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WISCONSIN OUTSIDE | July 2024

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we head into the busy summer season, we know folks will be seeking Wisconsin's shady forests and refreshing shorelines for outdoor fun. Here's to welcoming them outside, again and again!

In 2023, the outdoor participant base grew 4.1% over the previous year to a record 175.8 million Americans, and well over half (57.3%) of Americans age 6 or older spent time outside recreating, according to the Outdoor Industry Association's annual [Outdoor Participation Trends Report](#).

These record participation numbers are exciting and reaffirming to see. They provide more evidence underscoring the perceived value of outdoor recreation and demonstrate the demand for it.

When we welcome new participants, it is increasingly important to ensure these first experiences are positive, memorable and leave them yearning for more, especially as we see the overall participant base recreating less frequently. Repeat customers help ensure the longevity and sustainability of the outdoor industry.

As we reflect on these findings and what they mean for Wisconsin, the Office eagerly seeks your insights to inform our strategic plan, our Expedition Guidebook, for the next

five years.

What is your vision for the future of outdoor recreation in Wisconsin? What does it look like for our industry to thrive? What big ideas do you have that will get us there? What kind of support do you need?

We'll be on the road this month to gather your input, and we encourage you to attend one of the Wayfinding Forums. With six scheduled around the state, find one closest to you and join us for some rich discussions, networking and learning opportunities. [Please RSVP](#). We also ask that you take a few minutes to complete [our online survey](#).

We know the days are long, the sun is hot and our schedules are packed. We appreciate your time, insights and work that makes Wisconsin a desired place to live, work and play outside. Please take some time outside for yourself, too!



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.

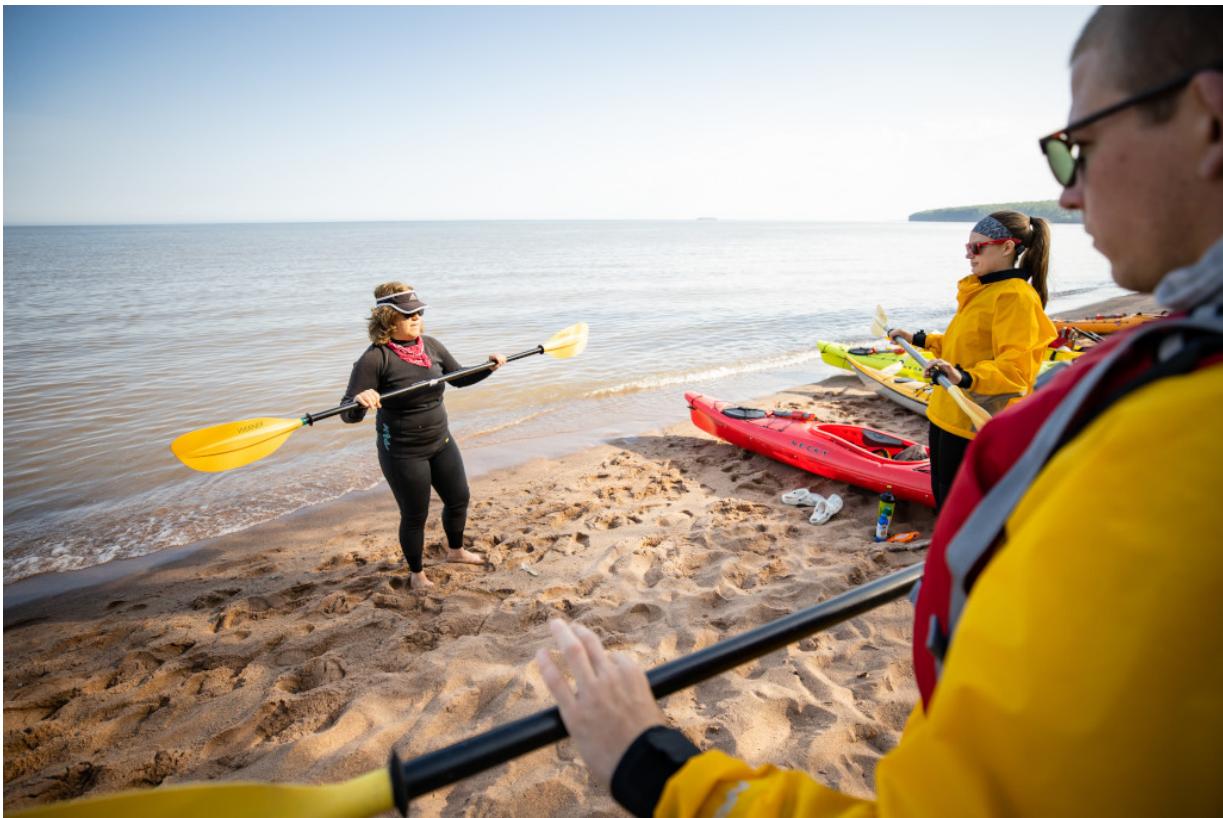
Wisconsin Outside is a monthly newsletter from the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation. Please share it with friends or colleagues with a vested interest in Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry by forwarding this email or [subscribing here](#).

