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WISCONSIN
— OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION —

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hi Friends,

Cassie here, and this month's note is coming from me.

As we start the new year, I am thrilled and honored to be stepping into the role of Director for the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation. Having been with the Office since the beginning, it has been so gratifying to be part of building the organization into the resource it is today. I am indebted to the leadership and opportunity provided by our previous director Mary Monroe Brown, whose vision helped set the course, and to Tourism Secretary Anne Sayers who champions and supports our work every single day.

Leading the Office is by far the most meaningful opportunity of my career. As a kid, I spent most of my time blazing trails and building forts in the woods behind our home, riding bikes along our rural roads or splashing in the Mississippi River on summer weekends. Those formative experiences shaped my appreciation for the natural world and led me into a career where I get to share my passion for the outdoors and foster an environment where Wisconsin's outdoor industry can thrive for all.

The gravity of this opportunity, and the responsibility that comes with this position, are not lost on me. I look forward to collaborating with my peers at the national level and

applying those learnings to Wisconsin; I am eager to help connect dots, bring resources to bear and cultivate innovative partnerships and programs. I see my role as mission-driven work to help Wisconsin build its reputation as an outdoor recreation destination, bring economic success to small businesses and rural communities and ensure all Wisconsinites will have access to and feel welcome in the outdoors.

I am beyond thrilled to bring my nearly two decades of experience in the outdoor industry — spanning retail, nonprofit and government — to work alongside so many talented partners, and I am excited to be positioned to hit the ground running. I would also love to hear from you, so please reach out if you'd like to chat. We always welcome your input as it helps inform our work.

In fact, input, in the form of numerous inquiries, is what led the Office to develop the Do-It-Yourself Economic Impact Report Workshop, and we are so excited to offer this program. Read about the details below or visit our website for more information. The application period opens tomorrow, Feb. 2, for those interested in participating.

Next month, we invite you to join us at the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism (WIGCOT) in Lake Geneva on March 10-12. The Office is pleased to host the breakout session, "Digital Cartography: Putting Your Outdoor Recreation Destination on the Map," with featured speaker Mike Bialousz, Principal Consultant and Practice Lead for State and Local Environments at Esri. Hear examples and get inspired for how to leverage the Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Inventory to create tools that showcase your community's outdoor recreation opportunities. Early bird registration rates end tomorrow, Feb. 2.

Then in April, please save the date for the second Wisconsin Healthy Communities Summit, which will take place on Monday, April 29, at UW-Madison's Memorial Union. The Office is co-hosting this one-of-a-kind event with the Wisconsin Bike Fed to bring together cyclists, outdoorists, health professionals and community leaders to build healthier communities through outdoor recreation. Stay tuned for updates on registration, speakers and the full agenda!

While there is lots going on and no shortage of inspiration happening out in the field (see our feature story about how partnerships have provided opportunities to get more people on bikes and create a welcoming community of riders), it's truly an exciting time to grow the reach of the Office and expand the ways in which we serve you. I can't wait!

Cassie

Cassie Mordini
Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation

The Office is interested in making industry connections.
Click here to update your information and help build Wisconsin's outdoor recreation directory.

Wisconsin Outside *is a monthly newsletter from the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation. Please share it with friends or colleagues with a vested interest in Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry by forwarding this email or subscribing here.*

Milwaukee Partnerships Lead the Way to Growing a Diverse Mountain Biking Community

Mountain biking is one of the fastest growing recreation activities across the country. But with no mountain biking trails in the city, Milwaukee residents have limited opportunities for learning how to ride. Add to that the cost of the sport — bikes, helmets, shoes, protective gear and other equipment — and mountain biking quickly becomes inaccessible for many Milwaukeeans.

Efforts are taking shape to get more people into mountain biking. A key to making these efforts successful is building partnerships. In Milwaukee County, several groups are collaborating and reaching out beyond Wisconsin's borders to overcome these barriers.

In 2023, Milwaukee Urban Trail Connections, a mountain biking trail group, and Wheel & Sprocket, a Wisconsin-based bike retailer, partnered on a weekend event to bring underrepresented mountain bikers together in Wisconsin. With support from Trek Bicycles and the national organization Minority Mountain Bikers, the Ride, Rally & Race Week came to southeastern Wisconsin in July 2023.

