ Size}))) = Overnight \text{ Visitors}$$

The statistics on number of overnight visitors will be distributed to the lodging industry and other tourism stakeholders.

#### **Conclusion**

The visitor survey will create the opportunity to evaluate trends as well as demonstrate improved results. This will help inform the community of the value of tourism.

## Lake County Film Industry support

SAG has reviewed the current practices related to providing a useful resource for the film industry. The film industry can provide economic stimulus if film production companies decide to shoot a portion or all of a film in Lake County. It is our recommendation that the Tourism Program remain a “resource” for the industry when they consider Lake County.

The key resource for the film industry is a photo library specifically designed to help location scouts and others find opportunities in Lake County. We contacted some of our colleagues in the film industry and were advised that we could contract with a location photographer and build Lake County’s resource for a reasonable budget. We recommend this in the next fiscal year.



Shooting in Lake County.



Sherman's Way producers: (l to r) Nance, Saavedra and Shulman. in Lake County.

## Planning – Community Development

### *The effort to evolve the ease of doing business in Lake County*

SAG met with the Director of the County’s Community Development Department, Richard Coel, to discuss the opportunity to proactively market the effectiveness of the County’s support of potential investors as a way to help stabilize, and ultimately, grow the local economy. We agreed that County staff needs to operate in a more “consultative” manner that is designed to support all sizes and types of new business opportunities. We also discussed the possibility of “pre-entitlements” and extending current legal non-conforming zoning status for property owners having challenges securing new commercial tenants.

It is suggested that there is a “single point of contact” approach for supporting a business through the County permit/entitlement processes. A new business that approaches the department would be assigned an overall liaison for all local permitting activities. This would be an experienced planner, familiar with local issues and various permitting requirements, who can work closely with the business owner while also working with various local agencies to minimize delays and identify solutions to issues that may arise during the permit process. One of the goals of this approach is to consistently seek ways to improve opportunities for the new business to successfully complete the permit process, while offering suggestions that could avoid extra time and expense. In this way, Lake County can help increase the likelihood of a successful opening. This will evolve the staff’s responsibility to include consulting with the potential business owner as to how to most effectively work through all key areas of being “permitted” to open. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. Pre-Application Development Orientation
2. Application Start-up Site Visit and/or Meeting
3. Creating a Master Timeline and regularly evaluating application progress
4. Working with the Building Division to identify potential building code and ADA compliance challenges and potential solutions as early as possible
5. Working with the local Fire Districts
6. Coordinating with the Health Department and Special Districts

The County marketing and economic development team will work with the planning staff to create a marketing plan for driving awareness of this new approach. The County will make a commitment to positive results and a supportive process for those who are deciding whether to invest in Lake County.

Another feature of this new program is the commitment to the business owner once all of the information has been submitted. There will be a specific commitment in terms of turnaround time to review and approach the overall project. This timeline will be jointly monitored by the department’s project liaison and the director.

The goal is to have this new approach approved and functional by January 2012.



### Pre-entitlements

This is a concept of determining potential uses for major development opportunities in the County and proactively entitling those properties for specific uses. The primary focus would be to support commercial and resort development. This could save a developer significant time and money and therefore, make a project more feasible and a site more attractive for development.

This is a concept that could also be marketed to the development community so they were aware of the new opportunities from these actions. This would also indicate to the investment community that the County will expedite their entitlement needs. This is not designed to limit the potential use for a site, but rather, to send a clear message to the development community of the County's intention to provide support.

County staff would develop a list of sites targeted for economic development. This list would be based on various issues, including zoning and building codes, access, and infrastructure availability. County staff involved would include representatives from Planning, Administration, Special Districts, Health and Public Works Departments. County staff and the District Supervisor would meet with owners of the targeted sites to determine a property's development potential. Planning staff would then complete a County-initiated entitlement process. Once an entitlement is granted by the Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors, the County could actively market those sites as shovel ready.

### Permit Approval Extension

The other initiative we discussed was to formally communicate that the County is extending the length of time for properties to vest their approved entitlements, which typically expire 2-years after approval if the project is not started. Extending this by an additional two years will give property owners some relief during this challenging economy. There is a great opportunity in the Planning area to generate excitement about a new approach to support Lake County investors; there also is a great opportunity to outwardly market a new approach to welcoming investment in Lake County. The current leadership in the Community Development Department is very motivated to move this overall concept forward. This is an excellent starting point. We believe that this new "consultative approach" can be implemented with a marketing and communication plan by June of 2012.