Waterbody, Mind and Soul: The Many Benefits of Water

Boating businessman Bill Yeargin [recently wrote](#) that we "are much more likely to come up with the next big idea out on the lake" than in an office.

Author [Wallace J. Nichols](#) makes a strong case for water-based recreation in his book and subsequent movement, "Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do." The book uses neuroscience to explain how being in and around water can make us physically and mentally healthier.

People are drawn to water. In fact, the recent [traveler sentiment study](#) from Longwoods International reports 51% of travelers are planning to go to a beach or waterfront on their next leisure trip. In a state like Wisconsin where lakes and rivers are plentiful, the opportunity to attract travelers and outdoor enthusiasts is just as great.



Guides provide expert knowledge as well as skills and safety information before leading a group of kayakers on a tour of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

Communities that care for their natural water resources can capitalize. Research collected by the [National Park Service](#) showed the [Apostle Islands National Lakeshore](#) welcomed almost 255,000 visitors to the northernmost point of Wisconsin in 2022, and they spent more than \$45 million during their trip. This national landmark consisting of islands in Lake Superior supports 623 jobs and numerous [commercial business partners](#).

We also know angling in Wisconsin provides economic benefits (for more, see [May's Wisconsin Outside](#)), and Wisconsin's waterways provide ample opportunities for water sports of all types.

Across the state, the outdoor recreation industry keeps us on and in the water by providing the gear we use. Think fishing poles, boats, paddles, docks and more, made in Wisconsin. Guides and outfitters, another important segment of the industry, are on the frontlines offering niche trips exploring wild rivers, cruising spectacular lakes, diving underwater, [setting the sails](#) or [even surfing](#).

[Guides and outfitters](#) from the Driftless, Northwoods, Lake Michigan and in-between provide opportunities for locals and visitors to experience lakes, rivers and streams by boat or by foot, with or without your own equipment. Many of these companies are locally grown, with founders who are in it for more than just a living.



A group outfitted by Wisconsin Canoe Company prepares to launch along the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. Hear their business story in [this excerpt](#) from a [longer video](#) sharing personal stories of Wisconsin tourism.

For example, the [Wisconsin Canoe Company](#) in Spring Green provides canoes, transportation and expert advice to help customers put in boats and paddle and camp their way down the Wisconsin River. What started as a couple of boats for a summer has turned into a thriving family business with several employees. Captain Andrew at [Riverwood Canoe](#) in Osceola is on a first-name basis with community members. He doesn't just help visitors get on the St. Croix River but will also recommend his favorite stores and restaurants in Osceola to visit.

Helping to outfit visitors so they can experience the laid-back joys of river life, many local businesses and campgrounds [rent or reserve tubes and other floating devices](#). Some, along with marinas, offer boat rentals or chartered cruise options. Catering to corporate groups for employee retreats, options abound like a [pontoon cruise](#) in Minocqua, a [chartered boat ride](#) in Madison, a [Lake Geneva cruise](#) or a let-loose [tiki ride](#) through the Upper Dells.



Wisconsin may not have an ocean, but there are plenty of scuba diving opportunities from the state's deepest inland lake, [Wazee Lake](#), to the Great Lakes where one can explore shipwrecks in Lake Michigan (pictured above) through chartered trips by [Aquatic Adventures](#) of Brookfield.

The almost-unexplainable draw to water also makes it a perfect stage for large-scale entertainment from waterfront concerts ([Lakefront Live](#) at UW-Madison's Memorial Union Terrace) to waterski shows (find one near you listed on the [Travel Wisconsin events calendar](#)) to whitewater racing (Wausau's [Whitewater Park](#) will play host to both the Midwest and National Freestyle Championships in August and offers lessons throughout the summer).

Wisconsin truly is an outdoor recreation destination, with opportunities and access to learn and enjoy mainstream and niche watersports. No matter what age you are or how you enjoy it, make sure to spend some time near, in, on or under the water – your body, mind and boss will appreciate it.



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 this month's industry highlights:



Nonprofit: [Great Headwaters Trails Foundation](#)

- The Great Headwaters Trails Foundation, Inc., develops and supports a system of family-friendly community bicycling and walking trails including the Conover-Phelps Trail and the River Trail, connecting the towns and serving the residents and visitors of eastern Vilas County.



