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WISCONSIN

— OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION —



A NOTE FROM THE TEAM

Wisconsinites enjoy the outdoors. It is core to the quality of life we enjoy in our state. Sure, spending time outside is fun, but in Wisconsin, we don't go outside just to ride bikes, cast lines or rev engines.

Our Wisconsinites build the bikes, handcraft the rods and fishing lures and assemble the engines and components for motorcycles, ATVs/UTVs, boats and yachts. (We make a lot of other gear, too!)

Wisconsinites get their hands dirty by building trails and constructing boat launches and campsites.

Wisconsinites organize events that allow us to explore new places and meet new people, challenge ourselves and celebrate the camaraderie found outdoors.

Wisconsinites share their passion for and knowledge of the outdoors through sales and guide services, educational programs or at the local gathering place where memories are shared.

These are the dedicated people behind Wisconsin's outdoor industry, a permanent and critical component of Wisconsin's economy. As the recent release of data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) underscores, outdoor recreation continues to be a powerhouse

driving Wisconsin's economy, **contributing a record \$11.2 billion** to the state's gross domestic product and **supporting 96,867 jobs in 2023. Wow!!!**

Throughout Wisconsin, outdoor recreation continues to be a force, creating attractive communities where residents want to reside and drawing in visitors, new businesses and workforce talent. The feature story below shares more details on the BEA data and a sneak peek at the local impacts of outdoor recreation in the communities that participated in the Office's pilot program, Do-It-Yourself Economic Impact Report Workshop.

As we close out 2024, in addition to the economic contributions of its outdoor recreation sector, Wisconsin has a lot to be proud of:

- In February, during an unprecedented winter, the [American Birkebeiner](#) pulled off an amazing feat, creating a 10-kilometer race course using machine-made snow to host and celebrate its 50th anniversary race.
- In April, the Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association released [a study](#) showing the incredible economic impacts of riders and industry in Wisconsin.
- In May, [Access Ability Wisconsin](#), an organization that provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities to access the outdoors, celebrated its 10th anniversary.
- In June, the [Tour of America's Dairyland](#) kicked off its 15th anniversary series by hosting [the 2024 Para-Cycling Road National Championships](#) in Janesville and was named one of [USA Today's 10 Best Road Cycling Events](#).
- Also in June, the city of Washburn ranked sixth-best place in the world (and fifth-best in the nation) for biking, [according to PeopleforBikes](#).
- In August, volunteer reporters were recognized for their invaluable contributions to Travel Wisconsin's Seasonal Reports which won an ESTO Mercury Award. (Here's the [thank you video](#), ICYMI.)
- In September, Wisconsin communities received over [\\$32 million in additional funding](#) for projects from the redistribution process of the Transportation Alternatives Program.
- In October, IRONBULL hosted its signature gravel bike race, the 5th annual [Red Granite Grinder](#), which winds through Marathon County and was recently awarded a [Travel Wisconsin JEM Grant](#) to increase marketing and promotion. This year, they saw a 22% increase in attendance from 2023 with attendees coming from 13 states!

Congratulations to you! It's been a great year, and we're honored to fuel and support your amazing work. Our team is here to help connect you to resources, guide you through challenges and celebrate your wins. And now, you can [follow us on LinkedIn](#) for timely news, opportunities and updates!

Here's to more exciting things to come in 2025!

Cassie Mordini, Director

Taylor Foster, Project and Outreach Specialist

Jess James, Outdoor Recreation Development Specialist

(The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation team, pictured below with Secretary Anne Sayers, after our strategic planning retreat in late September. [Reach out to us](#) anytime.)



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](#).

Breaking Records and Bringing Dollars to Communities: Wisconsin's Outdoor Economy Reigns in 2023

The annual release of data by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) showed that Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry posted another record-breaking year in 2023, contributing a whopping \$11.2 billion to the state's gross domestic product (GDP), increasing 9.4% over 2022. Growth of the state's outdoor industry surpassed the national average (9.0%) and the overall state economy. (Wisconsin's GDP grew 6.9% in 2023.)

In Wisconsin, the outdoor recreation industry supported 96,867 jobs and provided over \$5.4 billion in compensation. Across the board, growth was seen in nearly every category, reinforcing the significance of this important sector to Wisconsin's economy.

