

▶ 2003 KRV Community Inspired Marketing Plan Executive Summary ◀

In February of 2002 a diverse group of committed Kern River Valley residents organized by the Kern River Valley Revitalization, group (KRVR), contracted with an innovative planning team to prepare a Marketing Plan. The consultants, Bob Garrison of Nature Tourism Planning, and Diane Strachan of Inside-Outside Associates, joined with the KRVR committee to become the Tourism Marketing Steering Committee. Out of this committee evolved a unique approach to rural tourism marketing and planning for the KRV; **The Community Inspired Marketing Plan Project.** Funding for the project came from a \$25,000 USDA Forest Service grant awarded to the KRVR.

The catalyst for the marketing plan was to create and emphasize Giant Sequoia National Monument gateway marketing strategies, shoulder season strategies, and visitor satisfaction and retention. In addition, the Committee wanted to provide stewardship for the very resources that both attract and are threatened by tourists.

The resulting plan does not just represent a prioritized set of focused actions put together by a select few. This 10-month research and planning process set out to involve and educate hundreds of people. It set out to strengthen, re-orient, and train residents, community leaders, and small business owners to a way of marketing that is cost effective, sustaining and inspiring! The planning process set out to reveal to the community its own unique marketing position and source for long term enthusiasm and success. It has created a path for that enthusiasm and the resources to follow, and if followed, will keep that enthusiasm alive and provide constant positive results and feedback. **Was it successful so far?** Perhaps one resident's comment after one of the many community meetings says it best;

*"I learned that my input and experience is appreciated!
This [Tourism Town Hall] meeting allowed me to
realize I have a lot to offer – this Valley has a great future."
Rita Lawn*

In a desire to not "reinvent the wheel", but to build upon it, all marketing planning took into consideration the nine guiding principals developed in June 2000 by members of the community led by a team from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona's College of Environmental Design. They co-developed; **"A Vision for the KRV: Principles for Economic and Ecological Sustainability."**

Through a series of seven Tourism Town Hall community meetings, open to all and attended by approximately 200 people, prioritized goals and strategies were created.

Community outreach for this project through the media was essential and extensive. Local media was very supportive and effective in its outreach. Though 200 participated in meetings, through the media, as intended, many more were educated and informed.

The four goals driving this plan are; to establish and promote the KRV as a year round destination; to establish KRV as the premiere southern gateway to the Giant Sequoias; to preserve and promote the cultural and natural heritage of KRV; and to support and enhance the infrastructure development of the KRV for long-term sustainable tourism growth.

To accomplish the stated goals, extensive research went into identifying the primary tourism attributes of the KRV. Current and potential visitors of the Kern River Valley have been studied

and targeted as **three separate geographic niche markets; day-trippers, weekenders, and vacationers**. National and regional travel trends, motivators and constraints, and the target market's values and needs were taken into account when developing the strategies and tactics supporting the goals. Each National trend has a KRV "spin" described.

In community brainstorming sessions, visitor profiles were developed along with training the participants in the importance of understanding and addressing visitor values and needs in marketing. The planning facilitators took special care in training participating small business owners to utilize the national and regional tourism research found within this plan to market their own businesses. Branding and recommended key messages have been designed.

A valuable and custom designed "Marketing Tactic Tool Box" has been created for the KRV to maximize its limited marketing budget. It could also be named KRV's own guide to marketing! Prioritized tactics such as internet marketing, media outreach, signage, visitor retention, active word of mouth, paid advertising, promotional events and trade shows, and printed materials are all outlined in the Tool Box section. Each tactic comes with a set of objectives, insightful descriptions, tips and a budget range.

To implement the plan, a new KRV tourism management organizational structure has been developed. An organizational chart is included that emphasizes hiring a "coordinator". This position pulls together and promotes existing marketing strategies, initiates new actions and communications, and is careful not to duplicate existing tourism marketing efforts. To jump-start the program's results, the plan calls for hiring a part time media outreach consultant and website designer / marketer in addition to the coordinator.

The challenge of creating an innovative tourism marketing plan has been accomplished. The dedicated Tourism Marketing Steering Committee must now begin gathering more support for funding and implementing the plan. The plan's bold goals, creative and cost-effective strategies, and lenient timelines are all feasible and attainable. Imbedded into the plan and its processes are many opportunities for "learning as we go" and reminders to remain flexible. Remember; **"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few."** Suzuki Roshi. And the core of our marketing? Creating possibilities for the KRV!

For easy review of the key actions of the plan, go straight to the section entitled; "Here's what we are going to do! Marketing Goals, Strategies, Tasks, and Timelines Matrix Summary".

The successful implementation of this plan is vital to the preservation of the natural and historical heritage of the KRV and the economic health of our communities, individuals, and businesses.

