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# WISCONSIN

— OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION —



**WISCONSIN OUTSIDE | April 2023**

## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Happy Spring.

As the seasonal transition hints of warmer weather and many people start to feel cabin fever, we're taking this opportunity to show how employers are encouraging outdoor recreation. It's yet another way Wisconsin's outdoors play a key role in workforce attraction and retention. And with the popularity of our new [workforce attraction tool](#), we're doubling down on the topic.

In this issue of *Wisconsin Outside*, we've highlighted several examples of how companies of all sizes are investing in outdoor recreation to strengthen employee connections to the outdoors. You'll learn how the outdoors, and a connection to it, contribute to strategies aimed at overcoming the workforce crisis.

With over 15,000 lakes, 84,000 miles of rivers and streams and 6 million acres of public land, Wisconsin's natural assets are remarkable. This natural playground and the state's industrious history are an unbeatable combination for recruiting employees. Our \$8.7 billion outdoor recreation industry is a testament to it. Wisconsin's competitive edge is in leveraging these abundant outdoor offerings. As you read the article below, consider how you can engage your community and utilize the workforce attraction tool to address the workforce challenges.

Next month, as the spring season ramps up, the Office will be at the Governor's Fishing Opener in Price County. We'll also be attending events during National Travel and Tourism Week (May 7 - 13) to highlight the importance of Wisconsin's outdoor recreation destinations. We hope to see you outside.

Happy Trails,



Mary Monroe Brown  
Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation

P.S. If you are ever interested in having the Office provide a presentation at your event, please reach out by completing our brief [request form](#).

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](#).

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## Outdoor Connections Improve Work Environments

Time spent outdoors offers a plethora of benefits that can result in increased workforce productivity. Modern blue-chip companies such as [Apple and Google have introduced biophilic architecture](#) to bring the outdoors in, a testament to this theory. [Microsoft even built treehouse meeting spaces](#) to encourage employees take their work outside. Creating environments that support employee well-being is a growing priority, and given today's hiring challenges, company culture and employee benefits have become increasingly important for talent recruitment and retention.

Outdoor recreation is increasingly being seen as a key ingredient in workforce attraction and retention strategies. The Office's [workforce attraction tool](#) is just one resource for the recruiter's toolbox, positioning the state as an outdoor recreation destination and a great place to work.

Several Wisconsin companies have taken this strategy to the next level by directly investing in outdoor recreation infrastructure or programming to offer to their employees and the greater community. From trails on site to paid exercise time, productivity

increases when employees have opportunities to live out their passions and come back to work refreshed and energized.

[Ariens Co.](#) in Brillion, maker of snow blowers and outdoor power equipment, just opened a new purpose-built Nordic ski area to help their 3,000 employees and greater community connect to the outdoors. According to a statement by Monica Ariens, Project Lead and Managing Director of AriensCo Hospitality, in a [press release](#), “This is more than a Nordic facility. Families will be able to use the trails together throughout all seasons. Local cross-country running and skiing teams can train or host a meet. We are hoping this will draw all ages to enjoy the outdoors both recreationally and through competitive events we plan to host.”

The [Ariens Nordic Center](#) includes 5 kilometers of lighted trails for cross-country skiing, a 20-point biathlon target system, a snowmaking system for all trails and a kilometer paved roller ski loop.



*Trek Trails at the Trek Headquarters in Waterloo provide a nearby trail access for employees and play host to several races throughout the year. Photos courtesy of Trek associates.*

Similarly, Trek Headquarters, located in Waterloo, followed the lead of their employees who were looking to incorporate trail rides to their mix of lunchtime road rides, by adding singletrack trails to their campus. In the 1990s, the first parcel of Trek Trails was acquired and developed primarily for employees enjoyment and to be used by engineers for product testing.

