



YOSEMITE
—MARIPOSA—
COUNTY

TOURISM BUREAU

Annual Report
Fiscal Year
2020/2021

Dear Lodging And Business Partners,

The 2020/2021 fiscal year trudged on in the second year of COVID-19's disruption to world-wide daily life and negative impact to employment and the economic vitality of our county. This report will be a high-level overview and will not serve as a timeline for the impacts of COVID-19. Five marketing presentations are available on Yosemite.com for a deeper look at efforts made through the past fiscal year. We learned much about the trends and impacts of COVID-19 during the last four months of 2019/2020 and brought this experience forward into 2020/2021.

Most of YMCTB's marketing and advertising work this past fiscal year had been in reaction to the changing nature and rules/restrictions implemented due to the pandemic. These rules include directives from the County Health Officer "orders and guidance's" restricting access and opening of lodging related tourism. Additionally, Yosemite National Park's implementation of two consecutive summer and fall temporary vehicle reservations system in 2020 and in 2021, as well as a month-long February 2021 restriction during the natural Horsetail Fall – "Firefall" event. All these closures significantly curtailed visitation to the region. Furthermore, the lack of communication and information from YNP created ongoing confusion to the public of what was open, closed, how to make reservations and when. YMCTB was unable to plan and execute marketing campaigns for the county and destination in a timely

and effectively manner. Because of the void in communication by YNP on processes, much of our funds and efforts then turned to communication of these restrictions, closures, and reopenings of YNP.

Shifts in our primary markets:

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, California was the only visitor market that could travel and visit Yosemite Mariposa County during most of the fiscal year. Domestic and International visitation stopped completely. Our historic visitation trends significantly shifted away from the semi-retired and retired San Francisco Bay Area demographic, to a much younger, less travel-experienced Los Angeles market. It made sense that a younger audience would be less concerned with COVID-19 exposure and infection, due to the nature of infections at the time primarily impacting older populations. As many people were working remotely or furloughed, this group of younger Californians were anxious to leave their homes after long periods of stay-at-home measures and to take short road trips to rural and lightly populated areas such as National Parks. The lack of experience of these visitors created new problems, primarily with poor choices and behavior impacting the region's natural environment and potential for causing fires. More educational focus from YMCTB was required to teach visitors how to visit natural environments and reduce negative impacts. Also, to travel safely with COVID-19 so not to infect or transmit the virus to rural



areas such as Mariposa, which lacks the medical infrastructure to deal with outbreaks. The "Nature Rules" education campaign was created and deployed to help combat these visitor issues.

The meetings, weddings and special events industry remained closed through the fiscal reporting period. These segments contribute as much as 25% of lodging visitation for several of our larger hotel establishments with event space, so recovery of the meetings and special events industry is a focus for YMCTB and vital to long term lodging occupancy and recovery.

Earned and owned audience focus:

With YMCTB being primarily defunded by Mariposa County for this fiscal year, receiving \$50,000 or approximately 10% of normal funding, it was imperative for staff to extend audience reach with minimal expense. YMCTB shifted primary efforts from paid media to owned and earned media, utilizing our email database for newsletters and communications, social media, public relations/media, and

organic web search, to name a few. Although our staff was working remotely from home, more written articles (blogs) and videos were produced during this fiscal period than any other time in our history. This effort sustained and improved our positioning to aid recovery. Content was intended to keep folks dreaming about visiting our region once it was safe to do so.

The lack of county funds negatively impacted YMCTB ability to keep the destination top of mind. We believe the decision by the county to reduce funding during this fiscal year and now in the current year will have long lasting negative impacts on TOT and revenue production. The Lodging Association did choose to increase the TBID from 1% to 1.5%, but this increase during the pandemic with reduced visitation did not replace the lost traditional county funding.

Yosemite.com, YMCTB's website continued to see acceptable-to-favorable visitation. The volume of written content assisted in elevating organic results and increased search volume to the website. Although paid media continued to be invested, the starting and stopping of this paid media hurt potential website visitation and actual in-person visitation. Much of these funds went to communicating YNP reservations systems, not to help maintain brand marketing efforts.