The event drew bikers from Wisconsin and all over the country to experience Wisconsin's mountain bike scene. Activities included a tour of the Trek World Headquarters in Waterloo, group rides at the John Muir Trails at the Kettle Moraine State Forest – Southern Unit and an invitation to participate in the Red Barn Classic race of the Wisconsin Off-Road Series (WORS).

As part of the weekend, the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee brought high school youth out to the John Muir Trails. They were provided with bikes and helmets from Wheel & Sprocket. Jed Olson from ORA (Outdoor Recreation Alliance) Trails led a skills clinic before they hit the trails on their own. Riders from the Minority Mountain Bikers group rode along with the students, mentoring and providing representation that made these young riders feel comfortable, welcomed and empowered.

A group of Milwaukee-area bikers believe that access to mountain bike trails is the biggest barrier to diversifying the sport. Events like the Minority Mountain Bikers Ride, Rally, & Race Week forge new partnerships and build community representation. Photo courtesy of Khop Shoots .

Introducing kids to mountain biking in a fun, positive setting, drawing people from all over the country to experience Wisconsin and the WORS series and creating a strong community of people passionate about growing and diversifying mountain biking are just a few partnership successes from 2023.

Looking at 2024 and beyond, the vision of organizer Ken Cole is a two-pronged approach: 1) build on the inaugural event's success for another, bigger gathering with Minority Mountain Bikers to strengthen the mountain bike community *and* 2) leverage the growing interest in mountain biking to build more trails in the city of Milwaukee. He hopes by expanding the mountain biking community and connecting existing trails across the city will make mountain biking accessible to everyone.

Check out the video from the Minority Mountain Bikers weekend of July 20 - 23, 2023 in Wisconsin on the Black Like Us Facebook page.

Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry is an impressive combination of businesses, manufacturers, outfitters, guides, destinations and nonprofits. Each month, we share information about the industry so you can get to know your peers across the state and learn how each contributes to the collective success and diversity of the valued outdoor recreation industry in Wisconsin. Here are your February industry highlights:

Nonprofit: North Country Trail Association

- Over 200 miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail traverse northern Wisconsin, where the topography includes numerous waterfalls, long vistas, deep valleys and rocky outcrops of the ancient Penokee Mountain Range. The nonprofit North Country Trail Association develops, maintains, protects and promotes the 2,000-mile-long Trail, working closely with the National Park Service, trail groups, individuals, corporate sponsors and others who build and maintain the Trail and its story.

Manufacturer: BRP Marine Group

- BRP is an international manufacturer in the powersports industry. Sturtevant is the global headquarters for the BRP Marine Group. This campus employs more than 600 people in product development, product commercialization and support functions for Sea-Doo watercraft and pontoons, Alumacraft and Quintrex boats, Manitou pontoons and Rotax marine propulsion systems.

Guides, Tours, Rentals: Wacky Walleye Guide Service

- Wacky Walleye Guide Service offers guided fishing tours in the waters around Door County and the Bay of Green Bay. They offer guided tours for walleye, smallmouth bass, musky and trout in the warm months and ice fishing trips in the winter.

Retailer: Norton Boat Works

- The Norton family began building boats in the late 1800s and has been in business as Norton Boat Works since 1970. They design, build and restore wooden boats to customer specifications. They can also teach customers

how to repair their own boats and sell new and restored boats.

Destinations: Destination Lake Winnebago Region

- Destination Lake Winnebago Region is the official visitor's bureau for Fond du Lac, Waupun, Horicon and the lower Lake Winnebago area. Home to Horicon Marsh, the Kettle Moraine State Forest and several lakes, the visitor's bureau offers key information for exploring the numerous biking, fishing, golf, hiking, running, skating, water opportunities and other recreational activities in the region.

Interested in being featured? To be considered, make sure your business or organization is listed in our Outdoor Business Directory. There, you can submit a request to be added or to update your information. If you are already listed, feel free to send us an email with your interest to be featured in the newsletter.

New Workshop to Create Your Own Economic Impact Report

The application period opens tomorrow for the recently announced Do-It-Yourself Economic Impact Report Workshop! Apply by Feb. 18.

Organizations, agencies and partnerships that manage trails, recreation areas or outdoor destinations are invited to participate in a one-of-a-kind opportunity hosted by the Office of Outdoor Recreation. The **DIY Economic Impact Report Workshop** will help participants develop economic figures with much-needed information to build a compelling case that can be utilized to secure funding, cultivate allies or garner broad public support for their outdoor recreation assets.

