



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MENDOCINO RAILWAY AND SKUNK TRAIN ANNOUNCE RESULTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY 2016-2021

Findings Reveal that the Skunk Train and Railbikes Brought \$67.7 Million to Local Economy Over a 5-Year Period; Railbikes are Top Attraction Searched on VisitMendocino.com

FORT BRAGG, CA – (February 3, 2022) – Mendocino Railway and the Skunk Train have announced the findings from their Demographic Survey spanning the years of 2016 to 2021, while Visit Mendocino County (VMC) recently released their Annual Report for 2020-2021, and the results of both validate that the [Skunk Train](#) remains Mendocino County’s most popular and beloved attraction, while providing vital economic support to the local community. The survey demonstrates that the Skunk Train generated more than \$67 Million in visitor spending across various local communities over a five-year period, while VMC’s report indicates that the Skunk Train’s Railbikes are the number one most-viewed attraction on their website, with the Skunk Train itself also in their top 10.

“The Skunk Train and its Railbikes are again the number one attraction on [visitmendocino.com](#) for potential and returning visitors,” states Travis Scott, Executive Director, Visit Mendocino County. “We as a destination and community are blessed to have attraction of this caliber bringing thousands and thousands of visitors to our region, annually.”

Tens of thousands of visitors from California and all over the world come to Fort Bragg every year specifically to ride the Skunk Train, generating economic activity for local small businesses and creating and supporting local jobs. According to the Demographic Survey 2016-2021, a significant percentage of tourists (42%**) cite the Skunk Train as the primary reason they visited Mendocino County, with the vast majority of those people (74%) riding the train from the Fort Bragg depot. 80% of visitors stayed the night and about half of these visitors slept in Fort Bragg before or after their ride, spending an average of 2.55 nights in the area. In total, the Skunk Train brought over 370,000 visitors (93,512 parties) to Mendocino County who spent an average of \$723 above and beyond the cost of their train tickets, generating \$67.6 million for the local economy over those years.



“It’s great to see this type of growth,” says Robert Jason Pinoli, President of the Skunk Train’s parent company, Mendocino Railway. “Not only is this good for the railroad, but it has such a positive effect on the local economy. The train and railbikes bring people to the hotels, to shop in the stores and eat in our area restaurants. We also appreciate that agencies such as Visit Mendocino County and Visit Fort Bragg attract people to our communities, and that helps the Skunk Train and our surrounding area as well.”

The Skunk Train’s most recent survey demonstrated that the Skunk Train is an integral part of the Mendocino County community and one of the strongest economic drivers in the region, generating taxes that support public services and promoting jobs and prosperity. While ridership declined in 2020 when COVID-19 restriction shutdown the hospitality industry in whole or part, in 2021 ridership rebounded to the highest level in recent history.

“Visit Mendocino County is proud of our continued partnership with the Skunk Train,” continues Scott. “There is a reason it is annually a number one driver of tourism in Mendocino County. The team at the Skunk has created an experience that is so uniquely Mendocino County.”

*** With 42%* of guests coming to Mendocino County for just for the Skunk Train, the Skunk directly created 80,121 room nights and \$28.39m in spending.*



About the Skunk Train

Located in the redwood forests of Northern California’s Mendocino County, the Skunk Train is a heritage railroad that has been operating since 1885. Trains depart from the railroad's headquarters in the coastal town of Fort Bragg, as well as from the frontier town of Willits. This scenic railroad experience has been regarded as one of the “10 Best Rail Tours in the Country” (*USA Today*), and one of the “Top 10 Family Activities in California” (*National Geographic Traveler*).

Riders of Mendocino’s celebrated Skunk Train journey into Redwood forests on vintage steam locomotives while enjoying 40 miles of scenic delights, 30 bridges crossing mountain streams, and an 840-foot tunnel. Initially used to move redwood logs to the Mendocino Coast sawmills from the rugged back country, the Skunk Train has become one of the most beloved attractions in Northern California. The railroad was built in 1885, and 136 years later, it has retained all of its original charm – minus the pungent smell the engines used to emit, when people used to say you could “smell the Skunk before you could see it.” Operating year-round, the Skunk Train is a multi-generational experience, and riders can even bring along the family dog.

The nickname Skunk originated in 1925 when motorcars were introduced (which today are sometimes referred to as rail buses). These single unit self-propelled motorcars had gasoline powered engines for power and pot-bellied stoves (burning crude oil to keep the passengers warm). The combination of the fumes created a very pungent odor, and the old timers living along the line said these motorcars were like skunks, “You could smell them before you could see them.”

The view from the Skunk Train’s restored rail cars remains largely unchanged since the late 1800s. Regardless of the departure point, riders experience a journey back in time, while the California Redwoods provide an awe-inspiring backdrop for this rolling piece of American history.

The Skunk Train also offers various immersive Railbike experiences, where riders venture out on two-seat, pedal- and electric-powered bikes that skim atop the train tracks.

For more information or to book a reservation, visit www.SkunkTrain.com or call (707) 964-6371.

#

MEDIA CONTACT:

Heather Noll | Chalkboard Communications | heather@chalkboardcomm.com | 415.290.2891