

KERN COUNTY

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THE BOARD OF
TRADE IS A
DEPARTMENT OF
KERN COUNTY
GOVERNMENT.

Chairman says Kern equal to looming challenges

Vision for coming year outlined during eleventh annual State of the County Address



First District Supervisor Jon McQuiston, Chairman of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, presented his vision for the next year to gathered dignitaries and guests during the eleventh annual State of the County Address.

Accomplishments, challenges and the looming budget crisis were the key topics as Board of Supervisors Chairman Jon McQuiston addressed a capacity crowd at the 11th annual State of the County Dinner.

About 350 guests packed Bakersfield's Marriott Hotel on January 21 as the Chairman delivered the annual State of the County Address. Hosted by the Kern County Board of Trade, the event gathered social, political and economic leaders from across the county.

The address was also carried live on Kern Government Television and streamed around the world via the Internet.

Money matters were at the top of the Chairman's agenda.

"Over the last decade we have experienced fiscal ups and downs at the State and local level," he said. "Now, following a few years of a growing economy, again we find ourselves in a severe national and state economic downturn along with a state fiscal policy and budget process that are both broke – and broken."

McQuiston noted any attempt to determine the impact of the State's budget crisis on county programs and operations is difficult and would be speculative, but the Chairman stressed that the Board was committed to "a policy of fiscal prudence, sensibility, and sensitivity about how our decisions will impact both the citizens and employees of Kern County."

He explained the greatest challenge will be in providing mandated health and human service programs, meeting demand for job

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Joint effort produces new county visitor publication

The new and improved Kern County's Visitors Guide has hit the streets.

Produced by the Kern County Board of Trade, the 2009 guide sports new stories, updated features and bolder photos in a glossy magazine-style look.

"The department put a great deal of effort into updating our previous guide and bringing a little something extra to

the project this time around," said Executive Director Rick Davis. "I believe this is our best guide to date. We wanted something we could be proud of. I think we accomplished that."

After months in development the 76-page magazine began circulation this month, replacing the 68-page edition first released back in the spring of 2008.

The new guide was a joint effort between the county's official tourism bureau and *Bakersfield Life*, a specialty publication of *The Bakersfield Californian*.

"We are extremely pleased to have partnered with the Kern County Board of Trade in this annual publication," added Chris Thompson, Specialty Publications

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Kiosk system to receive Kern-COG Regional Award of Merit

Kern County Board of Trade has been named recipient of the Kern Council of Governments Regional Award of Merit in the category of local government for its groundbreaking interactive visitor kiosk network.

The award recognizes excellence at the local government level for cooperative service, delivery, productivity improvements or public-private partnerships.

Awards will be presented March 5 at the Petroleum Club in Bakersfield.

The Board of Trade earned the honor by developing the world's first system of exterior large-screen interactive visitor kiosks.

The revolutionary technology was designed in cooperation with industry leaders from around the world.

Visitor information is provided around the clock, assisting travelers with way-finding using interactive maps while also spotlighting dining, lodging and tourism opportunities both in local communities and throughout the county.

Attractive presentation (including flash movies and video clips) are designed to entice travelers to utilize the system.

The interactive capabilities allow information to be more easily

committed to memory and encourage further exploration of the county's offerings.

An advertising component is expected to make the system self-sustaining, allowing the Board of Trade to provide this service at no cost to taxpayers.

Each kiosk consists of a 46-inch touch screen operated like a large PDA or iPhone®. Exterior units are designed to survive Kern County's harsh elements – an industry first.

The current system includes four Bakersfield locations plus sites at Mojave, Taft, Kernville, Rosamond and Mojave. Additional units will come on line in the weeks ahead including kiosks in Lake Isabella, Boron, Tehachapi and the Indian Wells Valley.



The visitor information kiosk at Mojave's Legacy Park (above) is one of a dozen planned units in the Kern County Board of Trade's interactive tourism network, which is being honored with a Regional Award of Merit by the Kern Council of Governments.