WISCONSIN OUTDOOR INDUSTRY'S RECORD-BREAKING 2023

\$11.2 BILLION

Year over year growth: **+9.4%**

TO STATE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)

Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry had a record-breaking year in 2023, contributing \$11.2 billion to the state's GDP and surpassing the previous record set in 2022 by 9.4%. Outdoor recreation supported 96,867 jobs accounting for 3.2% of all jobs in Wisconsin. These historic numbers reinforce the importance of the outdoors and the outdoor industry to the Wisconsin economy and Wisconsinites.

1 IN 40 JOBS SUSTAINED BY OUTDOOR RECREATION


96K+ FULL-TIME & PART-TIME JOBS

Year over year growth: **+3.4%**

TOP ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTING TO WISCONSIN'S GDP


Multi-Use Apparel & Accessories
\$ 1.3 billion


Motorcycling/ATVing
\$ 1.1 billion


Boating/Fishing
\$ 928 million


RVing
\$ 464 million


Game Areas
\$ 499 million


Guided Tours/
Outfitted Travel
\$ 450 million


Hunting Shooting
\$ 320 million


Bicycling
\$ 157 million

WISCONSIN
—OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION—

SOURCE
Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account of the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

For an at-a-glance look at the data, [view and download](#) this helpful infographic.

The BEA data demonstrates outdoor recreation is more than just fun: it means green for the thousands of manufacturers, retailers, guides, equipment providers, nonprofits and others whose work is directly connected to the outdoors. It means green for local communities that invest in outdoor recreation amenities to attract visitors and improve the quality of life for residents. It means green for local businesses and residents that benefit from the spending of outdoor recreation enthusiasts. We should all be proud of the roles we play that add up to this

record-breaking achievement and collective success. Read on for individual stories from across the state.



Eau Claire's paved city trails are a popular and easy way to explore the city's art and shopping. Photo credit: City of Eau Claire

Economic Impact Reports Tell Local Stories

Across the state, localized outdoor recreation events, infrastructure and facilities inject dollars into communities. This year, the Office worked with five teams in a [Do-It-Yourself Economic Impact Analysis Workshop Series](#) led by [The Harbinger Consultancy](#) to estimate how much money outdoor recreation brings to a community.

This pilot program included a series of webinars plus one-on-one coaching. Organizations were selected through a competitive application process, with five teams ultimately conducting visitor surveys and research that led to their own local economic impact reports.

Dodge County Parks; the City of Eau Claire and Visit Eau Claire; Lafayette County; Visit Wausau, Village of Rib Mountain and Marathon County; and WinMan Trails each produced their own economic impact analysis. Combined, these reports found outdoor recreation contributed at least \$26 million for the local communities. The full reports are anticipated to be released in mid-December. Below is a preview of what each report studied.

Dodge County Parks studied the impact of county-run parks, the Wild Goose State Trail and Horicon Marsh on the community. Using a visitor survey and visitor spending data, Dodge County calculated the economic impact of parks and the marsh. The report highlights the additional benefits of these outdoor recreation areas on health and wellness and ecosystem services that preserve the environment.

The city of **Eau Claire and Visit Eau Claire** (the visitor's bureau) partnered on a project looking at the economic impact of paved trails through the city and the free public art along the trails. Trails and art support local businesses and strengthen the community by providing accessible, year-round recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. The spending power of locals using city trails for transportation resulted in significant dollars generated, community pride and a desirable trait for attracting new residents.



Photo credit: Lafayette County

Lafayette County's study looked at the economic and community impact of the Cheese Country Trails, a 47-mile trail system that welcomes almost 80,000 trail users during peak riding season. Preliminary findings indicate that visitor spending on activities such as dining, lodging and trail-related services directly supports local businesses and generates tax revenue. By understanding these spending patterns, the county can ensure the continued success of the trails.

Marathon County, Village of Rib Mountain and Visit Wausau worked together to analyze the Nine Mile County Forest and its impact on Rib Mountain village. The county park generates economic impact in the region due to the high-value spending of visitors. The report tells the stories of how Nine Mile serves as a hub for recreation, a driver of local business revenue and a valuable community asset.

