



## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

With a snowstorm that blanketed the entire state, it seems that winter has arrived. I always find it magical the way snowflakes sparkle under the lights downtown or on the downhill slopes. No matter how much snow falls this winter, it's important to remain inspired by that magical feeling and seek ways, beyond the traditional, to get folks outdoors. Heed some of these [winter placemaking tips](#) to foster a lively community spirit that strengthens social connections, supports local businesses and inspires travelers to experience it, too. Leverage free resources like the [Travel Wisconsin Snow Report](#), which tracks natural and

machine-made snow for winter sports, and the Snow Report [website widget](#) (embed it on your website) to help put your destination on the map this winter!

As we wrap up 2025 and look back at the year, there were so many industry efforts that put Wisconsin outdoor recreation in the minds of travelers. In the story below, we're celebrating these achievements and milestones.

It was also a year of growth and progress for the Office. From coaching teams to [conduct their own economic impact analysis](#) and securing media attention, to showcasing the industry, its contributions and innovations at events and with the launch of the [Wisconsin Governor's Outdoor Industry Awards](#), to representing Wisconsin on the stage at the [International Trails Summit](#), the [Outdoor Economy Conference](#) and the [TrailNation Summit](#), we are proud of our work in supporting partners and elevating Wisconsin's outdoor recreation. And this summer, it was reaffirming to have the Office become a permanent fixture within the state government, and to know that we'll have the runway to carry out our ambitious [2025-2030 strategic plan](#) to strengthen Wisconsin's economy and quality of life through outdoor recreation.

Cheers to the momentum we built in 2025, and here's to new summits in 2026.

Onward, outdoors –



Cassie Mordini  
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](#).*

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## Six Ways Partners Created Buzz for Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation in 2025

Before we count down to the New Year, let's toast to partner efforts that put Wisconsin's outdoor recreation offerings and industry in the headlines in 2025. From first-time gatherings to long-time anniversaries and everything in between, partners continued to raise the bar, providing exceptional outdoor experiences, products and services for Wisconsinites and guests.

While meaty, this list is just a smorgasbord of successes we noted in 2025, and with a focus on raising the profile of Wisconsin as an outdoor recreation haven, we're sure it's just an appetizer for what's to come in 2026. Here is a countdown of 6 ways partners put Wisconsin's outdoors on the stage in 2025:

## **6. Securing Major Events and Introducing Wisconsin to the World**

*Combined, thousands of competitors and spectators descended on Wisconsin for national and international championship events, while fans near and far followed the coverage.*

- [USA Cycling Collegiate Road National Championships](#) (Madison)
- [USA Cycling Masters & Junior Road National Championships](#) (Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, Mt. Pleasant, Lyons and East Troy)
- [Bass Pro Shops & Cabela's National Walleye Tour Champs](#) (Marinette)
- [Mercury B.A.S.S. National Championships](#) (La Crosse)
- [IFSS Dryland World Championships](#) (Minocqua)
- [National Snowshoe Championships](#) (Brillion)



*Wisconsin became the first U.S. destination to host the IFSS Dryland World Championships for mushing. Over 350 competitors (and their dogs) representing 23 countries landed in Minocqua in October. Photo credit: DanielTphoto courtesy of IFSS World Championships and World Masters Dryland.*

## **5. Breaking Ground and Grand Openings**

*Transformational infrastructure projects progressed with groundbreaking events and grand openings to ensure exceptional recreation experiences, and events provide a*

*space for people to connect, learn and celebrate their favorite activities, cultivating lifelong outdoorists.*

- [Recreational bridge over the Wisconsin River will unify Sauk and Dane County](#)
- [A look inside the new Lapham Lodge at Lapham Peak, Kettle Moraine State Forest](#)
- [Let's Ride Expo brings together motorized sports to educate and engage riders and the community](#)
- [New lodge opens to kick off 50th season at Nordic Mountain](#)

#### **4. National Designations and Winning Awards**

*Outdoor brands, organizations and destinations are leading the way, innovating, advocating and volunteering. Awards and designations recognized their achievements.*

- Great Pinery Heritage Waterway was one of five new [National Recreation Trails](#) designated by the Secretary of the Department of Interior this summer.
- Ravin, Mathews Archery and Vortex Optics all win Gold in [Bowhunting World's Reader's Choice Awards](#) in 2025 for best crossbow, best compound bow and best spotter and rangefinder.
- Fred Suchy of the St. Germain Bo-Boen Snowmobile Club was awarded the [2025 International Groomer of the Year](#) by the International Snowmobiling Hall of Fame.
- Wisconsin Bike Fed was awarded the [Advocacy Organization of the Year](#) by the League of American Cyclists at the National Bike Summit.

