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WISCONSIN

— OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION —



WISCONSIN OUTSIDE | March 2023

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In just a few short days, we'll be at the [Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism](#) (WIGCOT) which will be hosted in Green Bay on March 12-14. We are so excited to bring outdoor recreation-related topics to WIGCOT, one of the nation's largest state tourism conferences. In fact, our breakout session, "How to Capitalize on Outdoor Recreation's BIG Economic Impact Numbers in Your Community," is already proving to be popular with those that have registered to join us! In this panel, the experts will break down the economic impact of the outdoor industry in Wisconsin and share how local communities can leverage state figures and local data to tell their own compelling stories. Our economic impact data has been big news for the State, proving the importance of uplifting the outdoor industry through the work of the Office.

Our second breakout session will build off of our upcoming [webinar](#) on March 2nd, "Small Changes, Big Impact For a More Accessible Outdoors," and is titled similarly. Find more information and register for the webinar below, then get inspiration and tips from your peers that are successfully implementing accessibility projects from the WIGCOT session.

We hope you can join us for all or part of the conference to absorb lots of great content and engage in valuable networking opportunities. You can still [register here](#) and [become a sponsor](#).

You can also catch us at [Canoecopia](#), March 10-12. The Office is joining forces with WEDC's Office of Rural Prosperity to support Wisconsin manufacturers, businesses and communities that rely on paddling and outdoor recreation. In the story below, you'll see how regional trail efforts like the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway are successful at gaining momentum through robust stakeholder networks and envision driving economic impacts for the communities in which they are located.

As we prepare to welcome spring later this month, we are excited to share these upcoming opportunities to connect and engage with you. Our goal remains to support you with the resources, tools, guidance and inspiration you need to advance Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry.

Onward,



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](#).

Don't Miss the Upcoming Webinar

Small Changes, Big Impact for a More Accessible Outdoors



Thursday, March 2 at 12:00 PM

Creating accessible outdoor opportunities opens the door for one million Wisconsinites affected by disability and their family and friends. Communities that make small changes to include a diverse audience will have an advantage on the competition in capturing this economic potential. Nationwide, [travelers with disabilities spent \\$58.7 billion](#) over a two-year period (2018-2019), according to the Open Doors Organization.

“Small Changes, Big Impact for a More Accessible Outdoors” will bring together experts who will share the criteria and considerations to incorporate into your planning, design and construction process to help ensure your next outdoor recreation project is accessible. Learn how to evaluate current spaces or enhance them to create a more welcoming experience for people with a variety of disabilities, as well as what information you can provide in your marketing materials to help more outdoorists and their families prepare for an outing.

[Register Now](#)

Collaboration Creates Regional Connectivity to Drive Economic Impact

Trails and outdoor recreational activities are one of the top drivers of tourism for Wisconsin and support for their infrastructure is growing. In 2019, a [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy study](#) estimated that Wisconsin benefits from trails and active transportation each year with a net economic impact of \$1.5 billion, including \$686 million in spending from trail users and another \$833 million in healthcare cost savings. The study also showed that as trail system connectivity increases, these impacts grow

exponentially. As a central hub for the industry, the Office of Outdoor Recreation provides guidance and fosters connections to cultivate more collaborative regional projects and help them gain momentum like the visionary projects you'll read about below.

A Gateway to the Driftless

What began as a trail between the villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac, an idea that first gained support from the county in 2007, the [Great Sauk State Trail](#) is now a major segment of a larger regional trail system underway. Joining forces with similar interests in nearby communities, Sauk County and Dane County are committed to connecting the trail system projects in each of their counties, the Great Sauk State Trail and the Walking Iron Trail, respectively, via the Wisconsin River Recreational Bridge. Both counties recently [committed \\$2 million each](#) to the project.



Map of proposed, existing and connecting trails in the Gateway to the Driftless Trail System. Map courtesy of Chris James, Dane County Parks.