Manufacturer: [Wyatt Bikes](#)

- 100% American-made aluminum mountain bikes and fat bikes, made in Bangor by Wyatt Hrudka, owner and founder of Wyatt Bikes.



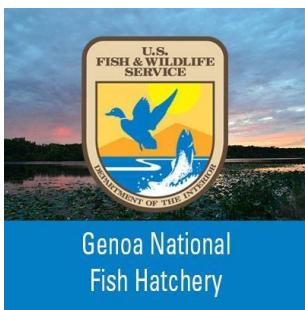
Guides, Tours, Rentals: [Smity Bait and Guide Service](#)

- Russ "Smity" Smith is a Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame guide. Rods, reel, tackle, life jackets, boats and expertise are provided by Smity Bait and Guide Service, primarily in Vilas and Oneida counties, to fish for panfish, bass, walleye, northern pike and musky.



Retailer: [Cranked Bike Studio](#)

- Cranked Bike Studios in Neenah offers road, mountain, hybrid, electric, gravel and kids bikes plus parts, accessories and clothing for sale in person and online.



Destinations: [Genoa National Fish Hatchery](#)

- The Genoa National Fish Hatchery serves as an Interpretive Center for the Great River Road, with exhibits about the people, fish and wildlife resources of the Mississippi River, tours of the fish hatcheries and nature trails to explore. The hatchery provides sport fish to public lands and restores threatened fish populations.

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.

Reminder: Share Your Insights and Join Us at a Forum

As part of our mission to draft the Expedition Guidebook, our vision and strategic plan for the Office of Outdoor Recreation for the next five years, we'd like to hear from you!

There are two ways you can share your insights, and we encourage you to do both! Take our **Stakeholder Input Survey** and join us at a **Wayfinding Forum**.

Take our Stakeholder Input Survey

Your voice is essential in helping the Office gauge the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in the outdoor recreation industry. Together, we can make the most meaningful impact through our work. It should be noted that this is not a recreation-user-focused survey about participation in outdoor activities.

Please complete the online survey by **July 21, 2024**. Participants may only take the survey once. The survey takes 10 - 15 minutes to complete.

Join a Wayfinding Forum

Attend a Wayfinding Forum to share your thoughts and engage in discussion, then stay to hear from business and community leaders about outdoor recreation initiatives in the area.

See the schedule below, and find more information on our website.

Please [RSVP by July 2](#) to indicate the session you plan to attend and don't forget to mark your calendar. A reminder with additional details will be sent to registered participants one week in advance.

Tuesday, July 9: Green Bay

1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

[University of Wisconsin – Green Bay, University Union](#)

Wednesday, July 10: Minocqua

1 – 3 p.m.

[The Waters of Minocqua](#)

Thursday, July 11: Eau Claire

9 – 11 a.m.

[The Lakely at the Oxbow Hotel](#)

Thursday, July 11: Hayward
3:30 – 5:30 p.m.
[American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation](#)
[Highway OO Trailhead- Samuel C. Johnson Family Outdoor Center](#)

Monday, July 15: Milwaukee
9 – 11 a.m.
[Havenwoods State Forest](#)

Tuesday, July 16: Wisconsin Dells
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
[Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center](#)

Wednesday, July 17
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
[Register for the virtual forum.](#)

RSVP Now

INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY NEWS

Wisconsin tourism generates record-breaking \$25 billion economic impact
Newly released data shows Wisconsin tourism generated a historic \$25 billion economic impact in 2023, marking back-to-back record-breaking years. All 72 counties saw year-over-year growth in total economic impact. As a top driver of overnight visits, outdoor recreation continues to be leveraged in Travel Wisconsin marketing, including the new episodic travel series “Here’s to Being Here” which explores extraordinary destinations. [View the series.](#) [See the data.](#)

German biker keeps returning to Wisconsin’s Tour of America’s Dairyland
Wolfgang Brandl, a German professional racing cyclist, has competed in the Tour of America’s Dairyland since 2016, returning each year for the races and the familiar German culture. He commented, “I’m just having so much fun.” [Read the story.](#)

Birkie dedicates new trail; Ben Popp elected as new Worldloppet President
On June 1, the American Birkebeiner Foundation dedicated a new paved rollerski loop named for the late Midwestern skier George Hovland at an opening of the new Trek Trails at Mt. Telemark Village Powered by OTM. Later that month, Executive Director, Ben Popp, was elected President of the Worldloppet Ski Federation, an international sports federation of cross-country skiing marathons – an idea born in Wisconsin in 1978. [Read more about the new trails.](#) [Read news about Worldloppet.](#)