GUIDE: New edition of tourism publication hits the streets

Continued from page 1
Manager for *The Californian*. "We are excited to see their works put into print as they continue to bring the wonders of Kern County to visitors from around the world. This is a great publication that truly shows the vast opportunities of recreation in our area."

The latest edition includes new feature articles on the growing Tehachapi wine district, ecotourism

opportunities and the county's visitor kiosk system along with information on popular activities and attractions such as whitewater sports, snow play, local arts and culture, music, golf, dining, off-roading and more.

Also included are driving tours, updated travel maps, and an expanded events calendar.

The advertiser-supported publication is available at consumer travel shows and is mailed to

potential visitors who request information. Within Kern they are circulated by participating lodging partners and placed in locations that generate visitor traffic – including two Board of Trade visitor centers.

Copies are provided free of charge to community organizations participating in tourism-related events, while an on-line version is available via web sites operated by both the Board of Trade and *The Bakersfield Californian*.

According to the California Travel and Tourism Commission, visitors spend over \$1.15 billion per year in Kern County – more than \$3 million per day.

Deliver Your Business Message 24 Hours A Day!

KERN COUNTY VISITOR KIOSK NETWORK
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The Official Kern County
Visitors Guide
California's Playground

Play Your Way!

Kern eclipses previous record for commercial filming activity

A volatile marketplace and the threat of a work stoppage made for an exciting, frustrating, yet ultimately profitable year for Kern County commercial filming in 2008.

The Kern County Film Commission reported a record high in economic impact from commercial filming – features, television, advertisements and still photos – for the second consecutive year.

After eclipsing the \$16 million mark in 2007, Kern County saw the 2008 number rocket to in excess of \$23 million based on estimates established by the Association of Film Commissioners International.

“I thought 2007 was bizarre, but 2008 takes the cake,” said Assistant Film Commissioner Dave Hook. “Early on we were definitely the popular girl at the prom, especially in regard to major productions. But as the year wound down the industry was hit hard, first by the economy and then by the threat of an actors’ strike. Fortunately the good outweighed the bad.”

Kern had surpassed its previous high by the end of June and tripped the \$20 million line for the first time by the end of summer. But filming slowed to a trickle over the last third of the calendar year as Hollywood began to tighten its purse strings.

“The economy turned, producers were afraid to start projects that could be interrupted by a strike, and we had to fight for every day of filming,” said Hook.

Final totals for the year showed Kern County playing host to 218 separate projects, accounting for 507 shooting days and an estimated \$23,720,000 in economic benefit to area businesses. The dollar figure marked a 45-percent increase over 2007’s total of \$16,316,500.

Monthly impact figures reached seven figures six times in 2008, including five months in a row from March through July. The peak came in May when film projects poured an estimated \$6.7 million in the county economy – a single-month



A major action sequence from *Star Trek*, filmed near Bakersfield, contributed to the county’s record \$23 million in economic impact from commercial production during the 2009 calendar year.

record buoyed by a full month of feature film activity.

The low-water mark came in August. The county entertained 15 projects that month but logged only 27 days of shooting -- mostly on low-budget activity. The result was \$427,500 in economic benefit.

“It’s almost comical to complain about the numbers when you remember that when the film commission started tracking impact a little over a decade ago, a \$400,000 month was cause for celebration,” said Hook. “But as you become more successful, your expectations go up. The economy, the state of the industry, what looks are hot and cold – all of these factors can make the numbers fluctuate wildly from month to month or year to year. You can’t rest on your laurels. Every time a production finishes work here we’re back to square one trying to land the next one.”

One of the challenges in this tougher economic climate is battling foreign incentives and union regulations.

“Compared to the gravy days, producers are throwing around nickels like they were tractor tires,” Hook remarked. “We’re seeing projects either bolt California for states or countries offering incentives, or cutting costs by staying inside the (studio) zone.”