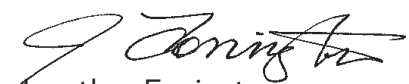
Book>Direct, YMCTB's online booking engine, saw excellent results when the park reopened in June 2020 through fall of 2020. Work continues to increase the effectiveness of this revenue generating lodging booking tool. With the loss of county funding however, we saw a decline in effectiveness due to the inability to drive paid visitation.

YMCTB staff was asked to assist and was brought into a significant number of regional "management" vs. "marketing" efforts. This included communicating time-sensitive YNP decisions and health officer orders, as well as crisis communications for county and state guidance for business and lodging operations. Staff focused their time and energy on sustainable travel education for visitors, media communications, economic impact issues and reporting, grant access communications, problem solving for labor shortages reducing business capacity as well as supply chain issues.

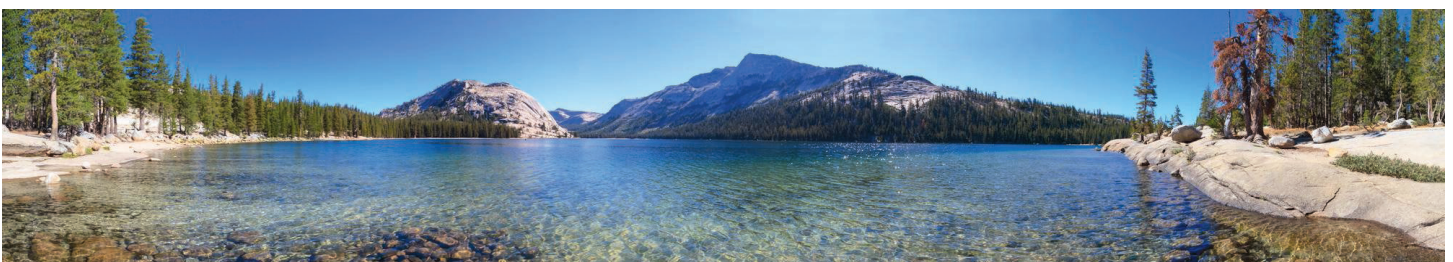
Although there have been acceptable returns in TOT and TBID taxes, there should be concern by all involved by the dangerous position our lodging industry has been impacted by and faces in the future. The current method used to evaluate the health of the lodging industry has been TOT tax returns. Higher than normal Average Daily Rate (ADR)

is the primary reason for TOT taxes averaging 80% of normal. Knowing that properties can't buy business by reducing rates, lodging businesses are holding or increasing rates to off-set the large increase in labor, fire and property insurance and supply chain costs. ADR has increased as much as 13% regionally and statewide, yet operating costs have increased more than 15%. Occupancy (visitors) for the region has dropped significantly, impacting restaurants, retail, and main street businesses. So, while 13% increases in ADR makes tax revenues appear to be a recovery, there is a downward spiral in actual occupancy or visitors, reducing employee hours and benefits across the board.

The most important factor while considering public safety is keeping Yosemite National Park open in the coming months and years without a reservations system. The county resuming tourism marketing funds is the key to reeducating the public that these past YNP reservation systems are no longer in place and that Yosemite Mariposa County is safe, open for visitors, and an amazing place to vacation, recreate and visit.