## Timeline

SAG, in conjunction with the Lake County staff and with input from tourism stakeholders, has created a timeline for completion of the proposed initiatives. This timeline is aggressive but achievable with a dedicated tourism community and advisory Board and with a focused tourism organization internal team.

### Organizational

#### Governance

1. Formation of Advisory Board with officers \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012
2. Create Advisory Board Communication Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 1/31/2012 – 5/1/2012
3. Development of Advisory Board Responsibilities and annual approval process \_\_ 1/1/2012 – 4/2/2012
4. Preparation of Draft Quantitative Goals, Gain Advisory Board Approval \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012 – 5/1/2012
5. Preparation of Annual Budget for Advisory Board Review \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012 – 5/1/2012
6. Presentation of Draft Marketing Plan for 2012/2013 \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012 – 4/2/2012

#### Management

1. Development of Job Descriptions for Communications and Chief Concierge \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012
2. Solidify Executive Director Title \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012
3. Create Individual Goals \_\_\_\_\_ 1/31/2012

#### Funding Strategies

1. Solidify Legal Issues with County Counsel \_\_\_\_\_ 1/31/2012 – 8/1 2012
2. Solidify Advocacy Plan with Advisory Board \_\_\_\_\_ 5/1/2012 – 11/1/2012
3. Advocacy Plan implementation \_\_\_\_\_ 11/1/2012 – 7/31/2013
4. TOT dedication resolution to County Supervisors \_\_\_\_\_ 5/1/2012 – 8/1/2012
5. Create Clearlake and Lakeport advocacy plan with advisory board \_\_\_\_\_ 8/1/2012 – 4/3/2013
6. Transactional Revenue Review and Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 6/1/2012 – 8/30/2012
7. Develop plan for Tourism Business Improvement District \_\_\_\_\_ 1/31/2013 – 6/1/2013
8. Licenses Fee Review and Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 7/1/2013
9. Launch TBID campaign \_\_\_\_\_ 6/1/2013 – 12/1/2013
10. TBID to County Supervisors \_\_\_\_\_ 12/1/2013
11. TBID Election \_\_\_\_\_ 12/1/2013 – 1/29/2014

### *Development Opportunities*

1. Venue Inventory \_\_\_\_\_ 3/1/2011
2. Develop Transportation Alternatives – Wine Packaging \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012 – 3/1/2012
3. Review Relationship with Fairgrounds \_\_\_\_\_ 4/2/2012 – 6/1/2012
4. Finalize Lodging Development Opportunities/Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 8/1/2012 – 10/1/2012
5. Conduct Lodging Development Tour – Virtual/In Person \_\_\_\_\_ 10/1/2012
6. Create Restaurant Development Opportunity Piece \_\_\_\_\_ 11/1/2013 – 12/1/2013
7. Conduct first Virtual Restaurant Tour \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2014
8. Evaluate Lake Attraction Options \_\_\_\_\_ 8/1/2012 – 3/2/2013

### *Workforce Development – Front Line training*

1. Investigate Front Line Training Program \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012 – 5/1/2012
2. Secure Front Line training Partners \_\_\_\_\_ 5/1/2012 – 8/1/2012
3. Program Development \_\_\_\_\_ 8/1/2012 – 1/31/2013
4. Program Launch \_\_\_\_\_ 3/3/2013

### *Marketing Initiatives*

1. Social Media Program \_\_\_\_\_ 1/31/2012 – 4/2/2012
2. Package Development \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012 – 5/1/2012
3. Database Program Launch – First Mailing \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012 – 4/2/2012
4. Website Development – SEO \_\_\_\_\_ 5/1/2012 – 8/1/2012
5. Countywide Calendar Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 8/31/2012 – 10/31/2012

