

VISIT UVALDE COUNTY

TEXAS HILL COUNTRY RIVER REGION, INC.
2024 ANNUAL REPORT



TEXAS HILL COUNTRY RIVER REGION, INC.

ABOUT THCRR

Texas Hill Country River Region is a not-for-profit 501(c)6 corporation that was created solely for the purpose of promoting tourism in Uvalde County. Formed in 1998, THCRR is experienced in the promotion of Uvalde County as a tourism destination. In the past five years, THCRR has implemented new leadership and a reenergized focus on its mission to promote Visit Uvalde County as an overnight year-round tourism destination and to increase off-season occupancy in the region's accommodations.

In addition to tourism promotion, THCRR manages the Uvalde County River Cleanup Program, "Don't Trash Where You Splash." This program includes volunteer efforts, a litter education campaign, management of waste maintenance contracts and supplemental cleanup contracts, and providing complimentary river trash bags to businesses and individuals within Uvalde County, all of which help keep litter out of the rivers and our destination a beautiful place to live and visit.

FUNDING SOURCE & CONTRACT

THCRR is funded by a contract with Uvalde County to manage a portion of the hotel occupancy tax revenue collected by the Uvalde County Tax Assessor. In previous years, the contract has designated 74% of total HOT revenue to be managed by THCRR for tourism promotion.

In response to a change in the way the HOT funds would be administered by the County in 2018, THCRR proposed an amended agreement that would direct 99% of total gross hotel occupancy taxes collected by the County to be allocated to THCRR to manage using 74% for tourism promotion and 25% for river cleanup efforts. On Nov. 13, 2018, Uvalde County Commissioners Court voted unanimously to adopt the proposed amended agreement.

UVALDE COUNTY VISITOR CENTER

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Melissa Bates, President

Ben Ferguson, Vice President

Michael Cummings, Secretary

Jamie Holmes, Treasurer

Dwynette Meadows, Board Member

Chase Roosa, Board Member

Morgan Weber, Board Member

STAFF

Hailey Conrad, Executive Director

Hailey@visitualdecountry.com

(830) 834-5544

Dara Fowler, Front Desk Host

Reception@visitualdecountry.com

Office: (830) 834-5534

OFFICE HOURS

Memorial Day - Labor Day

Monday - Saturday: 9 AM - 5 PM

Labor Day - Memorial Day

Sunday - Monday: Closed

Tuesday - Friday: 9 AM - 3 PM

Saturday: 12 PM - 4 PM

2024 IN REVIEW

Overview

The Texas Hill Country River Region (THCRR) made significant strides in 2024, showcasing our dedication to environmental preservation and community involvement and promoting Uvalde County as a year-round tourist destination. Key achievements are summarized below:

Environmental Impact

- Trash Removal: Over 20,000 pounds of waste were cleared from the Frio, Nueces, and Sabinal Rivers, supported by the River Cleanup Contractor, volunteers throughout the summer and the annual Frio River Trash Bash.
- Frio River Trash Bash: Donated \$9,180 to nonprofits and engaged 204 volunteers, nearly tripling attendance and trash collected compared to prior years.

Events and Tourism

- Total Solar Eclipse: Welcomed 34,000 visitors, generating widespread media attention and promoting the region's natural beauty.
- San Antonio Rodeo Qualifier: Attracted 4,000+ attendees, with many staying multiple days.
- Event Marketing Grants: Support local events, enhancing outreach and increasing visitor numbers.

Digital and Social Media Growth

- Follower Increase: Added 2,535 followers on Facebook and 1,418 on Instagram.
- Campaign Success: Partnered with CrowdRiff to leverage user-generated content and conduct 50 professional photoshoots to showcase local attractions.
- Workshops: Delivered sessions on branding, AI, and design tools like Canva, benefiting local businesses.