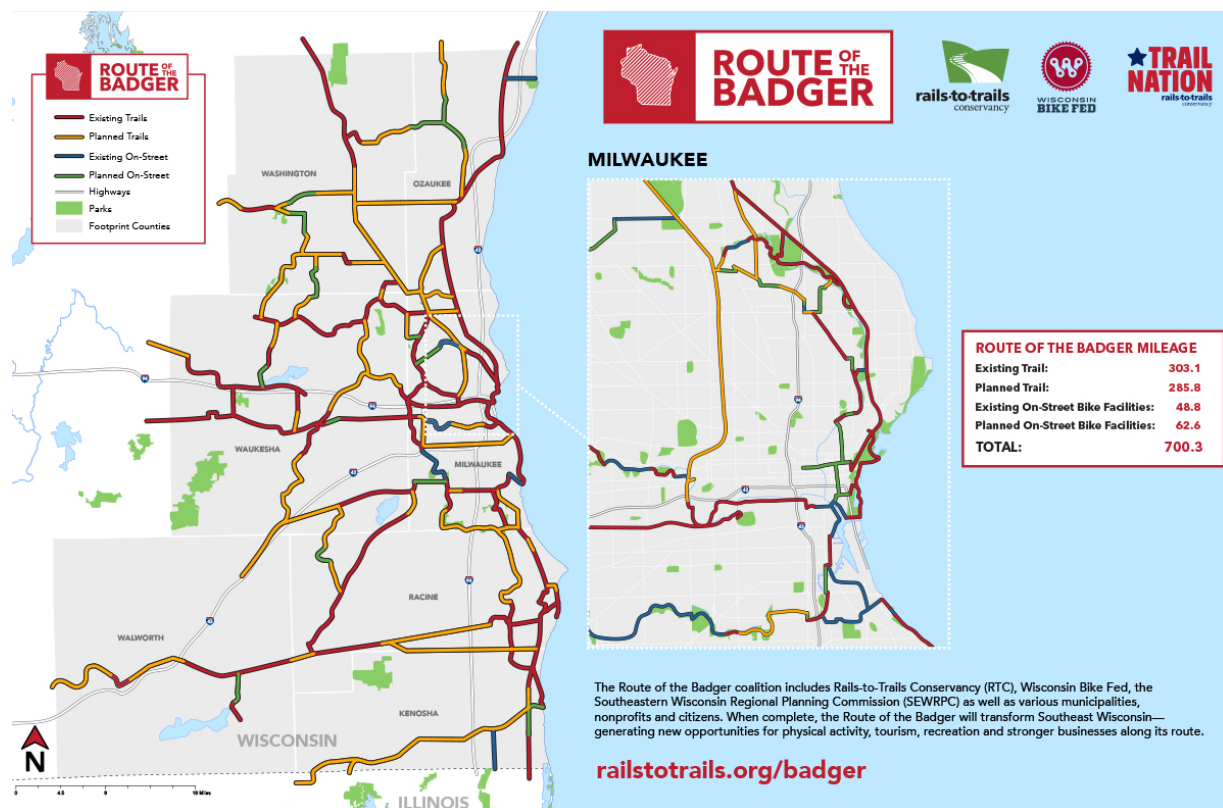
The efforts are being coordinated by a robust network of stakeholders including both counties, the communities of Cross Plains, Black Earth, Mazomanie, Sauk City, Prairie du Sac, Baraboo and Reedsburg, along with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, Wisconsin & Southern Railroad Company, the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission and in consultation with the Ho-Chunk Nation. All are committed to the ongoing progress of this large, regional project estimated to have a [\\$3 million local economic impact](#) for every 100,000 non-local users.

According to Marty Krueger, Sauk County Board Supervisor, “We’re developing a world-class recreational trail along the Wisconsin River through Sauk County to connect with the 400 State Trail. Our vision is to complete this large link that will eventually connect Middleton to the Mississippi and bring huge benefits to the region and the state.”