### *Group Sales Initiative*

1. Finalize Goals with Advisory Board \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2011 – 3/1/2011
2. Venue Inventory \_\_\_\_\_ 3/1/2011
3. Create Final Job Description and Independent Contract Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 12/1/2011
4. Develop Independent Contactor Plan – Review with County Counsel \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012
5. Incentive Plan Development \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012 – 1/31/2012
6. Recruitment of Sales Leader \_\_\_\_\_ 1/31/2013 – 4/2/2012
7. Creation of Preliminary Goals \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012 – 4/2/2012
8. Software - Database Implementation \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012 – 6/1/2012
9. Hiring Sales Leader \_\_\_\_\_ 4/2/2012
10. Development of Communication Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 6/1/2012 – 7/1/2012

11. Announcement of the Group Sales Operation \_\_\_\_\_ 6/1/2012 – 7/1/2012

#### *Lake Communication Plan / Public Relations*

1. Implement PR Roundtable \_\_\_\_\_ 1/31/2012 – 6/1/2012
2. Development of Key Messages \_\_\_\_\_ 2/1/2011 – 4/1/2012
3. Determine Annual Frequency \_\_\_\_\_ 3/1/2012 – 4/2/2012
4. Create Tactical PR Annual Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/12 – 4/2/2012
5. Engage Communications Expert \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012 – 3/1/2012

#### *Budget Review & Marketing Activity Realignment*

1. Update by Economic Development firms on small business support \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012 – 1/31/2012
2. North Coast Tourism Council Review \_\_\_\_\_ 12/1/2011 – 1/1/2012
3. Update Chamber of Commerce Agreement \_\_\_\_\_ 12/1/2011 – 1/31/2012
4. Complete the reallocation of budget dollars \_\_\_\_\_ 12/1/2011 – 3/1/2011

#### *Stakeholder Communication Plan*

1. Determine Specific Visitor Survey Process \_\_\_\_\_ 5/1/2012 – 8/1/2012
2. First Quarterly Dashboard \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012 – 5/1/2012
3. Send First Visitor Survey \_\_\_\_\_ 8/1/2012 – 8/31/2012
4. Full implementation of Stakeholder Communication Plan \_\_\_\_\_ 5/1/2012 – 11/1/2012
5. Complete First Visitor Impact Report \_\_\_\_\_ 12/1/2012 – 1/1/2013

#### *Planning – Community Development*

1. Extend legal non-conforming expiration deadline \_\_\_\_\_ 1/31/2012
2. Institute the “project liaison” consultative approach to support new businesses \_\_\_\_\_ 3/2/2012
3. Implementation of Zoning entitlement extensions \_\_\_\_\_ 1/1/2012
4. Create communication strategy with Marketing organization \_\_\_\_\_ 5/1/2012 – 7/1/2012
5. Create a site list of properties to be evaluated for County entitlement \_\_\_\_\_ 8/1/2012 - 1/1/2013