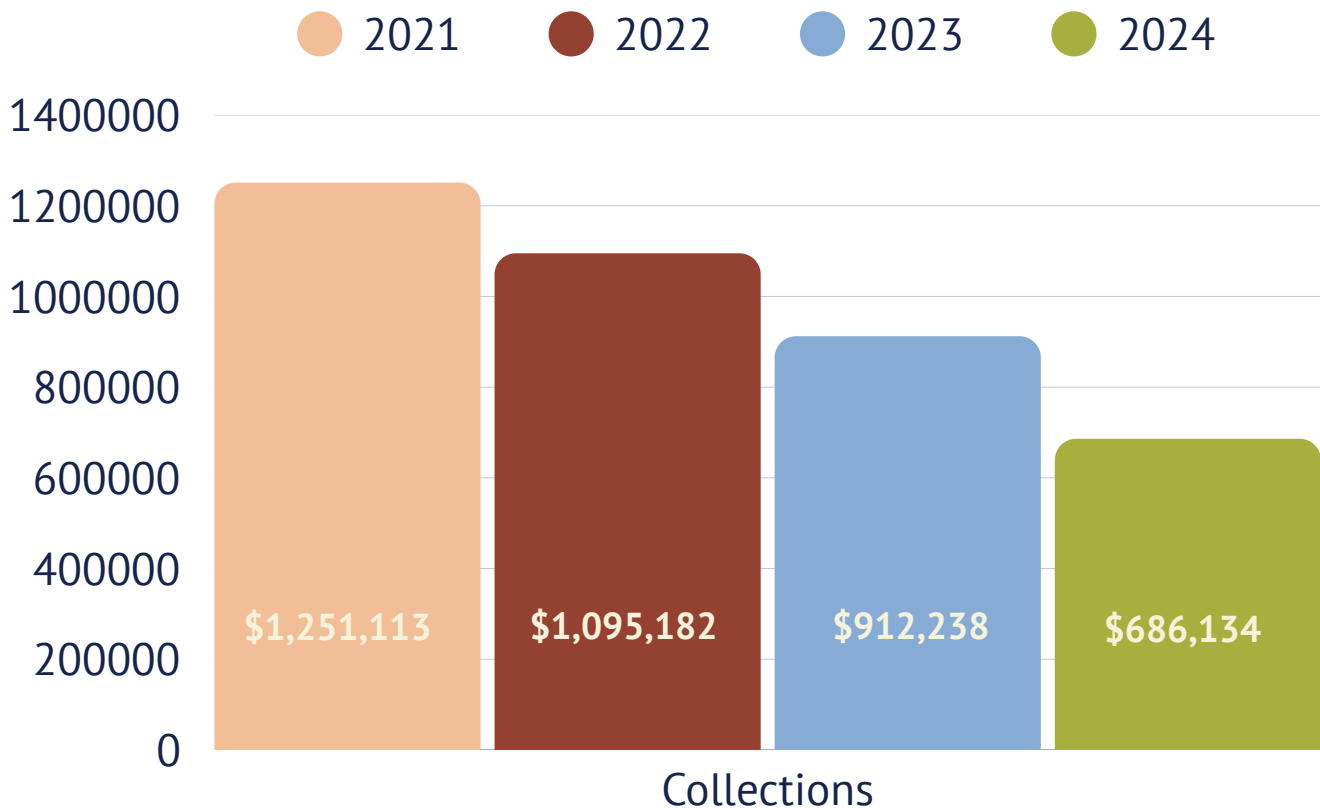
Community Engagement

- Rock Painting & Star Parties: Weekly and seasonal events brought families together for creative and educational activities.
- Donuts and Coffee with the Director: Fostered direct conversations with locals, offering transparency and collaboration opportunities.

HOT Tax Advocacy

- Advocated for updated legislation to expand Hotel Occupancy Tax usage, focusing on infrastructure, event hosting, and tourism growth. Proposed changes aim to align Uvalde County with other Texas destinations.

HOT REVENUE TRENDS



Hot Revenue Trends 2021-2024

In 2024, HOT revenue experienced a 15% decline compared to 2023. Looking ahead to 2025, projections indicate a further 20% decrease, primarily due to ongoing drought conditions affecting river levels. Recognizing the importance of rivers to Uvalde County's tourism, efforts have been intensified to promote alternative attractions and activities. To address these challenges, THCRR has partnered with Madden Media to implement a diversified marketing strategy. This includes creative campaigns, strategic partnerships, and showcasing the county's unique year-round appeal. These efforts are designed to support local businesses and sustain the region's vibrant tourism economy.

If drought conditions persist in 2025, THCRR will focus on mitigating the summer decline while driving increased off-season visitation. This will be achieved by promoting alternative attractions such as hunting, long winter stays, and spring activities like birding and nature hikes, ensuring Uvalde County remains a compelling destination regardless of seasonal challenges.

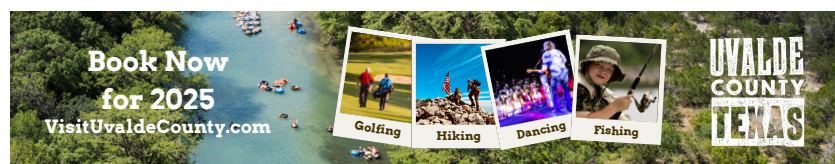
ADVERTISEMENTS

2024 Advertisements

THCRR began 2024 partnering with AD-KOA to run television advertisements in targeted markets, aimed at increasing regional awareness and tourism. In addition to these efforts, in-house advertising campaigns were actively managed on Facebook and Instagram. We also continued long-standing partnerships by placing advertisements in publications like Birdwatcher's Digest, Tour Texas, Travel Texas, Texas Hill Country River Region Guide, Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine, and Uvalde Radio.

In October, we shifted strategies and engaged MediaOne as our new advertising partner. MediaOne focused on digital platforms, including Google, Facebook, and Instagram, launching campaigns designed to drive traffic to our website and retarget visitors who had previously engaged with our content. Their approach combined fresh creative assets with precision targeting to attract new visitors and maintain engagement with returning audiences.