Jonathan Farrington
CEO / Executive Director



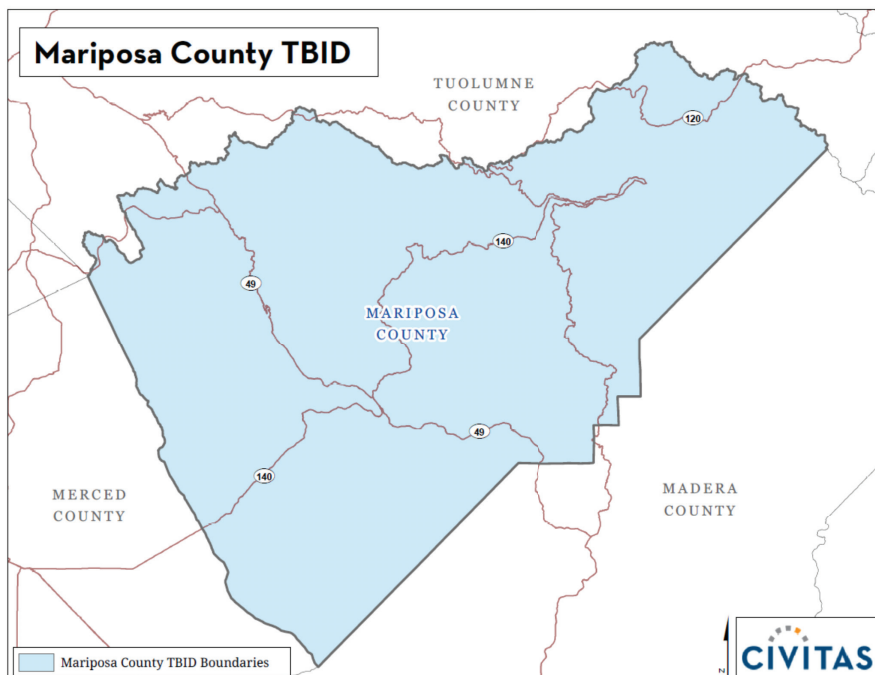
TBID Assessment

Mission Statement

The Yosemite Mariposa County Tourism Bureau is the branding, sales, and marketing agency responsible for positioning Yosemite Mariposa County as the destination of choice for leisure and group business for the economic benefit of the region.

Key Strategic Initiatives

- Promote off season overnight visitation
- Educate customers and constituents
- Operate a fiscally sound and effective business
- Foster positive relationships with key stakeholders and partners



TBID Statement

There are no proposed changes to the boundaries or assessed business.

A TBID increase of one-half of one percent (0.5%) started in January 2021. Lodging businesses will therefore be continue to be assessed a total of one and a half percent (1.5%) this year. This rate will sunset on December 31, 2022 unless action is taken by the YMCTB Board of Directors in its annual report. ¹

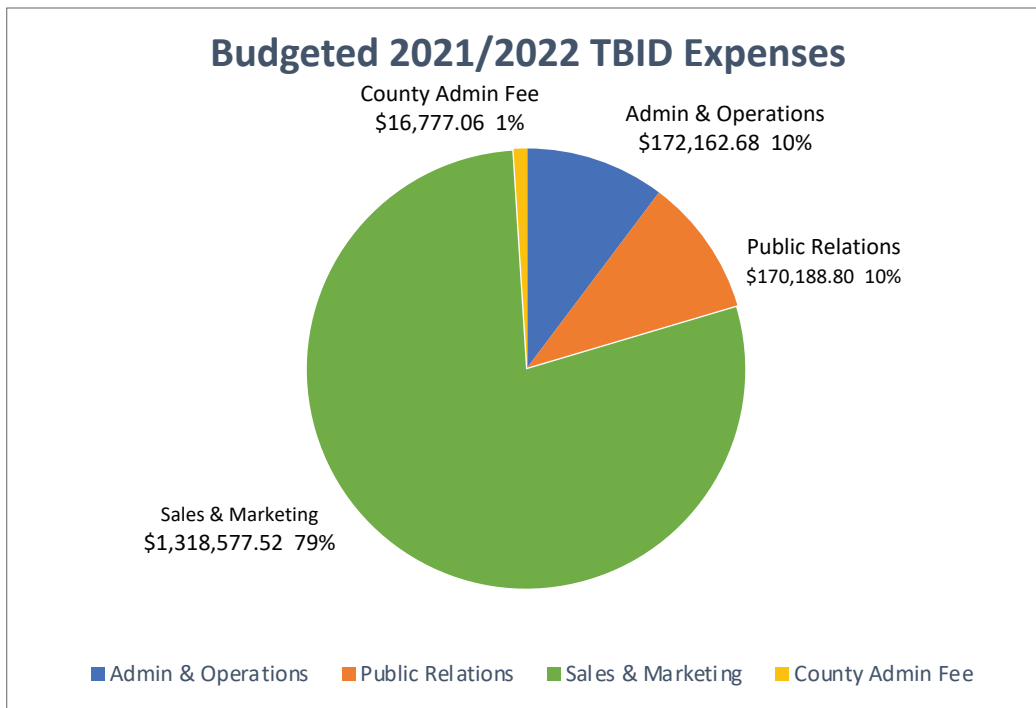
The district will continue to include lodging businesses, existing and in the future, available for public occupancy within the boundaries of the County of Mariposa, as shown.

