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WISCONSIN

— OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION —



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Exciting news this month with the annual release of data from the [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#) which shows Wisconsin's outdoor economy is big and growing faster than the state's overall economy. In fact, at \$8.7 billion contributed to the state's gross domestic product (GDP), Wisconsin's outdoor industry posted its largest year since the BEA has been measuring data.

Wisconsin's figures also reveal an inextricable link between outdoor recreation and tourism. Not surprisingly, travel and tourism account for a large portion of outdoor recreation's contribution to the state's GDP. We know outdoor recreation is consistently a leading driver of tourism to Wisconsin and inspires Wisconsin residents to travel within the state. In 2020, Wisconsin was one of only seven states to see an increase in value added from local outdoor recreation-related trips (within 50 miles of home) when travel took a major hit. In 2021, local trips grew even more, increasing by 7.2% to \$771 million.

In addition to the BEA release, it was exciting to see and hear the enthusiasm for outdoor recreation at a packed session on the outdoor economy and during hallway chats at the [Destinations Wisconsin](#) Fall Conference. We, along with our partners, know supporting the places people recreate, the businesses that make and sell outdoor gear, as well as the professionals that guide adventures and steward natural spaces creates a

thriving outdoor industry, benefits tourism and local communities and grows Wisconsin's economy.

The Office continues its work to provide support and resources as well as foster connections and collaborations that strengthen the industry and drive economic impact. In the story below, we provide additional highlights of the economic data included in this year's release, as well as a look at the economic impact of skiing and snowboarding.

As the snow begins to fall, Wisconsin's outdoor industry is heading into a new year on many positive notes and strong footing, and you can look forward to our continued support of your work.

Enjoy the holidays,



Mary Monroe Brown
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.

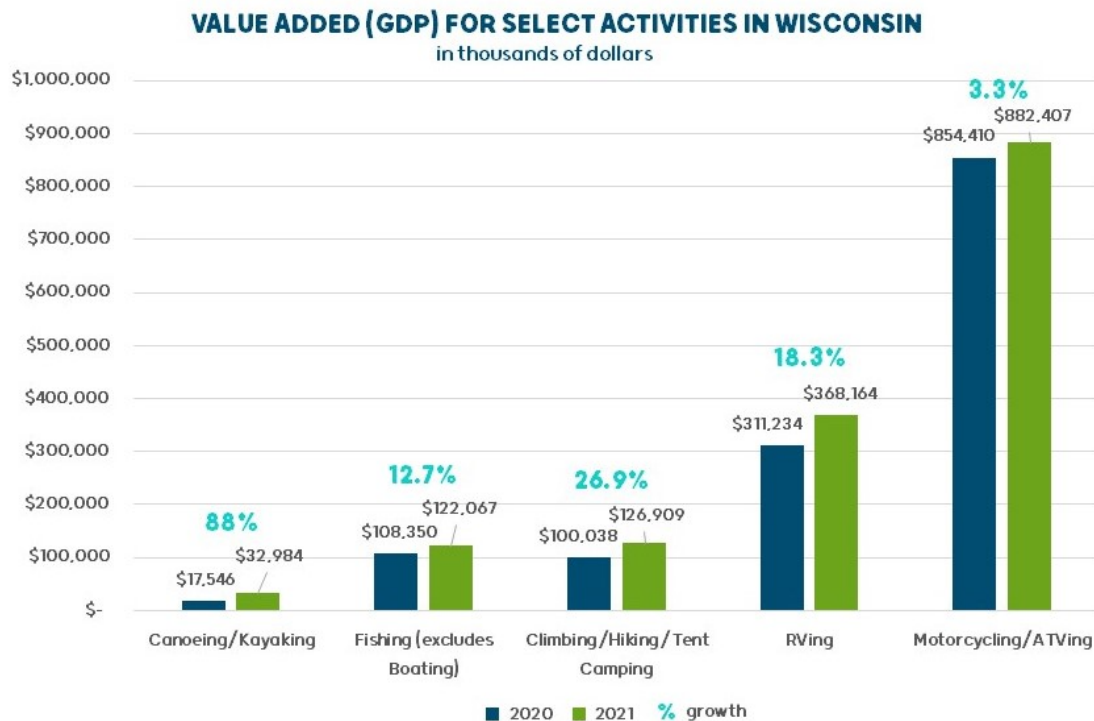
Wisconsin Outside is a monthly newsletter from the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation. Please share it with friends or colleagues with a vested interest in Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry by forwarding this email or [subscribing here](#).

Wisconsin's Outdoor Economy: Big, Growing & Vital

The annual data release from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) shows the outdoor recreation industry rebounded back to its pre-pandemic growth trajectory, recording the largest economic output since the BEA began measuring the industry's contribution to the economy five years ago.

In Wisconsin, the outdoor industry helped buoy the state's economy through the pandemic in 2020, and the new data show it surged back in 2021. Outdoor recreation contributed a record \$8.7 billion to the state's GDP. Wisconsin's outdoor economy grew by 14.1%, more than three times faster than the state's overall economy which grew by 4.6%.