St. Croix Rod launches new TECHNICA Series
After gathering feedback from trout guides, St. Croix Rod developed a new action for technical trout fishing to handle windy conditions. [Read the Gear Junkie review.](#)

Wisconsin Cities make 2024 best cities to bike list from PeopleforBikes

Washburn is the sixth-best city in the world for biking, according to the 2024 City Rankings by PeopleforBikes, and fifth-best in the United States. Madison was recognized as a City on the Rise for its improvements since 2019. [Read the story.](#) [Explore the rankings.](#)

RESOURCES

Update and add data to the Outdoor Recreation Inventory

The Office is currently updating the [Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Inventory and Explorer Tool](#). If your community or organization's data is missing or outdated, we want to hear from you. [Share your outdoor recreation data.](#)

KOA releases annual Camping & Hospitality Report

The report says camping is "becoming a formidable segment of the travel marketplace" with its popularity skyrocketing and acknowledges the growth and changing landscape of camping as newcomers seek amenities. [Read the report.](#)

Outdoor Foundation releases 2023 Participation Report

The growth in number of outdoor recreation participants reached a record 175.8 million in 2023 with an increasing number of diverse participants. While there continues to be more participants, the frequency of participation is trending downward. [Read the executive summary.](#)

USDA Grants to fund community and economic development projects

The Rural Community Development Initiative seeks applications for funding for financial and technical assistance for housing, community facilities or community and economic development projects in rural communities. Eligible applicants include public (including Tribal) organizations, nonprofit organizations and qualified private organizations. Applications due July 15. [Learn more.](#)

Grants for Trails: An Introduction to Finding, Applying and Managing Grants

Free American Trails webinar to learn more about outdoor recreation grants on July 18. [Register here.](#)

Adaptive Paddling Skills Assessment Workshop for guides and instructors

Learn how to integrate individuals with physical disabilities into paddlesport programs seamlessly. [Learn more.](#)

Apply by Aug. 9 for Community Design and Planning Services

The Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture at UW-Madison seeks projects for 2024-2025 student capstones. Capstones provide students with real-world challenges in community design/placemaking, urban redevelopment, waterfronts and park/open space planning. [Learn more.](#)

JOB LISTINGS

Harley-Davidson Engineering Positions

Positions available at Harley-Davidson's Product Development Center in Wauwatosa. [Learn more.](#)

Harley-Davidson Production and Manufacturing Positions

Work in the Powertrains Operations facility in Menomonee Falls. [Learn more.](#)

Vortex Hiring for Barneveld Facility

Graphic designer, machine operator, accounts payable and technician positions available. [Learn more.](#)

Milwaukee County Park Worker

Seasonal position available working in park operations and maintenance. [Learn more.](#)

Park Aide Needed in Adams County

Semi-skilled work including assisting with the operations of the park, maintaining park facilities and providing information to visitors. [Learn more.](#)

Recreation Event Manager in Kohler

Develop employee special events and recreation activities as a conduit for a large employer. [Learn more.](#)

Crew positions at Wisconsin Conservation Corps

AmeriCorps positions available year-round. Crew members and leaders needed. Work includes trail building. [Learn more.](#)

This is a new feature for Wisconsin Outside. If you have an outdoor recreation job posting you'd like us to include, please send a link to the posting to orec@travelwisconsin.com.

EVENTS

Tue July 2	OutWiGo Challenge Hike @ Newport SP	Newport
Sat July 6	Beach Yoga @ Pike Lake	Hartford
Sat July 6	Beach Yoga @ Devil's Lake SP	Baraboo
Sat July 6	Ridin' Dirty Gravel	Viroqua
Sat July 6	Burg 95 & Fork Horners 47	Gleason
Fri July 12	Horicon Marsh Guided Sunset Paddle	Horicon
Fri - Sun July 12 - 14	WORS #6 - ORA Trails Fest	La Crosse
Fri - Sun July 12 - 21	Kewaunee/ Door County Salmon Tournament	Kewaunee
Sat July 13	Vatten Paddlar Canoe, Kayak, SUP Races	Barnes
Sun July 14	Woolly Mountain Bike Race	St. Croix Falls
Wed July 17	CORP Clinic: Women's Cornering Clinic	Madison
Fri - Sun July 19 - 21	U.S. Biathlon Midwest Regionals Summer	Brillion
Sat July 20	Bass Classic Fishing Tournament	Balsam Lake
Sun July 21	Shoreline Boat Jam	Green Lake
Fri - Sun July 26 - 28	Wausau24	Wausau
Sat July 27	Sugar Creek Bluff Nature Hike	Ferryville

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.

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation is part of the
Wisconsin Department of Tourism

Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation | 3319 West Beltline Highway | Madison, WI 53713

[Website](#) | [1-800-432-8747](#)