“When we saw the impact on our employees of having trails nearby, that underscored the importance of trail access and having a good place to ride near where you live or work,” explains Bob Burns, Vice President, when reflecting on that moment. Since the initial development, Trek has developed 18 miles of singletrack trails which also play host to the Wisconsin State High School Championship race for [Wisconsin NICA](#) mountain bike teams, a Wisconsin Off-Road Series race, the UCI Cyclo-cross World Cup

and other special events. The company has also been named a [Great Place to Work](#) each of the last three years.



***West Bend has 6 miles of walking trails among restored prairies across its campus. Photos courtesy of West Bend associates.***

But these types of investments in outdoor recreation amenities at the workplace aren't just happening at big outdoor companies. [West Bend](#), the insurance company, is also a long-time certified [Great Place to Work](#). Its headquarter campus in the city from which the company takes its name, features a restored prairie, walking trails, disc golf and workout stations as well as outdoor spaces for contemplation.

The Hayward Area Memorial Hospital worked in partnership with the Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association to develop the Gateway Trails for mountain bike use. In our [June 2020 issue](#), we shared this story about partnership to further develop the hospital property's system of trails which are now used for hiking, running, biking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. "The access to trails right out of work is something that very few organizations can offer their employees. As we continue to grow our healthcare community in northern Wisconsin, attracting excellent clinicians has been critical to our success," explains Luke Bierl, CEO, of their recruitment efforts.



*The addition of the Gateway Trails added mountain biking options to the Hospital Trail System that also includes hiking, skiing and snowshoeing. Photo courtesy of [Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association](#).*

Smaller businesses have also seen the value of access to the outdoors as a means to strengthen company culture and increase employee well-being, and they, too, are investing in ways to offer these benefits, in big and small ways.

In Barneveld, [Vortex Optics](#) promotes its location adjacent to the [Barneveld Prairie](#), a State Natural Area owned by The Nature Conservancy, noting the scenic views from the office windows and encouraging their 200-plus employees to take advantage of the trails for hiking and wildlife watching.

In Coon Valley, a town of 700, [Borah Teamwear](#) “encourages a culture that creates a positive and healthy work environment,” explains Chris Jackson, the company’s owner. He adds, “and we take that seriously.” The company employs 20 to 30 staff, depending on the season, to make custom team apparel for biking and skiing and offers paid time to exercise as well as a company fleet of bikes for on-site usage. Employees can take an extra 15 minutes, paid, during their lunch break to accommodate a walk, a bike ride, time in the on-site garden or to play disc golf.



*Aerial image of Borah's flow trails in Coon Valley. Photos courtesy of Borah Teamwear.*

In 2018, Borah created a separate LLC to purchase an adjacent 7-acre lot in the small industrial park located on a hillside, not prime for a building development, and created a professionally built flow trail that is open to employees and the community. They've continued developing trails on nearby parcels with about 5 miles of singletrack for hiking or biking, which has ignited community interest to leverage outdoor recreation for economic development, given their proximity to La Crosse and its burgeoning popularity as a biking destination.

When private development of outdoor recreation infrastructure isn't an option, either due to land constraints or other factors, employers can look to what a community currently offers. In the case of [Eaton Corporation](#), they [became integral partners in the recent extension of the New Berlin Trail](#) in Waukesha. Previously, the paved trail ended at their property and took to Lincoln Avenue as an on-street route. Once the rail corridor alongside their property was acquired for the trail project, Eaton donated an easement and relocated a storage facility to allow for the trail connection.

"Eaton is passionately committed to the health and wellness of our team members, which includes incorporating outdoor recreation activities. With such a short window of time to enjoy spring, summer and fall in Wisconsin, we make the very most of it, offering a steady stream of outdoor activities to our employees," Jackie Pride, Communications & Engagement Manager, explains. The company encourages employees to make use of the trail and organizes wellness walks, spring clean ups and beautification projects to enhance their outdoor space.