Hook said rebates of up to 40 percent have caused films to go overseas and some television series to relocate to other parts of the country, particularly New York and New Mexico. Projects that stay within California often choose to remain within “the zone,” a 35-mile circle

drawn from downtown Hollywood. Within the designated area, union regulations don’t require per diem to be paid to crew members, reducing production costs.

“Our pitch is that we’re close enough and inexpensive enough to make up

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Kern County Visitor Center
GIFT SHOP

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ADDRESS: Despite many challenges, Kern logs accomplishments during 2008

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training, and providing safety net services where demand will grow as revenues decline. The Board has prepared for these and other challenges through the set-aside of reserve funds, placing restrictions on hiring and purchasing, and the creation of budget step-down plans.

But the address was hardly a litany of gloom and doom. Despite the challenges ahead, McQuiston said it was important to highlight the many achievements of the previous year.

The Chairman noted the county had augmented the Gang Task Force Strategic Plan by 18 deputy probation officers while the Sheriff's Department has been able to bring patrols to full strength for the first time in years. All but one fire station in Kern County is now staffed with at least three firefighters, providing a significant increase in both effectiveness and safety.

The County also opened a new state-of-the-art Emergency Communications Center which will coordinate efforts during natural disasters and other emergencies.

Kern's Public Health Department is now viewed as a leader in the State on combating West Nile virus with only two cases reported last year. Human Services improved in all measures of children reuniting with eligible families. Children returning to foster care decreased by over 16 percent and timely adoptions improved by over 23 percent.

The Agricultural Commission, working with the partnership that developed "Spray Safe," implemented the "Kern Pilot Project to Protect Agricultural Workers" to reduce the number of people affected by pesticide drift. From a high of 373 individuals affected by pesticide drift in 2002, Kern reduced that number to zero in 2008.

The Planning Department implemented live web-streaming video of Planning Commission

meetings allowing citizens in outlying communities to avoid the drive to Bakersfield, saving time and fuel while limiting vehicle emissions. The Airports Department entered a public/private partnership to install a solar electric system at Meadows

"Kiosks" to show visitors what we offer in the way of goods, services, attractions, and experiences. Kern County is pioneering this large format outdoor touch-screen technology, the only system of its kind in North America. Kern also



Board of Supervisors Chairman Jon McQuiston addresses the challenges at hand during the annual State of the County event.

Field, saving the county \$1 million over 20 years on an investment of \$45,000 while reducing pollution.

The County participated in the groundbreaking of the Veterans' Cemetery on land donated by Tejon Ranch, while the Veterans Department was recognized by the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs for attaining \$2.8 million in new benefits and \$3.0 million in retroactive awards for local veterans.

Our Career Service Center and Employers Training Resource staff provided services to 812 businesses in Kern County, including 125 who had never before used the services.

The Board of Trade developed and fielded a system of roadside electronic

enjoyed more than \$20 million in economic benefits from film projects last year, a new record.

But McQuiston's emphasis was not on the accomplishments of the past but on Kern's future.

"Not since the Great Depression has the national economy been in such a state of disarray and uncertainty," he said. "Kern County is still a place of opportunity" noting that its oil, agriculture, wind energy and solar energy interests place Kern at the forefront of those industries.

Those same interests will help the county remain a good steward of the environment, helping it to comply with state requirements for greenhouse gas emission reductions, McQuiston noted.

Kern County's location, its transportation and telecommunications infrastructure continue to support the growth of manufacturing, production, warehousing, and office space needs. Its rich historical, cultural, natural resources and world class recreation opportunities continue to afford the opportunity for visitors seeking shorter trips closer to home during the downturn in the economy.

The Naval Air Weapons Division China Lake is positioned to grow by approximately 900 positions over the next few years. It will bring with it the need for greater contractor support, goods and services.

But as important as industry is to the County, McQuiston said its people were far and away the most valuable resource it has to offer.

"Kern County is rich with people who are not afraid to work, but only seek an opportunity, with people who may not have much but give much, with people who believe in family and community," he said.

The Chairman also had words of encouragement for the thousands of County employees facing an uncertain future due to the state's ongoing budget crisis.