Linking Southeastern Wisconsin

On the other side of the state, the [Route of the Badger](#) is another regional trail project. “What makes this trail network so important is that it will provide seamless walking and biking routes for recreation, transportation and connect communities across seven counties in Southeast Wisconsin,” explains Willie Karidis, Route of the Badger Project Manager for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. The plan will extend and link existing trails to create a 700-mile trail network connecting Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha counties.

The massive project is spearheaded by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy managing a coalition of dozens of stakeholders across the region. Recent progress has included the completed first phase of the [Powerline Trail](#) in Greenfield, the [acquisition of a 10.7-mile segment](#) of former rail corridor to extend the White River State Trail in Racine and create 56 miles of uninterrupted trail, as well as the [commencing of a two-year equitable development planning process for the 30th Street Corridor](#) that will connect with the Hank Aaron State Trail in Milwaukee and provide recreational access to neighborhoods that disproportionately lack safe recreational opportunities.



Both of these regional projects aim to fill gaps and foster connectivity among area communities, creating regional competitiveness for their quality-of-life amenities. Connected trail systems create transportation alternatives that can help mitigate automobile traffic and congestion, as well as offer healthy lifestyle habits that can contribute to reduced healthcare costs. They also offer recreational opportunities for residents and visitors whose associated spending contributes to local economies. The strength of these projects is in their regional collaborations and community support gained through a shared vision of the benefits that trail connectivity provides.

A River Runs Through It

Rivers, too, are a line of connection between communities, naturally. The Wisconsin River, once called the “hardest working river in America,” was heavily relied on to transport lumber downstream to paper mills. This storied past is part of the inspiration behind the [Great Pinery Heritage Waterway](#) (GPHW), which was recently [designated as the 21st state water trail](#) by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Great Pinery Heritage Waterway is a 108-mile trail along the Wisconsin River in the heart of the state. Currently running from Oneida County to Portage County, the trail connects to two other water trails on tributaries and a Class I trout stream, passes through two state parks, parallels hiking and biking trails on the banks, traverses Class I-III rapids, and has access to camping and 24 marked landings with interpretive signage. Championing the project, the Wausau & Marathon County Parks & Recreation Foundation has worked with [local stakeholders and municipalities](#) to leverage the natural amenities and develop the area as an outdoor recreation destination that attracts visitors and new residents.

Dave Eckmann, Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce CEO and president explained, “A significant component of our plan is to market the greater Wausau region as an outdoor recreation mecca of the Midwest to attract and retain skilled workforce and innovative companies. The GPHW proposal would help contribute to realizing this strategy and further enable the area to reach full potential as a nationally recognized outdoor hub.”

With the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway offering 92-miles of scenic paddling, new Great Pinery Heritage Waterway now complements this southern route with a northern option and different scenery. The vision for the trail is to expand into Vilas and Wood counties, so one could paddle from the headwaters to Lake Petenwell and Castle Rock Lake and perhaps, eventually connect further south to the Lower Wisconsin River.

They Come from Afar

Today, outdoor enthusiasts have traveled from all over the nation [to thru hike the Ice Age National Scenic Trail](#) – a 1,200 mile footpath contained solely within the state. Projects like the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway, Gateway to the Driftless Trail System and

Route of the Badger see the potential economic gains that could be realized by attracting even more outdoorists with the addition of a developed paddling route along the 430-mile length of the Wisconsin River or a 230-plus-mile trail that takes cyclists from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River.

All of the regional programs listed take tremendous focus and collaboration. If any of these are in your area, consider getting involved to help see it to fruition. The economic impact of connectivity is an important factor for workforce attraction, retention, business growth and healthy communities.

Trail Reporters Wanted

As spring approaches, so do the ever-changing conditions of the shoulder season. The Wisconsin Trail Report will serve as an important resource to help prepare trail users for their hiking or biking adventures. 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

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 March industry highlights:



Nonprofit: [Outdoor Heritage Education Center](#)

- The Outdoor Heritage Education Center, located in Hazel Green, aims to increase the public's understanding and stewardship for natural resources, resource management and America's outdoor heritage including outdoor related recreation like fishing, hunting and other shooting sports.