Programming with incentives is another common tool used by employers to cultivate employee well-being. [PeopleForBikes](#), whose mission is "to get more people riding bikes more often," recently piloted a program among their employees before rolling out [Bike Perks](#) to employers across the country. Developed in part from inspiration during his time

at Pacific Cycle in Madison as part of their internal bike committee, Ryan Birkicht, Director of Enterprise Partnerships at PeopleForBikes explained, “The program focuses on lifestyle change, utilizing the bicycle as a form of transportation and recreation. It’s not just a commuter incentive program, but it can be used that way, too.” Utilizing the Ride Spot app, employers can tailor a Bike Perks program to meet their needs – for an annual challenge or a month-long campaign. (May is National Bike Month.) PeopleForBikes supplies a template and support for the program for free.

As more people discover the benefits of time spent outside, they are advocating for outdoor opportunities in their communities and at work. Employers, too, are valuing the competitive edge outdoor recreation provides in terms of employee recruitment, retention and productivity.



## MEET YOUR WISCONSIN OUTDOOR INDUSTRY

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 April industry highlights:



**Nonprofit:** [Wisconsin Bike Fed](#)

- The Wisconsin Bike Fed works to cultivate, motivate and unite a strong community to move bicycling forward in Wisconsin using education, legislation and involvement. The Bike Fed offers a variety of programming and events, from mobile bike repair to pedestrian initiatives.



**Manufacturer:** [Impact Gel](#)

- Impact Gel, located in Ettrick and started in 2002, manufactures saddle pads using a patented, environmentally friendly gel that makes riding comfortable for both rider and horse.



**Guides & Tours:** [Lakeshore Adventures](#)

- Lakeshore Adventures offers kayak tours, equipment rentals, zipline adventures and fishing charters out of its Baileys Harbor location in Door County.



**Rental & Retailer:** [Glide Disc Golf](#)

- Glide Disc Golf, located in Madison, is one of the state's premier disc golf pro shops. The shop has a large selection of new and used discs, bags, portable baskets and a custom apparel line.



**Destinations:** [Visit Wausau](#)

- Self proclaimed as "Wisconsin's outdoor basecamp," Wausau offers four seasons of outdoor recreation opportunities. Visit Wausau provides information on these activities and more, so you are well prepared to explore the community.

*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.*

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## Wisconsin Trail Report Launching Soon

We are gearing up to launch the Wisconsin Trail Report for the 2023 season on April 11, and we can't provide this valuable community resource without your support. Updated conditions are an invaluable resource for trail users, providing much needed information about your community. Now is the time to take action to ensure the hiking and biking trail networks in your area are included in this popular statewide report.

All trail network listings on the Wisconsin Trail Report require a dedicated volunteer reporter(s) to provide weekly condition updates throughout the season from April until early November. You can adopt your local trails and become a reporter, or you can help us to recruit reporters.

### Ready to become a Trail Reporter?

Read the Trail Reporter Role below. If you are able to fulfill the duties of a Trail Reporter, please complete this brief [online form](#) to submit your interest.

### Trail Reporter Role:

- *Reporters are expected to update or refresh their report(s) on a weekly basis and as conditions change via a secure website portal.*

- *Condition updates consist of a rating selection and a brief written description of general conditions with notes of any segment closures, obstacles or hazards.*
- *If conditions have not changed, the report(s) can be updated by simply logging into and clicking save to refresh the “last updated” date that is visible on the report(s). This ensures visitors to the Wisconsin Trail Report know they are seeing the most updated information.*
- *Reports are to be maintained from early April to early November.*

## Become a Trail Reporter

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# INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY NEWS

### **American Birkebeiner Featured on CBS Sunday Morning**

The 2023 American Birkebeiner hit record attendance numbers with 30,000 spectators, over 13,000 skiers and more than 4,000 event volunteers. CBS Sunday Morning was there to take it in and share the festive experience. [Watch the story here.](#)

### **Learn to Hunt Turkey Programs Seeking Mentors, Landowners**

Pheasants Forever is hosting two spring turkey Learn to Hunt programs. They are seeking landowners that allow turkey hunting on their property for the April 7-8 program in Burnett County and experienced hunters to act as mentors for the April 14-15 program in Crawford County. [Contact](#) Pheasants Forever R3 Coordinator John Motoviloff for information.