WinMan Trails opened to the public in 2013 with trails designed for seasonal biking, skiing, hiking, running and Onewheeling, staying on the cusp of trail-based trends. WinMan's economic impact analysis included a robust visitor study during the summer of 2024, finding that 86% of visitors are non-local. Their survey also found that 75% of WinMan visitors come to the Winchester-Manitowish area in Vilas County because of WinMan.

These reports demonstrate the big impact outdoor recreation has on local economies, while representing a fraction of the overall impact of the outdoor industry on Wisconsin's economy. From north to south, east to west, and everywhere in between, trails and parks generate income, employ residents and provide places that double as tourism destinations and community gathering spaces. Continued investments in outdoor recreation, whether through businesses, local governments or nonprofits, lift outdoor recreation for communities and the state.



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 this month's industry highlights:



Nonprofit: [Jack Lake Silent Sports Association](#)

- The Jack Lake Silent Sports Association was established in 2019 to build and maintain the Jack Lake Mountain Bike Trails built in 2017 at Jack Lake Veteran's Memorial Park in Deerbrook.



Professional Services: [Bast Durbin Advertising](#)

- For over 30 years, Bast Durbin has developed, nurtured and expanded its network of relationships with media outlets and marketing channels to promote brands and products in the outdoor recreation sector.



Guides, Tours, Rentals: [Runamuk Rides](#)

- Runamuk Rides offers snowmobile and side-by-side UTV rentals in the Hayward/Cable area. Guided tours are also available. Rentals include helmets and maps.



Retailer: [R&R Sports Fishin' Hole](#)

- For over 50 years, the Fishin' Hole in St. Francis has sold a large selection of rods, reels, lures, line and terminal tackle for inland and Great Lakes fishing. Other services include line spooling, live bait and free seasonal fishing schools for all ages and skill levels.



Destinations: [Harley-Davidson Museum](#)

- The 20-acre campus in downtown Milwaukee along the Menomonee River includes indoor and outdoor sights chronicling the 120-plus year history of the iconic Harley-Davidson brand.

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.

SUCCESS STORIES

Onewheel Event Rolls in \$90k for the Northwoods

WinMan Trails, a nonprofit public/private partnership trail system in Winchester, recently hosted its third annual [Midwest Onewheel WinMan Enduro and Dual Slalom](#). This year's event drew a record 150 riders from 22 states, generating over \$90,000 in economic impact for Vilas County businesses and nearly \$10,000 to support trail building and maintenance at WinMan.

A Onewheel is a unique self-balancing electric skateboard with a single, wide tire in the middle. The activity originated on the West Coast and has since gained popularity across the country. Learn more about the sport [in this story from Wisconsin Life](#).

By embracing emerging outdoor trends, WinMan has positioned itself as a premier destination for outdoor activities. Their 23-plus miles of mountain bike trails are perfectly suited for Onewheel riders, providing a unique and exhilarating experience. Additionally, WinMan offers trails for hiking, running, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and winter biking.

The industry is taking notice. WinMan will be the featured presenter in an upcoming webinar by American Trails. To learn more lessons from WinMan Trails, join them in a free international webinar Dec. 12 called [Innovative Development of a Year-Round Destination Trail System in a Rural Area](#).

Planning is already underway for the fourth annual Midwest Onewheel WinMan Enduro and Dual Slalom, scheduled for Sept. 21-22, 2025. As the event continues to gain momentum, growing from 99 to 150 riders in its first years, it highlights the significant role that outdoor recreation events play in boosting local economies and fostering a vibrant outdoor culture.



A Onewheel rider and a mountain biker share the trails at WinMan. Photo credit: WinMan Trails

INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY NEWS

Draft Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Released

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is seeking public input on the draft SCORP now through Dec. 15. The [SCORP](#) describes the supply and demand for outdoor recreation in Wisconsin and the barriers Wisconsin residents may experience preventing them from participating in outdoor recreation. [Learn more.](#)

Wisconsin Scores in *Outside Magazine's* Top 50 Places to Work

Outside Magazine released its list of "The 50 Best Places to Work in 2024," and Wisconsin businesses Gunpowder Inc. (Delafield) and Shine United (Madison) made the list at Nos. 7 and 25, respectively. Travel Wisconsin's PR firm, TURNER, made the list at 19! Gunpowder Inc. and Shine United are both marketing firms, Gunpowder is an outdoor-focused firm. Companies on the list have gone above and beyond for employee satisfaction while encouraging employees to harmonize work and outdoor recreation. [See the list.](#)