Manufacturer: [Ardisam](#)

- Ardisam, located in Cumberland, started manufacturing earth and ice augers in 1960. They have since expanded to include camping tents, hunting blinds, tree stands and other outdoor equipment and parts.



Guides & Tours: [Larry Smith Outdoors](#)

- Larry Smith Outdoors offers a range of services from educational and demonstration videos to guided fishing services. Located in the Lake Winnebago area, Larry Smith and his team have over 30 years in open water and ice fishing experience.



Rental & Retailer: [Shepherd & Schaller Sports](#)

- Shepherd & Schaller Sports was founded in 1949 and is located in Wausau. Providing gear, clothing and accessories for over 10 outdoor recreation activities, Shepherd & Schaller carries the latest equipment that is on-trend and high performance.



Destinations: [Burnett County Tourism Coalition](#)

- Burnett County Tourism Coalition works to support and promote the over 500 pristine lakes, 80 miles of national scenic riverway and over 50,000 acres of wildlife areas in their county, dubbing it a "true getaway for water and wildlife enthusiasts alike."

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.

INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY NEWS

Permanent Ice Shanty Removal Dates Approaching

As spring approaches, DNR reminds anglers that permanent ice shanties need to be removed from bodies of water. [Read the release](#).

ORA Trails Seeks Development Director

The La Crosse area trails and outdoor recreation organization seeks to add a Development Director to the team to direct a \$6 million capital campaign. Deadline to apply is March 15. [Read more](#).

Midwest Family Ski Resorts Introduces “Legendary Pass”

The Legendary Pass, a new, multi-tiered season pass for the 2023-24 winter season, will provide access to all three of the company’s ski areas: Granite Peak (Wausau, WI), Lutsen Mountains (Lutsen, MN) and Snowriver Mountain Resort (Wakefield, MI). The 2023-24 Legendary Pass will go on sale Saturday, March 4, 2023. [Read more](#).

RESOURCES

Working in the Outdoor Industry Webinar Series

Hosted by Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, this four-part webinar series is a masterclass on available jobs, needed skillsets, trends and technical and academic programs for the outdoor industry. [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.](#)

New Federal Funding Tool

Use the new tool released by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to answer a few questions and learn what federal funding opportunities projects your projects may be eligible to receive. [View the tool.](#)

New TrailNation Playbook for Building Trails

A robust guide with examples and resources for every step of the trail development process was launched as part of the new TrailNation effort by Rails-to-Trails. [View the playbook.](#)

EVENTS

Fri-Sat Mar. 3-5	<u>Bayfield Winter Festival</u>	Bayfield
Sat Mar. 4	<u>Sweaty Yeti Winter Festival</u>	Neillsville
Tues Mar. 7	<u>Guided Full Moon Hike</u>	Milladore
Fri-Sun Mar. 10-12	<u>Bikeorama</u>	Madison
Fri-Sun Mar. 10-12	<u>Canoecopia</u>	Madison
Sat Mar. 11	<u>Fat Bike Birkie</u>	Cable
Sat Mar. 11	<u>Geocaching in the Park</u>	Hudson
Sat Mar. 11	<u>Weekend Wild Walk</u>	Baraboo
Sat Mar. 11	<u>Candlelight Hike</u>	Lake Geneva
Fri Mar. 17	<u>Alternative St. Patrick's Day Hike</u>	Milwaukee
Sun Mar. 19	<u>Hills Are Alive Trail Run & CaniCross</u>	Lake Geneva
Sun Mar. 19	<u>Spring Equinox Hike</u>	Milwaukee
Sat Mar. 25	<u>Deer Ecology & Shed Antler Hunt</u>	Babcock
Sat Mar. 25	<u>Frog Hike</u>	Eagle
Sun Mar. 26	<u>An Evening with Dr. Jane Goodall</u>	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.

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



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