The free technical guidance and one-on-one coaching from The Harbinger Consultancy will help participants develop a custom report illustrating the economic value outdoor recreation provides a community.

Visit our website for complete program details, dates and to complete an application.

Learn More

INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY NEWS

The Ice Age Trail and North Country Trail Become National Park Service Units
Wisconsin's two National Scenic Trails were designated as national parks in December. The change gives the trails greater access to federal funding and improved maintenance. Read the announcement.

Manitowoc Area to Host the 2025 U.S. Women's Pro Disc Golf Championship
The event, coming to Wisconsin for the first time, will take place at four Manitowoc County disc golf courses. It is expected to bring more than 300 competitors, event staff and spectators. Read the article.

New Visitor Center Stop on the Great River Road in Onalaska
The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Visitor Center, which opened in 2018, was designated as an interpretive center for the Wisconsin Great River Road scenic byway that follows the Mississippi River. Learn more.

Nominate a Hunter or Archer Educator by Feb. 15
The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is accepting nominations for the 2023 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year, Hunter Education Group of the Year and Archery Education Instructor of the Year awards. Read the release.

Wisconsin Rural Partners Seeks Nominations for Top Rural Development Initiatives
The annual recognition program seeks to uncover and share the great things happening in rural Wisconsin. Awards will be given at the annual conference in May. Read more.

RESOURCES

Second Edition Rural Development Toolkit Released
After three years of research, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) released an updated edition of its widely regarded rural economic development toolkit that supports communities looking to diversify their economies through outdoor recreation. View the toolkit.

Rebuilding American Infrastructure With Sustainability And Equity (RAISE) Funding
U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) funding for planning or constructing surface transportation infrastructure projects is available. Eligible projects will improve safety, environmental sustainability, quality of life, community connectivity and economic competitiveness including tourism and innovation. Applications are due by 10:59 p.m. CT on Feb. 28, 2024. Learn more.

Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Applications Due Feb. 28

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development offers this versatile program to support business opportunities or business enterprise projects in eligible rural areas. Uses may include financing job training programs, building repair or modernization, feasibility studies, business development and much more. Specific requirements apply. Find more information.

Now Hiring For AmeriCorps Forest Corps Team
Launch a U.S. Forest Service career with AmeriCorps. The programs are recruiting team members in direct, hands-on service in areas such as wildlife risk management, reforestation, environmental conservation and resource management. Members receive a compensation package equivalent to $15 an hour and invaluable on-the-ground training. Application deadlines are Feb. 29 (team leaders) and March 31 (team members). Details available here.

Norma & Stanley DeBoer Quiet Trails Fund Applications Due March 1
Funding is available through the Norma and Stanley DeBoer Quiet Trails Fund to support the creation and maintenance of quiet trails (e.g., walking, hiking or skiing) in Wisconsin. Grants range from $500 to $1,000. Learn more.

EVENTS

Various	**Candlelight Events at State Parks**	Various
Fri-Sat Feb 2-3	**American Pond Hockey Invitational**	Minocqua
Sun Feb 4	**Stewardship @ Lodi Marsh Ice Age Trail**	Lodi
Fri-Sun Feb 9-11	**U.S. Snowshoe National Championships**	Eau Claire
Sat Feb 10	**Jig's Up Ice Fishing Contest**	Chippewa Falls
Sat Feb 17	**Northern Pines Sled Dog Race**	Iron River
Sat Feb 17	**Trailtessa Be Blissful Snowshoe Hike**	Hartman Creek
Sun Feb 18	**Polkas On Ice!**	Steven's Point
Wed-Sun Feb 21-25	**American Birkebeiner Ski Race**	Hayward
Thurs Feb 22	**Skate Around the World with Outdoor UW**	Madison
Sat Feb 24	**Snowbound In the Underdown**	Merrill
Sat Feb 24	**Urban Candlelight Hike**	Milwaukee
Thurs Feb 29	**Family Ice Skating Night**	Madison

Add your events to TravelWisconsin.com to increase your reach. Events should be marketed to a statewide audience or beyond. Read the full criteria here. Login to the Travel Wisconsin database to submit a listing or fill out the event form here. Please also keep the Office up to date on the events, projects and news in your area by adding orec@travelwisconsin.com to your email distribution lists. A few selected events are highlighted here each month.