¹ This change was prompted by the notification from Mariposa County that funding would be eliminated starting October 2020. The YMCTB Board has the ability to make changes of up to 0.5% in the TBID without approval from the members of the lodging community. Despite that authority, the YMCTB Board sought public feedback before making any decisions: a survey of the lodging owners, a community phone call and email feedback. If the County resumes funding for the Tourism Bureau at the same level prior to COVID-19 pandemic, then the additional 0.5% TBID assessment will be rescinded.

TBID Expenditures: Carryover from 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 Budget

At the end of the 2019/2020 fiscal year, the Bureau had a TBID carryover balance of \$0. The Bureau planned for a deficit that fiscal year and decreased its cash balance to make sure that the region was being marketed as fully as possible.

The 2021/2022 budget was developed with the same intent - to spend all TBID income for the year in order to ensure that lodging partners received the maximum benefit from the Bureau's marketing efforts.



2021/2022 Annual Budget Notations

Several partners that had been furloughed during 2020 were brought back to support the work of the Bureau.

- 360ViewPR, our PR firm, returned with some slight modifications to the contract.
- Atlantic Link, our Scandinavian representation, was re-engaged, for a return to four international offices.

Additional funding has been added back to support marketing to international travelers as well as some domestic markets.

Maintaining flexibility is critical during these times as conditions can change significantly with little notice.

- Additional sources of income from grants will continue to be sought, though none of this income is budgeted given the uncertainty of this type of funding.
- The Board of Directors has given the CEO / Executive Director discretion to manage the budgeted expenses given the changing situation.

Due to the lack of funding from the county, sponsorships for nonprofits and local events will be reduced to about one-third of budgeted levels

The budget also includes putting aside funds for future needs of the bureau, especially as it relates to upgrading the website, our primary marketing asset.

Goals for 2021/2022

As Yosemite Mariposa County enters a third fiscal year with a pandemic-impacted economy, YMCTB will continue to stretch limited marketing funds to do more with less. The California tourism drive market is experiencing in-state travel fatigue, meaning Californians are going to more to domestic and international travel destinations now that travel restrictions have eased. As 60% of visitation to our region is California based, this makes recovery more challenging and highly competitive with the 100+ destinations and destination marketing organizations competing for California, domestic and slowly returning international visitors. YMCTB will continue to apply for grants and other forms of funding to off-set the missing county contributions.

COVID-19 is expected to impact all aspects of regional tourism well into 2022 and international markets into 2023. It is still unclear as to how Yosemite National Park will operate during the 2022 peak season into fall, specifically due to construction projects limiting visitation distribution, housing for staff and implications of COVID-19 on shared housing, restrooms, and kitchen prep areas. This impacts both the concession and NPS operations.

YMCTB staff has developed a clear 3-year rolling marketing strategy and plan. For the 2021-2022 plan year, we have adjusted to emerging trends. The Board of Supervisors has been provided with a copy of the Marketing Plan, a proprietary document.

1. Focus on the California drive market. Despite the issues currently being experienced with “California Travel Fatigue”, YMCTB will continue to market and promote to California residents as well as focus on the semi-retired and retired travelers, who have primarily stayed home since March 2020.

2. Return to select domestic markets. Domestic travel will return slowly, as vaccination rates across the US increase confidence. Because of the breadth of the US and the limited budget, YMCTB has not invested in domestic-specific marketing. General efforts with Yosemite.com, written story content, owned and earned efforts via ECRM (email), social media, etc. have filled that role. Noble Studios will continue to run minimal digital marketing in a few domestic MSA’s during traditional travel decision-making impact periods.