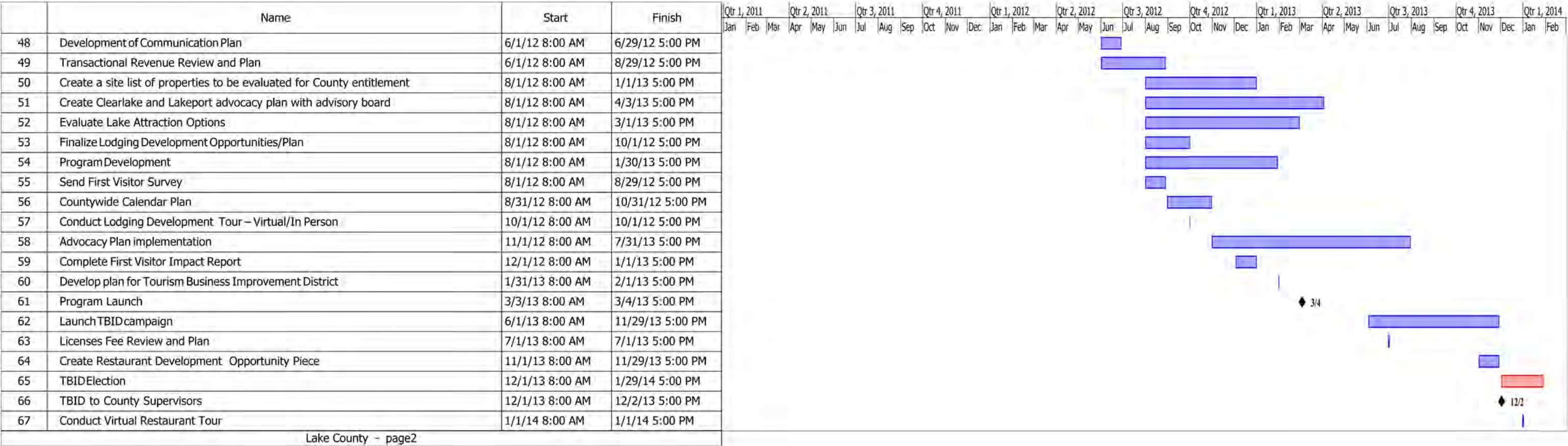
*Film Commission*

1. Contract Photographer to shoot locations for online resource \_\_\_\_\_ 6/1/2012 – 8/1/2012



	Name	Start	Finish																																																
				Qtr 1, 2011	Qtr 2, 2011	Qtr 3, 2011	Qtr 4, 2011	Qtr 1, 2012	Qtr 2, 2012	Qtr 3, 2012	Qtr 4, 2012	Qtr 1, 2013	Qtr 2, 2013	Qtr 3, 2013	Qtr 4, 2013	Qtr 1, 2014																																			
				Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb										
1	Finalize Goals with Advisory Board	1/1/11 8:00 AM	3/1/11 5:00 PM																																																
2	Development of Key Messages	2/3/11 8:00 AM	4/3/12 5:00 PM																																																
3	Venue Inventory	3/1/11 8:00 AM	3/1/11 5:00 PM																																																
4	Complete the reallocation of budget dollars	12/1/11 8:00 AM	2/29/12 5:00 PM																																																
5	Create Final Job Description and Independent Contract Plan	12/1/11 8:00 AM	12/2/11 5:00 PM																																																
6	Institute the “project liaison” consultative approach to support new businesses	3/3/12 9:00 AM	3/5/12 5:00 PM																																																
7	North Coast Tourism Council Review	12/1/11 8:00 AM	12/30/11 5:00 PM																																																
8	Update Chamber of Commerce Agreement	12/1/11 8:00 AM	1/31/12 5:00 PM																																																
9	Create Tactical PR Annual Plan	1/1/12 8:00 AM	4/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
10	Develop Independent Contactor Plan – Review with County Counsel	1/1/12 8:00 AM	1/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
11	Develop Transportation Alternatives – Wine Packaging	1/1/12 8:00 AM	5/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
12	Development of Advisory Board Responsibilities and annual approval process	1/1/12 8:00 AM	4/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
13	Development of Job Descriptions for Communications and Chief Concierge	1/1/12 8:00 AM	1/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
14	Engage Communications Expert	1/1/12 8:00 AM	2/29/12 5:00 PM																																																
15	Formation of Advisory Board with officers	1/1/12 8:00 AM	1/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
16	Incentive Plan Development	1/1/12 8:00 AM	1/31/12 5:00 PM																																																
17	Investigate Front Line Training Program	1/1/12 8:00 AM	5/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
18	Solidify Executive Director Title	1/1/12 8:00 AM	1/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
19	Update by Economic Development firms on small business support	1/1/12 8:00 AM	1/31/12 5:00 PM																																																
20	Implementation of Zoning extensions	1/1/12 8:00 AM	1/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
21	Create Advisory Board Communication Plan	1/31/12 8:00 AM	5/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
22	Create Individual Goals	1/31/12 8:00 AM	1/31/12 5:00 PM																																																
23	Implement PR Roundtable	1/31/12 8:00 AM	5/30/12 5:00 PM																																																
24	Extend legal non-conforming expiration deadline	1/31/12 8:00 AM	1/31/12 5:00 PM																																																
25	Recruitment of Sales Leader	1/31/12 8:00 AM	1/31/12 8:00 AM																																																
26	Social Media Program	1/31/12 8:00 AM	1/31/12 8:00 AM																																																
27	Solidify Legal Issues with County Counsel	1/31/12 8:00 AM	8/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
28	Creation of Preliminary Goals	3/2/12 8:00 AM	4/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
29	Database Program Launch – First Mailing	3/2/12 8:00 AM	4/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
30	Determine Annual Frequency	3/2/12 8:00 AM	4/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
31	First Quarterly Dashboard	3/2/12 8:00 AM	5/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
32	Package Development	3/2/12 8:00 AM	5/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
33	Preparation of Annual Budget for Advisory Board Review	3/2/12 8:00 AM	5/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
34	Preparation of Draft Quantitative Goals, Gain Advisory Board Approval	3/2/12 8:00 AM	5/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
35	Presentation of Draft Marketing Plan for 2012/2013	3/2/12 8:00 AM	4/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
36	Software - Database Implementation	3/2/12 8:00 AM	5/30/12 5:00 PM																																																
37	Hiring Sales Leader	4/2/12 8:00 AM	4/2/12 5:00 PM																																																
38	Review Relationship with Fairgrounds	4/2/12 8:00 AM	5/30/12 5:00 PM																																																
39	Create communication strategy with Marketing organization	5/1/12 8:00 AM	6/29/12 5:00 PM																																																
40	Determine Specific Visitor Survey Process	5/1/12 8:00 AM	8/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
41	Full implementation of Stakeholder Communication Plan	5/1/12 8:00 AM	10/31/12 5:00 PM																																																
42	Secure Front Line training Partners	5/1/12 8:00 AM	8/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
43	Solidify Advocacy Plan with Advisory Board	5/1/12 8:00 AM	10/31/12 5:00 PM																																																
44	TOT dedication resolution to County Supervisors	5/1/12 8:00 AM	8/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
45	Website Development – SEO	5/1/12 8:00 AM	8/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
46	Announcement of the Group Sales Operation.	6/1/12 8:00 AM	6/29/12 5:00 PM																																																
47	Contract Photographer to shoot locations for online resource	6/1/12 8:00 AM	8/1/12 5:00 PM																																																
Lake County – page1																																																			





