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WISCONSIN OUTSIDE | April 2020

A Note from the Director

Welcome to the first Wisconsin Outside email newsletter!

Getting outdoors is part of my core being and what connects me to the things I love. Yesterday I took a bike ride; the long kind where you finally disconnect from all the thoughts and to-dos running through your mind. It was freeing, and I came back to my desk refreshed and energized.

Our office couldn't have imagined kicking off this newsletter in the midst of a pandemic. So much has changed. So many are hurting, trying to adjust to a new normal. But through all of this, what has remained is our great outdoors.



Getting outside has never felt so important to so many people. We see people on walks, at parks, riding bikes, taking children outside and hoping and dreaming of greater adventures. It demonstrates our intrinsic connection to and need for outdoor spaces where we can recreate, recalibrate, and enjoy ourselves.

As we remain “Safer at Home” on this 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, we can still partake in virtual celebrations (see some options under Events below), and we can still get outside. Take hope in all the new and renewed connections that are happening as more people venture out of doors, feeling a deeper appreciation for our common treasure. Witnessing this trend simultaneously as we meet with stakeholders is what fuels me as we undertake the exciting challenge of building out Wisconsin’s Office of Outdoor Recreation during this unprecedented time. When we come out on the other side, outdoor recreation will be part of leading the recovery of minds, hearts, health, and local economies.



Mary Monroe Brown
Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation

This edition of Wisconsin Outside is the first from Wisconsin’s Office of Outdoor Recreation. Please share it with friends or colleagues with a vested interest in Wisconsin’s outdoor recreation industry and partners by forwarding this message or [subscribing here](#). You may also update your subscription preferences [here](#).

An Office Decades in the Making

Since the state started measuring the economic impact of tourism in the 1960s, outdoor recreation has been recognized as an important driver in this segment of Wisconsin’s economy. In fact, it received “co-star” status as the industry was often referred to as “Tourism and Outdoor Recreation,” a nod to the growing Northwoods destinations, campgrounds, hunting and fishing camps, ski hills, and beaches that beckoned visitors through all four seasons.

“Outdoor recreation has always been a part of the story of Wisconsin,” says Wisconsin Department of Tourism Secretary-designee Sara Meaney. “It is the number one marketable reason people come to Wisconsin.”

Boasting shorelines of two Great Lakes and the mighty Mississippi, over 15,000 lakes and 10,000 miles of navigable rivers, two of the nation’s 11 national scenic trails, and 16 million acres of forested land, Wisconsin is an outdoorist’s playground. It also hosts the American Birkebeiner, North America’s largest cross-county ski

race drawing travelers worldwide, and is home to renowned outdoor brands like Trek, Pacific Cycle, Johnson Outdoors, Wigwam Mills, Mathews and more.

In 2019 the [National Bureau of Economic Analysis](#) released the first comprehensive picture of the outdoor recreation industry's economic impact at the state level. At the same time, Wisconsin's Office of Outdoor Recreation was formally created with bipartisan support within the Department of Tourism recognizing the industry's economic impact to the state and the opportunity to bolster its continued growth.



Department of Tourism Secretary-designee Sara Meaney with Governor Evers and Department of Natural Resources Secretary Preston Cole announcing the proposed Office of Outdoor Recreation.

“The office of outdoor recreation can connect all of the stakeholders that drive the outdoor industry in our state to develop new initiatives, shared priorities, and potentially pool resources,” added Meaney.

The Wisconsin Office will work to support and uplift the outdoor recreation industry and its partners for the economic and overall well-being of the state and its residents.

Industry & Community News

Madison Launches Shared Streets for Safe Recreation Outdoors With an increasing number of trail users, the City of Madison has approved a plan to close

some streets to only local traffic allowing for safe and healthy spaces to recreate. [Read the article.](#)

Northwest Sportshow Goes Virtual Originally planned to take place in Minneapolis, MN on April 2-5, the show's organizers pivoted to a virtual platform to serve exhibitors – including a number of Wisconsin-based companies, guide services, and travel destinations – with much-needed marketing exposure. [Read the article.](#)

Wigwam Mills Sponsor Virtual Race Series As race cancellations have left runners lacking a venue for competition and camaraderie, Wigwam Mills sponsored a series of free races to continue encouraging running as way to alleviate stress. [Read the article.](#)

Saris Delivers Food to Families and Kids in Need Using electric cargo bikes, Saris employees delivered more than 1,000 pounds of food to more than 200 families in one day. [Read the article.](#)

7 Tips to Safely Recreate Outside While Social Distancing Safer at Home doesn't mean you have to stay inside. Heed these tips when you get outside. [Read the article.](#)

Events

UW-Madison Virtual Earth Week | Apr 19-24 Hosted by the Office of Sustainability, a variety of events are scheduled throughout the week. [See the schedule.](#)

DIY Spring Clean-up | Ongoing Take the Milwaukee Riverkeeper DIY Spring Clean-up Pledge. Take a garbage bag with you on your next walk to pick up litter. [Learn more.](#)

Weekly Social Campfire | Thursdays, 7-8pm Who doesn't love sharing stories around the campfire? With social-distancing and fire-burning restrictions, Travel Wisconsin is taking this ritual online. [Join the conversation on Facebook.](#)

The [Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation](#) is housed within the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.



Wisconsin Department of Tourism | 201 W Washington Ave | Madison, WI 53703 | [1-800-432-8747](tel:1-800-432-8747)