3. Continue to emphasize outreach to the international market. International travel is critical to Yosemite Mariposa County’s recovery. Most DMO’s put their international marketing programs on hold during the pandemic, but YMCTB chose to stay engaged in our primary international markets. Doing so has already proven through media and PR coverage to have been a better long-term strategy. Now that travel restrictions are lifted, we expect to see



50% recovery by spring and summer and up to 75% returning annual visitation by fall.

4. Resume Sales, Travel Trade & FAM trips for international travel trade and PR/Media. Domestic media-related sales trips and visits will also continue.

5. Continue to strengthen our relationship with 360ViewPR for earned media coverage. Editorial has huge value in comparison to paid print or native media. The cost vs. results is a solid investment.

6. Utilize social media strategy for continued success and investment. YMCTB will continue to grow existing audiences as well as expand into new media such as Tik Tok if this channel, or others, will stimulate travel behavior.

7. Emphasize earned and owned email communications. YMCTB email efforts to consumers and our constituents has reached a new level for professionalism and impact. Email design improved with implementation of the BEEpro creative design tool. The increased quantity and quality of written content has elevated the value of the communications and increased interaction, open rates, and click-through rates to the website.

8. Drive lower-funnel or short-term bookings through traditional media (radio and print). Traditional media also increases “new customer acquisition” to Yosemite.com. Co-op marketing options will continue to be offered at a discounted price to Mariposa County lodging businesses.

9. Continue to invest in digital media. This is YMCTB’s largest area of media investment. Noble Studio’s daily monitoring of Yosemite.com performance has led to superior management



or shifting of digital media spend to the highest performing channels based on real-time monitoring. Digital media extends beyond display advertising and SEM. YMCTB will continue to test options such as native advertising, as well as make significant investment in social channels in new and creative ways.

10. Complete Key Special Projects – The YMCTB Destination Vacation Planner (DVP) was created 12 years ago, and has gone through various cosmetic revisions. The print collateral piece is showing its age both from a design and use perspective. Printed visitor guides are expensive to produce and distribute. The YMCTB staff is reimagining the DVP in a digital platform; it will become available for use and download on Yosemite.com. Maps detailing the County’s distinctive regions are being created along with copy to support the maps and destination.



2020/2021 Leadership

Board of Directors

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Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite

Jason Brannan

AutoCamp Yosemite

Kim Brisack

Coulter Cafe & Big Table Ranch

Lisa Cesaro

Yosemite Hospitality

Ron Halcrow

Yosemite Plaisance Bed & Breakfast

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Victoria Imrie

Yosemite Ziplines and Adventure Ranch

Christian Mueller, Board Vice Chair

The Redwoods at Yosemite

Donna Nassar, Board Secretary

Community Member

Candy O'Donel-Browne

Community Member

Douglas Shaw, Board Treasurer

Yosemite Bug Rustic Mountain Resort

Kevin Shelton, Board Chair

Yosemite Resorts

Marketing Committee

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Coulter Cafe & Big Table Ranch

Nia Huerta

Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite

Lisa Cesaro

Yosemite Hospitality

Scott Gediman

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The Redwoods in Yosemite

Victoria Imrie

Yosemite Ziplines and Adventure Ranch

Donna Nassar

Community Member

Douglas Shaw

Yosemite Bug Rustic Mountain Resort

Kevin Shelton

Yosemite Resorts

Emerald Wong

AutoCamp Yosemite

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Mariposa County Board Supervisor, District I

Wayne Forsythe

Mariposa County Board Supervisor, District IV

Advisory Council

Scott Gediman

Yosemite National Park

Board President

Mariposa Chamber of Commerce

Tourism Bureau Staff

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CEO / Executive Director

Ellen Bergstone Wasil

Director of Marketing & Creative

Tony McDaniel

Director of Communications

Craig Polson

Social Media & Content Curator

Aaron Demery

Operations Manager



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