#### **3. Attracting Adventurers Whose Stories Captivated**

*For those who like a challenge, Wisconsin's rivers and trails are tempting, and the community support for adventurers is unmatched.*

- [Gear Junkie: 400+ Miles in 4 Days: Paddler Crushes FKT of 'Beastly' Wisconsin River](#)
- [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: He came from Japan to hike the 1,200-mile Ice Age Trail. Wisconsin hikers fully embraced him.](#)

#### **2. Accolades and Headlines**

*From state parks and wildlife areas to river towns and urban escapes, Wisconsin's*



outdoor destinations are capturing the imaginations of readers of *Travel + Leisure*, *AFAR*, *USA Today* and others.

- [Devil’s Lake State Park Named Number 1 State Park in U.S. for Hiking](#)
- [One of USA Today’s 10 Best Places to Birdwatch](#)
- [One of the Midwest’s Best Outdoor Destinations \(La Crosse\)](#)
- [This Midwestern City is Underrated for Active Travelers \(Milwaukee\)](#)



**Trech Kekahuna and Vinny Anthony II (and his dogs) of the UW Badgers Football team visited Wyalusing State Park this summer to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Wisconsin State Park System. Watch the [Instagram reel](#) to see the scenic views, hidden waterfall and all the fun they had with #TravelWI.**

## 1. Milestones that Mark Leadership and Longevity

While more people than ever before are participating in outdoor recreation and enjoying the benefits of time spent outside, caring for our outdoor assets and making them accessible for recreation and enjoyment isn’t new to Wisconsinites – it’s a deeply ingrained part of the state’s history and culture. Anniversaries celebrated this year marked milestones that reflect Wisconsin’s leadership outdoors.

- Wisconsin State Park System 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Travel Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Badgers kicked off the [Wonders of Wisconsin NIL \(name, image and likeness\) campaign](#) with a special [anniversary video at Wyalusing State Park](#).
- Wisconsin Wild Rivers 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – In Florence at the Wild Rivers Interpretive Center an event celebrated the state [Wild Rivers](#) designation to “afford people of the state an opportunity to enjoy natural streams, to attract out-of-state visitors and assure the well-being of our tourist industry, and to preserve some rivers in a free-flowing condition and protect them

from development,” which was created three years prior to the national Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

- Rails to Trails Conservancy and Elroy-Sparta 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Often considered the nation’s first successful rail to trail conversion, the [Elroy-Sparta State Trail](#) is featured in the PBS documentary [From Rails To Trails](#), celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the national organization and movement to create a network of scenic trails.

Congratulations, and Happy New Year!



Wisconsin’s outdoor recreation industry is an impressive network of businesses, manufacturers, outfitters, guides, destinations and nonprofits. Each month, we’ll share information about the industry so you can get to know your peers across the state and see 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:** [Outdoor Heritage Education Center](#)

- Founded in 1998, the Outdoor Heritage Education Center hosts mentored hunting, target shooting and fishing events and programs in partnership with other organizations around the state to support outdoor education efforts with an aim to engage the next generation.



**Guides and Tours:** [Adventure Milwaukee](#)

- Adventure Milwaukee provides fully guided paddle tours down the Milwaukee River. Guided trips vary in length and duration.



**Retailer:** [Seed-N-Feed Store](#)

- Seed-N-Feed located in Fifiield provides a variety of goods including trail cameras, Garmin and other outdoor items.



**Manufacturer:** [Hollow Socks](#)

- Designed and operated in Appleton, Hollow Socks are made with Peruvian alpaca fiber and are naturally moisture-wicking, making them great for outdoor adventure.



**Destinations:** [Tilleda Falls Campground](#)

- Located near Shawano, Tilleda Falls Campground is a family-friendly campground full of outdoor adventures. Next to a Class A trout stream, campers can unwind and explore.