### **Outdoor Retailer Seeking Nominations for Inspiration Awards**

Nominate advocates, leaders and changemakers in the following categories: Individual, Emerging Leader, Manufacturer, Nonprofit and Retailer. Nomination deadline is April 19. [Learn more.](#)

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# RESOURCES

### **Rural Housing Solutions Webinar Recording Available**

Hosted by USDA Rural Development with the EPA and Housing and Urban Development, the webinar highlights federal resources and private sector strategies to help gateway communities leverage their outdoor recreation and tourism venues to address housing solutions. [Watch the webinar.](#)

### **USDOT/FHWA Equity in Roadway Safety Webinar Series, April 17**

The series will feature noteworthy tools and practices to elevate equity in roadway safety data analysis, project prioritization processes, and meaningful community involvement. This kick-off event will feature a leadership panel addressing noteworthy actions and tools to address disparities in traffic fatalities and serious injuries. [Learn more and register.](#)

### **The Economics of Downtown Revitalization Webinar, April 18**

From UW-Madison Extension's Community Economic Development, this webinar will highlight recent quantitative studies to illustrate the impact of downtown revitalization efforts on economic outcomes. [Learn more and register.](#)

### **DISCOUNT CODE for 2023 Courses from The Harbinger Consultancy**

Harbinger's online courses like DIY Trail Research and Outdoor Recreation Roadmap, combine instruction, coaching, group learning and step-by-step templates to guide communities and organizations in their work. **Use code WIOUTDOOR for 10% off.** [Learn more and register.](#)

### **New Inclusive Spaces Learning Network to Launch in April**

Organized by Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's Together Outdoors Coalition, the new Inclusive Spaces Learning Network (ISLN) will provide education and programming on topics including inclusive space design, barriers to access and strategies to expand welcoming and belonging for users who have traditionally been excluded or underrepresented. [Learn more here.](#)

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**EVENTS**

Mon Apr. 3	<a href="#"><u>WI Conservation Congress Open House</u></a>	Various
	<i>Enter the keyword "congress" to find an event in your area.</i>	
Sat Apr. 8	<a href="#"><u>Artemis Turkey Scouting for Women</u></a>	Madison
Sat Apr. 8	<a href="#"><u>Spring Bird Hike @ Devil's Lake State Park</u></a>	Baraboo
Sat Apr. 8	<a href="#"><u>Migration Hike @ Lakeshore State Park</u></a>	Milwaukee
Tu-Th Apr. 14-16	<a href="#"><u>Midwest Horse Fair</u></a>	Madison
Sat Apr. 15	<a href="#"><u>Fishing Clinic for Kids</u></a>	Milwaukee County
Th-Sun Apr. 20-23	<a href="#"><u>Ice Age Trail Annual Conference</u></a>	Sheboygan
Sat Apr. 22	<a href="#"><u>Chippewa Trail Races 50K, 20 mile, 10K</u></a>	New Auburn
Sat Apr. 22	<a href="#"><u>Happy Little 5K @ Mirror Lake State Park</u></a>	Baraboo
Sat Apr. 22	<a href="#"><u>Work Play Earth Day @ State Parks</u></a>	Various
	<i>Enter the keyword "Earth Day" to find an event in your area.</i>	
Sun Apr. 23	<a href="#"><u>Bear Trax Trail Run</u></a>	Delafield
Fri Apr. 28	<a href="#"><u>ATV Safety Class</u></a>	Milladore
Fri Apr. 28	<a href="#"><u>Backyard Wausaultra</u></a>	Wausau
Sat Apr. 29	<a href="#"><u>Wausaultra Double Down</u></a>	Wausau
Sat Apr. 29	<a href="#"><u>Hunter Instruction Certification</u></a>	Fitchburg
Sat Apr. 29	<a href="#"><u>Icebreaker Triathlon</u></a>	Barron

*Add your events to [TravelWisconsin.com](http://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](mailto:orec@travelwisconsin.com) to your email distribution lists. A few selected events are highlighted here each month.*

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



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