## Conclusion

### *This is a great time to seize the moment!*

The opportunity to work with a broad base of tourism industry leaders and listen to their thoughts as well as understand their interest in the future of Lake County has been the catalyst to our recommendations. In more than 100 conversations and meetings with stakeholders and staff, it is clear to us that this is a great “moment” to move Lake County tourism forward.

We have brought forward key concepts in the following areas:

#### **1. Governance and Industry Involvement**

- a. Lake County is fortunate to have passionate leaders with great insight in its tourism community. There needs to be a permanent structural shift to benefit from their experience and involvement. This involvement will lead to great input in future marketing decisions. It will also lead to an organized industry that will be successful in strengthening the tourism marketing effectiveness by advocating for dedicated and increased funding.

#### **2. Strengthening Internal Leadership**

- a. We heard clearly the strong support for the current internal leadership and the interest in supporting them to drive more focus and tangible results in the future. This is also a significant structural shift. The Tourism Marketing Organization will be focused on aggressive business booking as opposed to a passive exposure model. The development of a successful group sales effort will be the cornerstone of this new direction.

#### **3. Focus Marketing Resources – Drive Business**

- a. We listened to stakeholders talk about new directions in driving business to Lake County. Many industry leaders believe that we need to guide future visitors in understanding the great attributes of Lake County. This is another quantum shift in how the County approaches the leisure traveler in future. We have recommended a new direct marketing approach that utilizes the most current and effective channels to reach our targeted consumer. The new group sales opportunity will also drive new business to Lake County.

#### **4. Make Lake County an Even Better Place to Invest**

- a. In our discussions with current and potential future developers we learned that there needed to be an aggressive approach to making Lake County a place where investors wanted to “invest”. We have made recommendations and are continuing to work with potential investors on how to be creative and provide world-class support in ensuring their success in Lake County.

SAG has presented more than 60 specific recommendations and actions to be implemented over the next three years. This may seem like a daunting task. We are confident there are key strengths and strong leadership in place today that can accomplish this plan and positively change the face of tourism for years to come.

## *The bottom line*

We have outlined recommendation that will translate into over 15,000 room nights annually.

The partners of Strategic Advisory Group are committed to staying engaged and supportive as this plan is implemented.

We want to personally thank Kelly Cox and Debra Sommerfield, who both have embraced the need to innovate and challenge the status quo.