Several categories that grew in 2020 saw continued growth in 2021.



Other categories also rebounded in 2021. Skiing/snowboarding [saw a 15.1% increase](#). According to the National Ski Areas Association, ski resorts saw record attendance during the 2021-2022 winter season. Travel and tourism as well as local trips also saw significant increases, 39.9% and 12.5%, respectively.

Notably, Wisconsin leads all states for contributions to GDP in the motorcycling/ATVing category and is second in the bicycling category, in large part because of major manufacturers located in the state. Harley-Davidson Motor Company has its headquarters and several facilities in Wisconsin, and the Polaris drive-train facility in Osceola is responsible for engineering and engine assembly for all of their product lines, including their ATVs, side-by-sides and Indian Motorcycle. The state is also home to several bicycle and bicycle accessory headquarters or manufacturing facilities, including Trek Bicycle, Pacific Cycle, Planet Bike and many more small- to medium-sized bike companies.

The top activities contributing to Wisconsin's outdoor economy are as follows:



Wisconsin's outdoor industry also supported nearly 90,000 jobs across various sectors in 2021 with a growth rate of 9.7% compared to 2.4% for all jobs. Manufacturing jobs were a source of this growth; even during the pandemic, manufacturing jobs grew 11% to 8,928 between 2019 and 2021.

The outdoor industry continued to show its resilience and strength in a year that wasn't without difficulties. While more people continued to find the joys of outdoor recreation, the industry still faced lagging supply chain issues and hiring challenges. Yet, despite the obstacles, the industry had a large bolstering effect to local communities with social and economic benefits proving its vital role to Wisconsin's economy.

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 December & January industry highlights:



Nonprofit: [American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation](#)

- The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation is dedicated to hosting one of the world's best cross-country ski events, maintaining premier recreation trails and promoting healthy lifestyles for people of all ages.



Manufacturer: [Berntsen International](#)

- Berntsen is a manufacturing company, headquartered in Madison, producing markers, monuments and identification products used in a range of industries including outdoor recreation. Their parks and trails product line includes trail posts, mile markers and decals, among others.



Guides & Tours: [Rohr's Wilderness Tours](#)

- Rohr's Wilderness Tours, located in northern Wisconsin on the headwaters of the Wisconsin River, and offers year-

round recreational activities including cross-country ski trips, snowshoeing and snowmobiling.



Rental & Retailer: [ERIK'S Bike Shop](#)

- ERIK's Bike Shop, founded in 1977, is the Midwest's leading bike, snowboard and downhill ski retailer. ERIK's offers new and used equipment, a range of accessories and gear and sizing and tuning services.



Destinations: [Langlade County Tourism](#)

- Dubbed the "County of Trails" and located in the Northwoods, Langlade County offers visitors and residents an abundant array of recreational opportunities all year long including hiking, biking and snow activities.

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.

A Winter Boon: Wisconsin's Ski Areas

Some of Wisconsin's earliest snow falls from snow-making machines as ski areas begin prepping for their busy season. With more than 30 ski and snowboard areas, Wisconsin has the third most resorts in the country. We are a Midwest destination for downhill adventure, drawing visitors from the nearby states of Iowa, Illinois and Indiana which have a combined total of only nine ski areas.

In 2021, skiing and snowboarding contributed more than \$33 million to the state's gross domestic product, an increase of 15.1% over the previous year. Even with a less-than-average natural snowfall last winter, the hills were bustling.

Each year [Skiing Wisconsin](#), the association for ski areas in the state, offers programs that appeal to both avid and novice skiers and snowboarders. The Skiing Wisconsin Passport is one digital pass that includes 18 discounted lift tickets, one to each of the participating member hills. The annual Learn to Ski and Snowboard Week, which will be held this year between December 18 and 23, is another organized effort by the group and encourages Wisconsinites to try the sport at deeply discounted rates.



A \$13 million investment in upgrades at Wilmot Mountain (owned by Vail Resorts) has contributed to visitor attraction. As the closest ski area to Illinois, the resort draws many out-of-state visitors.

With new and renewed interest in skiing and snowboarding, like many other outdoor activities, several ski areas are also investing in their operations to ensure excellent experiences that keep visitors coming back. [Whitecap Mountains Resort](#) began a complete renovation of its hotel, lodge, beginner area and parking. [Trollhaugen](#) is midway through a three-phase plan that has included an upgraded, variable-speed four-person chair lift, new runs and, coming next summer, another lift. [Granite Peak](#) is awaiting final decisions on the [Rib Mountain State Park](#) Master Plan and could potentially be adding more downhill runs in the future as well as mountain bike singletrack to offer a different view of the hills during spring, summer and fall.

Creating off-season recreation opportunities is another way ski areas generate year-round business. Many cross-country ski trails convert to mountain bike trails, and increasingly downhill runs are being used for mountain biking during summer months. At [Mt. Ashwabay](#) in Bayfield, even the winter trails include groomed options for fat biking.