"Kern County's workforce is made up of thousands of dedicated staff, supervisors, managers and department heads," the Chairman said. "Together, as a team, they are the most professional group of individuals I have had the pleasure to work with.

"For our County employees, know for certain that many of you will be asked to do more with less, and to make sacrifices. I am certain that despite the challenges before us, you are the team that we need to meet the challenges of the present and build the future as we weather this time of economic hardship.

"Kern County is still today the land of opportunity. Kern County feeds the nation, fuels the nation, powers the nation, and defends the nation. And we're going to keep doing all of those things in 2009," he concluded.

Joint effort promotes Kern County tourism to Southern Cal

The Board of Trade made an aggressive pitch for Southern California tourism dollars February 14-15, taking part in the annual

Adventures in Travel Expo, sponsored by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The premiere consumer travel show in the Southland attracted an

estimated 25,000 would-be travelers to the LA Convention Center.

Using a trio of Sidewinder missiles on loan from the US Naval Museum

of Armament and Technology in Ridgecrest to lure trade show guests, Executive Director Rick Davis and Marketing Associates Annie Hess and Kathy Lunstrum teamed with representatives of the Ridgecrest Convention and Visitors Bureau, the California Desert Visitors Association and the US Navy in an effort to entice travelers to come north.

"Times are tough but people still want to travel, they're just being smarter about it," said Davis. "We wanted Southern California to know that we're just a tank of gas away and we've got a lot to offer."

Representatives distributed visitor-related material, including the newly-released Kern County Visitors Guide, while fielding questions about Kern's tourism offerings.

Davis stressed the importance of Kern County's appearance at travel industry events.

"It's a qualified audience," Davis explained. "People pay to attend, so you know they're serious about their travel. They want to go somewhere. We want to convince them that 'somewhere' should be Kern County."

According to the California Travel and Tourism Commission, visitors generate in excess of \$1.15 billion in economic benefit to Kern County each year.



Executive Director Rick Davis chats with a visitor during the Adventures in Travel Expo. The Board of Trade teamed with local and regional tourism partners to pitch area locations to travelers.

FILMING: Projects contribute record amount to economy

Continued from page 3
the difference, and our locations are unique enough to make Kern County worth the trip," said Hook.

Feature films accounted for 125 total shooting days last year, with major projects like the highly-anticipated J.J. Abrams-helmed *Star Trek* prequel (filmed near Bakersfield and on the Tejon Ranch) and Will Ferrell's comic send-up of the 1970s television series *Land of the Lost* (which lensed in the Trona Pinnacles near Ridgecrest) heading the way.

Other notable features included *Fast and Furious* (Tejon Ranch) with Vin Diesel and Paul Walker in the street-racing series' fourth installment, and the Haley Joel Osment starrer *Montana Amazon* filming near Frazier Park.

Television accounted for 44 shooting days with the Spike TV miniseries *Meteor* heading the way with a two-week stay in Taft.

Scenes for the Fox series *Dollhouse* were shot on the Kern River while reality shows made Kern

County a regular with episodes of *Mythbusters* (Cuddeback Dry Lake), *Smash Lab* (Mojave Spaceport and Tejon Ranch), *Little People, Big World* (Bakersfield) and *Pamela: Girl on the Loose* (Willow Springs Raceway) among those using Kern County locations.

Major commercials contributed 79 shooting days and featured spots for Comcast (Kern River), Chrysler (Frazier Park), Burger King (Rosamond), McDonald's (Bakersfield), Jeep (Jawbone Canyon OHV area) and Time Warner (Red Rock Canyon).



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**REGIONAL
TRANSIT**

February 28 - **Sheriff's Activities League Fishing Derby**, The Park at Riverwalk, 11200 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield. Check in time is 7am. Derby starts at 8am. No artificial fishing lures allowed. Anglers must bring their own gear. Entrants ages 16 and over must have a valid fishing license. Adults \$10, age 17 and under \$5. (661) 868-4102

March 11 - **Frank Ferrante is Groucho Marx**, Parker Performing Arts Center, 500 E. French Avenue, Ridgecrest, 7:30 pm. Ferrante recreates his New York, London, and PBS triumph as the legendary Groucho Marx in his fast-paced comedy show packed with songs, stories and inspired audience interaction. Tickets \$22. (760) 375-5600.