**Strategic Advisory Group would also like to thank the following stakeholders who have provided invaluable insight that has driven these recommendations:**

### *Events and Attractions*

David Rose  
Robinson Rancheria Resort & Casino

Jerry McQueen  
Rotary Club of Lakeport, Konocti Challenge

Mary Ann McQueen  
Rotary Club of Lakeport, Konocti Challenge

Anne Garner  
Eleven Roses Ranch

Jeff Mann Sr.  
Oasis Motocross

Wally Fuller  
Soper-Reese Community Theatre

JoAnn Schwartz  
Twin Pine Casino

Gary Trippeer  
Entrepreneur

Nancy Brier  
Entrepreneur

Richard Persons  
Lake County Fair

Wilda Shock  
Lake County Wine Alliance

Linda Lake  
Museum Curator

Marilyn Holdenried  
Kelseyville Pear Festival, Lake County Quilt Trail

Barbara McIntyre  
Taylor Observatory

Flipper  
Rockin "M" Farms

Holly Harris  
AirKayaks.com

Karen Turcotte  
EcoArts of Lake County

Linda Kelly  
The Gourd Gallery

Lisa Fricker  
Artist

Marilyn Waits  
Heron Festival, Redbud Audubon Society

Renee Geare  
Artist

Sherry Harris  
Diego's Gallery

Susan Laymon  
Lakeside Arts/Harbor Village Artists

Sherry Treppa  
Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake/Running Creek  
Casino

***Restaurants/Caterers***

Marie Beery  
Saw Shop Gallery Bistro

Julie Hoskins  
Chic Le Chef and Chic Le Fleur

***Business Community***

Melissa Fulton  
Lake County Chamber of Commerce

Ted Herrera  
The LAVA Center

Trena Pauly  
Kelseyville Business Association, Polestar Computers

Barbara Flynn  
Brick Oven Pizza

Claude Brown  
Westgate Petroleum

Bill Stone  
Clearlake Oaks Business Association, A&B Collision

John Lindstrom  
Rob Roy Golf Club

Ken Porter  
Kimco

Mickey Burke  
Big Valley Rancheria

Carol Cole-Lewis  
Thrive! Lake County

Carol Hays  
Lakeport Main Street Association

Cathy Thorburn-Wilson  
Small Business Development Center

Debbie Clarke  
Clarke's Collectibles, North Shore Business Assoc.

Richard Hoyt  
RH Photo

Ricia Araiza  
RAML Design

***Lodging***

Marlana Gould  
Tallman Hotel

Sandra West  
Edgewater Resort

Kyle Miller  
Ferndale Resort/Watercolors Restaurant

Tony Barthel  
Featherbed Railroad B&B

Peggy Barthel  
Featherbed Railroad B&B

Lynne Butcher  
Tallman Hotel

Greg Bennett  
Konocti Harbor Resort and Spa

Larry Mazzola  
Plumbers Local 38  
Konocti Harbor Resort and Spa

Dan Nelson  
Hoberg's

Maryann Schmid  
The Lodge at Blue Lakes

Barbara Johnson  
Casa de Milagros

Mary Jane Fagalde  
Acorn Development/Hoberg's Resort

Samir Tuma  
Clear Lake Cottages & Marina

T O'Rourke  
Harbin Hot Springs

Tracy Anderson  
Robinson Rancheria Resort & Casino

### *Wine Industry*

Peter Molnar  
Obsidian Ridge/Lake County Winegrape Commission

Monica Rosenthal  
Lake County Winery Association (LCWA)/Grape Grower

Clay Shannon  
Vigilance Winery/Shannon Ridge Winery/LCWA

Gregory Graham  
Gregory Graham Winery

Shannon Gunier  
Lake County Winegrape Commission

Jim Fetzer  
Ceàgo Vinegarden

Dennis Krentz  
Big Valley Sauvignon Blanc

### *County Staff*

Kelly Cox  
County Administrative Officer

Debra Sommerfield  
Deputy Administrative Officer – Economic Dev.

Matt Perry  
Chief Deputy Administrative Officer

Richard Coel  
Director, Community Development

Scott De Leon  
Director, Water Resources

Anita Grant  
County Counsel

Kathy Ferguson  
Director, Human Resources

Jennifer Hammond  
Senior Administrative Analyst

Linda Armstrong  
Visitor Information Center Manager

Lore Schneider  
Administrative Office