RESOURCES

Trail Friendly Community Self-Assessment Released

In anticipation of opening its Trail Friendly Community designation, the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) recently released a Trail Friendly Community Self-Assessment in partnership with West Virginia University. The assessment analyzes trails and bike infrastructure through a broad lens of community development. [See the tool and companion guide.](#)

Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Letters of Interest Accepted

The Environmental Protection Agency's Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities is now accepting letters of interest through Dec. 12. The program provides planning assistance to local governments working in partnership with community organizations. [Learn more.](#)

U.S. Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program Applications due Jan. 13

Applications now accepted for municipal or county governments, eligible Native American tribal governments and qualified nonprofits to establish community forests that provide community benefits including recreation. [Learn more.](#)

Two Free American Trails Accessibility Webinars in January

Registration is open for two webinars in January focused on different aspects of accessibility and outdoor recreation. [Trailblazing Accessibility: Ensuring Equitable Access to Natural Spaces for Those with Disabilities](#) is on Jan. 16. [Access Versus Accessibility](#) is Jan. 30.

RAISE Grant Applications due Jan. 30

Applications for the FY 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program are being accepted now for planning and constructing surface transportation infrastructure,

which could include multi-modal transportation access. Eligible applicants include states, local government and federally recognized Tribes. [Learn more.](#)

Sport Fish Restoration Boat Access Applications due Feb. 1

State funding is available for boat ramp construction and renovation, channel dredging, parking lots, accessible paths, lighting and restroom facilities. Between 25-50% non-federal matching funds required. [Learn more.](#)

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Applications due March 1

This National Park Service program supports locally led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States. It assists communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers and wildlife habitats and creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations. [Learn more.](#)

JOB LISTINGS

Trek Hiring in Waterloo

Several open positions are available at the Trek headquarters in Waterloo, including positions in brand management, customer care, CAD and quality control. [Learn more.](#)

Positions Available at Harley-Davidson

Digital, engineering, finance, logistics, manufacturing, marketing, sales and more positions are available for Harley-Davidson across Wisconsin. [Learn more.](#)

Schmitz Brothers Family of Resorts Hiring

- Little Switzerland in Slinger has positions available for guest services, ski instructor and snowboard instructor. [Learn more.](#)
- Nordic Mountain in Wild Rose is hiring for indoor and outdoor positions. [Learn more.](#)
- Crystal Ridge (formerly Rock Snowpark) in Franklin is hiring a Snowcat operator and operations member, both full-time positions. [Learn more.](#)

Summer Outdoor Adventures Club in Reedsburg Hiring

Nonprofit organization that serves children in kindergarten through high school is looking for leaders for canoeing, hiking, biking, snowshoeing and camping experiences. [Email for information.](#)

Diversity in Conservation Internship

The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is accepting applications for the 2025 cohort of the Diversity in Conservation Internship Program opening Dec. 2. Applications due Jan. 24. [Learn more.](#)

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

Blaze a trail with us at the 2025 Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism

The future for Wisconsin tourism is Boundless! Save the date for the [Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism \(WIGCOT\)](#), March 9-11, 2025, in La Crosse, and watch for an announcement when registration opens in December. In the meantime, [book your lodging](#) for the conference.

We'll be blazing trails for Wisconsin tourism and outdoor recreation at WIGCOT 2025, with paths of possibilities intersecting for everyone!

Help us craft the schedule. We are accepting programming ideas through Friday, Dec. 13. If you have an idea for a presentation topic, and an expert from your organization who can speak on the topic, we want to hear about it! Presentations can be a single speaker, co-presenters or a panel discussion. [Submit your proposal here.](#)

Hoofers 60th Annual Ski and Snowboard Resale is Dec. 7-8

The Hooper Ski and Snowboard Club is hosting its annual Ski and Snowboard Resale, Wisconsin's largest ski swap, at Union South in Madison. Discounted items for all ages are for sale. Community members can sell their new and gently used gear.

World Ice and Snow Sailing Championship in Madison

Elite and recreational racers from around the globe will gather in Madison on Feb. 3-8 to test their racing skills. Male and female world champions will be crowned in several categories. The championship is part of the Clean Lakes Alliance Frozen Assets Festival on Lake Mendota. [Learn more.](#)

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

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