*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

[New economic report reveals outdoor recreation on public lands and waters contributes \\$351 million to the economy every day](#) | *Outdoor Recreation Roundtable*

[Latino Outdoors officially launches first Wisconsin chapter in Madison](#) | *Madison365*

[Ariens Nordic Center to host snowshoe championships](#) – Elite snowshoe athletes from across the world will compete at the Ariens Nordic Center in Brillion this December | *Insight*

[Cherish Wisconsin Outdoor Fund provides \\$100,000 to projects in the state](#) | *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

[International Mountain Bicycling Association \(IMBA\) launches an IMBA Trail Town Program](#) – The IMBA Trail Town designation is more than a badge of honor, it's national recognition acknowledging communities that value trails and the people that ride them | *IMBA.com*

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## RESOURCES

### [NEW Talent Recruitment Grant](#) – **Opens soon, Webinar Dec. 2**

The program offered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation opens soon and will provide grants up to \$500,000 per municipality or organization to administer a talent recruitment program. Register to attend the informational webinar on Dec. 2 [here](#).

### [AARP Community Challenge](#) – **Grant Opens in January**

Funding will soon be available for projects that focus on meeting the needs of adults aged 50 or older through quick-action grants. Projects may focus on transportation, local improvement projects and more. Applications will be due in March. [Learn more](#) about the 2025 grant awardees and sign up to be notified when the application for 2026 opens.

### [Joint Effort Marketing \(JEM\)](#) – **Grant Applications due February 1**

Administered by the Department of Tourism, JEM grants fund events and sales promotion for nonprofit organizations quarterly. In September, multiple outdoor recreation campaigns were awarded JEM grants. You can see awardees [here](#).

### [MAP: Connecting People to Forests](#) – **Applications due January 22**



The Matching Awards Program (MAP): Connecting People to Forests focuses primarily on in-person community engagement and completion of appropriate stewardship activities. Programs must create a lasting change that allows all community opportunities to benefit from activities on National Forest System lands or adjacent public lands. Requires a 1:1 nonfederal match.

**Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) – Grant Applications due February 1**

The RSG program from the Department of Tourism assists destinations in securing competitive sporting events that require a financial commitment to host.

**Recreational Trails Program – Grant Applications due March 1\***

Administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Recreational Trails Program supports municipal governments and incorporated organizations with reimbursements for the development, rehabilitation and maintenance of recreational trails and trail-related facilities.

*\*Note that the DNR has proposed moving the application deadline to March 1 (previously May 1). Learn more [here](#).*

**Tribal Transportation Program Safety Fund – Applications due January 15**

Administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Tribal Transportation Program Safety Fund supports projects that aim to reduce fatal and serious injuries in transportation-related incidents. Eligible projects include transportation safety plans, safety data assessment, improvement and analysis and more.

**Vibrant Spaces Grant – FY26 Deadline approaching**

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) provides grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000 to communities for projects that create vibrant and engaging spaces downtown, foster community connection, provide accessible locations for programming and boost foot traffic for businesses. Connect with your Regional Economic Development Director to apply. Communities must have 80% of the funding committed.

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## JOB LISTINGS

**Diversity in Conservation Internship**, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, various locations

**Online Sales Support Specialist – Angler Guide**, St. Croix Rod, Park Falls

**Sea Kayak Guide and Naturalist**, Trek & Trail, Bayfield

[Adventure Tour Guide](#), Door County Adventure Center, Sturgeon Bay

[Supervisor Ski Resort Operations](#), Hilton Grand Vacations, Wisconsin Dells

[Various Positions](#), REI Co-op, Appleton and Madison

[Visitor Services - Gardens & Grounds Assistant](#), The Nature Place, La Crosse

[Crew Leaders, Members and Individual Placements](#), WisCorps, Statewide

**Wisconsin Ski Areas Hiring for Various Winter Positions:**

[Alpine Valley Resort](#), Elkhorn

[Cascade Mountain](#), Portage

[Crystal Ridge](#), Franklin

[Devil's Head Resort](#), Merrimac

[Granite Peak](#), Wausau

[Trollhaugen](#), Dresser

[Tyrol Basin](#), Mt. Horeb

[Wilmot Mountain](#), Wilmot

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