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- A.3. Kern River Valley Primary Tourism Attributes – Recreational
- B. Preliminary 2000 Census Data for the KRV
- C. Outdoor Recreation Trends
- D. Nature Based Tourism Trends
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- F. Town Hall Meeting Outcomes & “Ode to Planning” Ron Bolyard
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- H. Key Messages (5 total – full color)
- I.1. Preliminary Funding Options/Grant Ideas List
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Forms Designed for KRV Internal Marketing Communications

- __Monthly Visitor/ Customer Tracking Sheet
- __Special Events Fact Sheet for Calendars and Media Exposure

▶▶ What's In It For Me? ◀◀

Dear Readers of this Plan,

Supporting this plan's initiatives will make the Kern Valley a better place to live and work. Tourism is the “economic engine” of our Valley. Tourism dollars create jobs, sustain families, and enable local merchants to be in business -- from auto repair to groceries. Additionally, Valley services such as schools and medical care facilities are supported, enhanced, and made more available.

This plan is designed to increase Valley tourism and its resultant economic benefits while not negatively impacting Valley life, infrastructure and facilities.

By you acting upon and supporting this Plan's initiatives, your family, your organization, and your business can benefit! Please read the Plan. Help yourself and our Valley to strengthen the local economy and enhance quality of life values. Let us know what you think.

Thank You.

*Allan Jaffe, Resident
Tourism Marketing Steering Committee Member*

Project Funding and Kern River Valley Revitalization, Inc.



This Community-inspired Tourism Marketing Plan is the result of a USDA Forest Service grant to the Kern River Valley Revitalization, Inc.. The grant, part of the National Forest Rural Community Assistance Program, is designed to help rural communities develop sustainable economic growth. In the case of the Kern River Valley, the recent designation of the Giant Sequoia National Monument provided the valley with the opportunity to build on its success as a tourism destination by marketing the valley as the gateway to the giant sequoias.

The Kern River Valley Revitalization, Inc. is a broad-based umbrella group organized to facilitate the economic sustainability of the Kern River Valley, consistent with maintaining its rural character and quality of life. Its members represent the Kern County Board of Trade, Kernville and Kern River Valley Chambers of Commerce, non-profit conservation and social organizations, business owners and individuals throughout the Kern River Valley. The group created a Tourism Steering Committee to apply for this grant, hire the consultants to prepare the marketing plan, participate in the planning process, and oversee its implementation.

August 2002 Giant Sequoia National Monument Draft Environmental Impact Statement's Impact on KRV Tourism

The recently released Giant Sequoia National Monument Draft Environmental Impact Statement (August 2002) mirrors the recreation and tourism trends found in this document and recognizes gateway communities and recreational amenities outside the boundaries of the monument as important assets to monument visitors. Further, the Sequoia National Forest's (SNF) preferred alternative calls for improving recreational access, expanding interpretive services, camping facilities and other guest services, and ensuring no loss of access to areas currently available to the public. The Giant Sequoia National Monument Environmental Impact Statement should have a positive effect on the KRV's tourism industry and our ability to implement this plan. However, it should be noted that the SNF preferred alternative is a draft document and the KRV should monitor future drafts and actively comment on this and future planning documents to ensure the economic, recreational and environmental needs of KRV's residents and guests are taken into consideration.

▶ Acknowledgements ◀

It is with deep appreciation and respect for bravery that the following people and businesses of the Kern River Valley dove in and supported this unique approach to marketing planning for the Valley. It should be noted that without knowing exactly where things would end up, the entities listed below supported, and continue to support, the positive approach to tourism marketing that will provide economic stability while preserving the Valley's cultural and natural heritage.

It is people like these, people who jump into the void and meet the ongoing challenges without giving up, that will make the world a better place! If anyone is left out, our sincerest apologies, and please let us know so you will be added to this growing list!

In Appreciation,

*Bob Garrison and Diane Strachan, Your KRV Planning Facilitators
Remember. . . "What goes around, comes around!"*

Tourism Marketing Steering Committee

Ron Bolyard, Committee Coordinator
Tom Anderson, KRV Revitalization, Inc.
Aimee Barajas, Kern County Board of Trade
Bob Barnes, California Audubon's Kern River Preserve
Allan Jaffe, KRV Chamber of Commerce
Mike Ludiker, Kernville Chamber of Commerce
Meredith McKenzie, Resident
Cliff Urseth, Kern Valley Sun Newspaper
Chuck White, KRV Revitalization, Inc.
Clay Witherow, Cerro Coso College



Thank you!

Tourism Marketing Planning Collaborators/Sponsors

Kern River Valley Revitalization • Kern County Board of Trade • Kern River Valley Chamber of Commerce • Kernville Chamber of Commerce • Cerro Coso College • South Fork School & Community Foundation • Kern River Valley Historical Society • Friends of the Kern River Preserve • R-Ranch in the Sequoias • Valley Wild • Taco Bell Express • Crossroads Texaco • Isabella True Value Hardware • Builder's Mart • Mountain Mesa Texaco • Kern Valley Sun • Kern Valley Canyon Connection • Petal Pusher Plus • Golden State Surplus • Mountain River Adventures • Cheryl's Diner • Austin Carpet Cleaning • Lake Design • Nature Ali • Mojave Desert-Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council • Mountain View Southern Baptist Church • Whitewater Voyages • Odd Fellows • Kern River Valley Hospital • Family Life Center • Southern Sierra Research Center • Erskine Creek Ranch • *We invite you to join*