March 12 - **The Pretenders in Concert**, The Majestic Fox Theater, 2001 H Street, Bakersfield, 8 pm. Tickets \$30.50-\$56.50. (661) 324-1369 or www.vallitix.com.

March 13 - **Mariachi Festival**, The Majestic Fox Theater, 2001 H Street, Bakersfield, 7:30 pm. Mariachi Vargas De Tecalitlan with Mariachi Imperial De Mexico and Mariachi Garibaldi De Jaime Cuellar. Tickets \$38.50-\$78.50. (661) 324-1369 or www.vallitix.com.

March 14-15 - **"Gold Fever"**, CSUB Dore Theater, 9011 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield. CSUB Theater for Young Audiences presents shows at noon, 2pm and 4pm on Saturday and again noon and 2 pm Sunday. Old West history and legend are humorously blended to make a statement about greed and compassion. General admission, \$5, under 12 admitted free. (661) 654-3150.

March 21 - **Grapevine Winter Jousting Series**, Tejon Ranch Equestrian Center 1401 Crane Canyon Road, Lebec, 11 am. Events judged and scored according to the rules and guidelines of the American Jousting Alliance. Knights, warriors and war horses in competition along with fun activities and demonstrations. Tickets: \$10 for adults, \$6 for children age 6-14, age 5 and under free. (661) 245-4000.

March 29 - **Quackers for Kids Rubber Duck Race**, The Park at Riverwalk, 11200 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield, 9:30 am. Over 5,000 ducks will be launched. Top prize is \$2500. Ducks sell for 1 for \$5, 5 for \$20 or a "Cheater" duck 1 for \$25. Cheater ducks are guaranteed to start at the front of the pack! (661) 549-2598 or wamy2030@yahoo.com.

April 4 - **14th annual Scottish Gathering and Games**, Bakersfield College, 1801 Panorama Drive, Bakersfield, 9 am. Men in kilts, loud bagpipers, strong Scottish athletes and Highland dancers celebrate Scottish culture. Entertainment includes the folk rock music of Tempest and tribal Celtic movement pioneers The Wicked Tinkers. Tickets \$13 in advance, \$16 at the gate. (661) 393-6765.

April 4-6 - **Lake Isabella Fishing Derby**, Isabella Lake, 7 am daily. The 20th annual derby offers over \$200,000 in prizes. One tagged trout is worth \$20,000, ten tagged trout are worth \$10,000 each, and 989 tagged trout are worth from \$20 to \$1,000 each. Registration is \$15 per person or \$35 per family before March 15th. (760) 379-7511 or derby.kernrivervalley.com.

April 19 - **Civil War Battle Demonstration**, Fort Tejon State Historic Park, 4201 Fort Tejon Road, Lebec, 10:30 am. Troops of the North and South present Civil War battles and skirmishes of the era. Battles at 10:30am, noon and 1:30pm. Tours available of the opposing camps in between battles. Admission: \$5 for adults, \$3 for children. (661) 248-7001.

April 19 - **Jeff Dunham, "Spark of Insanity"**, Rabobank Arena, 1001 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield, 5 pm. The comedian/ventriloquist brings his eclectic cast of characters to Bakersfield. Tickets \$43. (661) 322-2525 or www.ticketmaster.com.

April 22 - **Baryna Russian Folk Music and Dance**, Parker Performing Arts Center, 500 E. French Avenue, Ridgecrest, 7:30 pm. Ensemble presents a dazzling program of Russian folk dances and music. Various ethnicities within Russia are included, along with a humorous explanation for every piece. Tickets \$22. (760) 375-5600.

See www.VisitKern.com for a complete calendar of events.

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