Below are examples of the impactful advertising campaigns run throughout 2024, showcasing the diversity and appeal of Uvalde County's offerings.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: 2,898,670 (Up 355%)

Reach

Instagram: 153,504 (Up 681%)

Facebook: 41,442 (Up 99%)

Visits

Instagram: 4,273 (Down 21%)

Facebook: New: 2,535, Total: 101,215

Likes or
Follows

Instagram: New: 1,413, Total: 13,893

Paid Reach: 1,737,457 (Up 466%)

Ad Trends

Paid Impressions: 5,764,581 (Up 645%)

RIVER CLEANUP / CONTRACTOR

Cleanup Impact

Environmental preservation remained at the forefront of THCRR's mission in 2024. Key accomplishments include:

- **Trash Collected:** Over 20,000 pounds of trash were removed from the Frio, Nueces, and Sabinal Rivers.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** 204 participants contributed to cleanup efforts during the Frio River Trash Bash.
- **Significant Contributions:** Roll-off dumpsters placed during the July 4th week added approximately 15,000 pounds to the total collection.



Frio River Trash Bash

This event celebrated community involvement and environmental stewardship:

- **Funds Raised:** \$9,180 supported cleanup efforts and event logistics.
- **Activities:** Included local vendor booths, entertainment, and an awards ceremony for outstanding contributions.
- **Impact:** Attendance and trash collected nearly tripled compared to previous years.



TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE

Preparations

The Total Solar Eclipse occurred on April 8, 2024. With talk of many people coming to the area and staying up to two weeks, we prepared as best as possible. We had meetings with local businesses to help get everyone prepared. Restaurants were stocked, lodges were open, stores were ready with supplies and the Visitor Center was full of information on the event and local things to do. We provided dumpsters, port-a-potties and a local guide for all in attendance.



April 8th

The day of brought 34,000 visitors to Uvalde County. 10,000 stayed overnight within the county and 24,000 came for the day.



Although the weather did not cooperate as we would have liked, it was still a jaw dropping experience. We had news channels from San Antonio broadcasting live from Concan, as well as many well known scientists in Uvalde County.

EVENT MARKETING GRANTS

Texas Hill Country River Region (Visit Uvalde County) supports local businesses through its Event Marketing Grants. These grants are designed to help event organizers market to audiences outside of Uvalde County and increase attendance. Approved funds can be used for social media campaigns, printed materials such as banners and flyers, and other advertising needs.

Grant Application Process:

1. Submit the Event Marketing Grant application, available on the Visit Uvalde County website, at least 90 days before the event.
2. Upon approval by the Board of Directors, event organizers can begin tracking eligible expenses.
3. All marketing materials must prominently feature the Visit Uvalde County logo and tag @visitualdecountrytx in social media posts.
4. After the event, organizers have 30 days to submit a post-event form and all receipts to the Executive Director.
5. Once approved, reimbursement checks and Placer.ai tracking data are issued.

This streamlined process ensures fairness and accountability. Regardless of the event's success or longevity, applications must be submitted annually.



HOT TAX PROPOSED CHANGES

Overview

In Q4 2024, THCRRA advocated for proposed legislation to update the allocation of Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funds in Uvalde County. These changes aim to align the county's practices with the majority of Texas cities and counties, enabling more flexible and impactful use of HOT revenues to support tourism growth and economic development.

Current Allocation

Under the existing code:

- 75% of HOT funds must be dedicated to the promotion of tourism and lodging in unincorporated areas.
- 25% is designated for trash removal and maintenance of litter containers in state-owned rivers and riverbeds.

Proposed Changes

The new legislation seeks to:

- Expand HOT fund usage to include event hosting, infrastructure improvements, and tourism-related enhancements.
- Invest directly in experiences and attractions that encourage overnight stays.
- Align Uvalde County's HOT fund practices with those of other Texas counties.

Why This Matters

- Consistency Across Texas: Ensures Uvalde County remains competitive with similar destinations.
- Greater Tourism Impact: Provides resources for events and infrastructure that attract more visitors.
- Economic Growth: Strengthens local businesses by increasing overnight stays and visitor engagement.



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

Conclusion and Future Goals

In 2024, THCRR successfully advanced its mission of promoting Uvalde County as a premier tourism destination. Key achievements included impactful environmental initiatives, record-breaking event attendance, and significant growth in digital engagement.

Future Goals for 2025

1. Rebranding Launch: Finalize and implement new branding with Stav Creative by March 2025.
2. Year-Round Tourism: Develop marketing strategies to attract visitors during off-peak seasons.
3. Community Engagement: Host round tables to help battle local issues, workshops to help local businesses grow, and provide resources for locals and businesses to be informed.
4. Night Sky Friendly Certification: Work toward becoming a recognized night sky-friendly destination to preserve natural beauty and attract astro-tourists.
5. Enhanced Marketing Efforts: Partner with Madden Media to expand marketing campaigns, driving more visitors to Uvalde County year round.
6. Social Media Realignment: All social media handles now represent Visit Uvalde County as our public-facing identity, distinct from our business name. Our new handles are @visitualdecountrytx, ensuring consistency and easier recognition across platforms.

Together, we will continue to celebrate and preserve the unique beauty and culture of Uvalde County.