As a key winter activity that drives tourism and is part of what makes Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry thrive in all four seasons, ski areas are places that invite families and friends to make magical winter memories and provide significant contributions to the state's economy.

INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY NEWS

Trek Bicycle Announces Holiday Campaign to Benefit World Bicycle Relief

For the second year in a row, Wisconsin-based Trek named World Bicycle Relief's Buffalo Bicycle the "Bike of the Year" and is matching donations to the organization up to \$500,000 in an effort to bring the purpose-built bike to rural communities across the globe. [Read the release.](#)

New ADA-Accessible Yurt at Flambeau River State Forest

The ADA-accessible Elk Ridge yurt was paid for by Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act funds and is exclusively available to hunters during certain hunting seasons but open to all between June 1 and August 31. [Read the release.](#)

Ice Age Trail Hosts Celebration of Partner Collaborations

Partners from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Department of Tourism and the National Park Service helped celebrate numerous trail projects and the successful Mammoth Hike Challenge. [Read the story.](#)

RESOURCES

Wisconsin Snow Report Widget and QR Code Available

Help outdoorists hit the slopes and the trails this season. Print and display this [QR code sign](#) to direct people where to find the latest snow conditions, or [download the widget](#) to embed the Wisconsin Snow Report on your website.

Trail Funding Best Practices for Legislative Sessions Webinar December 7

Join Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and state-based active transportation, trail, multimodal transportation and transit advocates from around the country for an interactive discussion of replicable policies, tactics and success stories. [Learn more.](#)

U.S. Bicycle Route System (USBRS): Success Stories Webinar December 15

Learn about what the USBRS is and how communities can be part of its growth in offering bicycle touring options for travelers and cyclists. [Learn more.](#)

Legacy Trails Grant Deadline December 15

Funds are available for projects that restore, protect and maintain watersheds on our national forests and grasslands, specifically in areas where Forest Service roads and trails may impact water quality in streams and water bodies. [Learn more.](#)

Main Street Bounceback Grant Deadline December 31

The program provides one-time funding up to \$10,000 for businesses or nonprofits that move into existing vacant commercial properties, helping to create a foundation for long-term success for themselves and their communities. Businesses must apply through the WEDC's [regional partner](#) for their location. Grants are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. [Learn more.](#)

Go Outside Fund Deadline December 31

Teachers or partner organizations may apply for funding to cover costs that facilitate getting kids outside and hands-on with nature, such as purchasing field supplies, or paying for transportation, substitute teachers or educator costs. Grants range between \$100 and \$500. [Learn more.](#)

Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) Grant Deadline January 1

This Department of Tourism program assists destinations in securing competitive sporting events in Wisconsin that require an upfront cash or financial commitment. [Learn more.](#)

Vibrant Spaces Grant Deadline January 31

A new pilot program from WEDC will award grants from \$25,000 to \$50,000 to help local communities develop and enhance public spaces. Applicants must be municipalities and provide a 1:1 match for a project ready to begin construction in 2023. [Learn more.](#)

Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grant Deadline February 1

The Department of Tourism's reimbursement grant for nonprofits provides funding to make a promotion or event come to fruition. Five different categories of projects can be considered for funding: new events, existing events, sales promotion, one-time/one-of-a-kind and destination marketing. [Learn more about JEM Grant opportunities.](#)

Recreational Boating Facilities Grant Deadline February 1

Funding is available to counties, local governments, sanitary districts, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts and qualified lake associations for recreational boating facility projects including ramps and service docks, weed harvesting, dredging and navigational aids. Applications are accepted any time and reviewed June 1, September 1, November 1 and February 1. [Learn more.](#)

Sport Fish Restoration - Boat Access Grant Deadline February 1

Funding is available for boat ramp construction and renovation, channel dredging, parking lots, accessible paths, lighting and restroom facilities. Counties, local governments, tribes, sanitary districts, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts and qualified lake associations may apply. Between 25-50% non-federal matching funds required. [Learn more.](#)

Angler R3 Grant Deadline February 15

The Angler R3 (Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation) grant program provides funding for programs or projects that help grow the number of anglers in Wisconsin. This is a reimbursement grant that may award up to 75% share of total eligible project costs, up to \$15,000. [Learn more.](#)

EVENTS

Note: In-person events may change due to precautions based on COVID-19 guidance. Please see each individual event for more information.

Sat Dec. 3	Trailtessa 2022: Be Calm	Luck
Sat Dec. 3	Global Fat Bike Day Celebration	Hayward
Sat Dec. 3	Santa Cycle Rampage	Milwaukee
Sat-Sun Dec. 3-4	Hooper Ski & Snowboard Resale	Madison
Sat Dec. 10	Santa Cycle Rampage	Madison
Sat Jan. 14	Seeley Hills Classic	Seeley
Sat Jan. 21	Birkie Tour	Hayward
Fri-Sun Jan. 27-29	Fat Bike Worlds	New Richmond
Sat Jan. 28	Ski-de-She Race	Cable

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

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