



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

There is something special about hiking in the fall. Walking at a slower pace allows me to observe both significant and small seasonal shifts in the plants, animal activity and the surrounding landscape. At this time of year, I also see changes in our industry as we fully transition away from summer sports to embrace shoulder-season activities and prepare for winter.

November is also [National Native American Heritage Month](#). As an industry closely tied to nature's rhythms, we can learn much from those whose traditional way of life is inextricably linked to the land. For example, [a recent article](#) in *The Washington Post* explores the connection between the Ojibwe people, their land and the manoomin, or wild rice, they harvest. The plant holds religious, cultural and economic significance for the Ojibwe; tending to it, generation after

generation, is one of many ways the Ojibwe honor their heritage and engage with the natural world.

Outside of Tribal lands, interest in [recreationally harvesting wild rice](#) and in [other foraging activities](#) continues to grow. While this expanding curiosity offers opportunities within the outdoor recreation industry from gear to guides, the tactile experience of harvesting and foraging food sources can also remind us of our essential connection to nature — and the role we as professionals and as people play in [caring for it](#).

In this spirit of caring, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is [actively working with Tribal communities](#) and other partners to ensure the manoomin continues to thrive. This effort is not simply about preserving one plant or its habitat. It's about our connection to land, to each other and our responsibility to ensure a positive future for our communities.

The Office of Outdoor Recreation is here to be a landing place where you can find the connections, resources and support you need to succeed. Because when it comes to connecting people to the outdoors and each other, you all have an outsized impact. Thank you for all that you do!

With gratitude for you and our growing *Wisconsin Outside* community,



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](#).

Outdoor Recreation Offers Unique Ways for Communities to Come Together

Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry is not just about beautiful places and exhilarating activities; it's about the good-natured people you meet along the way. A key differentiator of Wisconsin's thriving outdoor industry is the strong connection to community it fosters, evident in our destinations, businesses and programs. This month, with a spirit of thanksgiving, we celebrate three examples of how outdoor recreation brings people together and enables our communities to thrive.



Hikers relaxing outside [Clear Water Outdoors](#) in the heart of downtown Delafield. Photo Credit: Linda Webster, Courtesy of Ice Age Trail Alliance.

Destination: Ice Age National Scenic Trail

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is remarkable. While many national scenic trails lead hikers through remote wilderness where encountering another human is rare, the Ice Age Trail takes a different approach. The 1,200-mile trail not only showcases the stunning diversity of Wisconsin's glaciated landscapes, it also intentionally connects hikers to vibrant, friendly and uniquely Wisconsin communities along the way.

The [Ice Age Trail Alliance](#) (IATA), whose mission is to conserve, create, maintain and promote the trail, recognizes the value of this differentiator and intentionally works to strengthen the connection between those who traverse the trail and the communities that surround it.

[Ice Age Trail Communities](#), nearly 30 to date, frequently go the extra mile to welcome and support hikers and other trail visitors. These communities take pride in the trail and recognize trail-based tourism's significant positive impact on local businesses and the economy.

“I don’t think anyone expects it when they first start hiking the Ice Age Trail, but you quickly become part of a community — one that not only shares a love for beautiful landscapes, but also for the small-town gems,” said Melissa Pierick, Director of Marketing and Community Relations, Ice Age Trail Alliance. “Hikers become ambassadors for Wisconsin’s communities, swapping stories about the best burgers, coffee shops and mom-and-pop motels. The Trail builds connections that strengthen both the people who hike it and the communities it passes through.”

The IATA works to foster connection to the trail from a young age through educational opportunities like Saunters and Think Outside, which shared the trail with more than 10,500 students last year. It also leverages events like the Mammoth Hike Challenge in October to raise the profile of the trail and further incentivize engagement with both the trail and local businesses.

The interconnectedness — between the Ice Age Trail, its visitors, surrounding businesses and the volunteers who devoted [more than 103,000 hours](#) last year to trailblazing, outreach and other trail-related activities — exemplifies the great potential that outdoor recreation has for bringing people together and helping our communities to flourish.



Travel Wisconsin presents a [Joint Effort Marketing](#) check to the Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association (WATVA) at WATVA's 2025 VIP Ride. Photo credit: Courtesy of WATVA.

Association: Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association

In October, an enthusiastic group of ATV/UTV riders, manufacturers, retailers, volunteers and government officials assembled for the Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association (WATVA) 2025 VIP Ride. They gathered at Dyracuse Recreation Park to discuss the future of ATV/UTV recreation in Wisconsin, which, thanks in large part to WATVA's community-building work, looks bright.

"The Wisconsin ATV/UTV Association is proud to help bring together riders, industry partners and public officials to celebrate the growth of off-highway recreation in Wisconsin," said WATVA President Randy Harden. "Events like the VIP Ride at Dyracuse Park highlight the strength of our statewide community and the collaboration it takes to maintain safe, welcoming trails for everyone. With the support of our Trail Ambassador volunteers, we're able to showcase the professionalism, hospitality and commitment that define Wisconsin's ATV and UTV community."

WATVA diligently fosters its community, serving as a central hub for riders, clubs and industry affiliates like dealers and manufacturers. As a trusted resource, WATVA is

able to inform, educate, empower and organize its community to build and maintain momentum for the sport and industry through advocacy and next-generation engagement.

One way WATVA works to secure a positive future for the sport is by partnering with the [RideSafe Foundation](#) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to advance rider safety education throughout the state. WATVA has engaged in [creative outreach efforts](#) to this end, including presenting in schools, setting up information booths along ATV/UTV trails and hosting a helmet-fitting station at the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo. Reaching young people and working with communities to discuss the safe operation of motorized recreational vehicles is critical as interest in the activity continues to rise.

According to the DNR, riding ATVs and UTVs is [one of the fastest-growing segments of outdoor recreation](#) in Wisconsin, and it's a lucrative part of the economy. WATVA's research found ATV/UTV riders generated an economic impact of \$5.4 billion in 2023. The work that WATVA and its partners are doing to bring the community together will help to ensure that riders can continue to engage in the sport safely and enthusiastically for generations to come.



Representatives from the National Shooting Sports Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources tour Henry Repeating Arms' facility in Rice Lake through Partner with a Payer. Photo credit: Courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Program: Partner with a Payer

Supporting outdoor recreation involves a joint effort between government and

industry. Under the 1937 Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act and the 1950 Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, certain outdoor recreation manufacturers must pay industry federal excise taxes. Collectively, those manufacturers contribute more than \$1 billion in taxes each year. These taxes fund both conservation efforts and industry-boosting initiatives like hunter recruitment and retention.

To celebrate this collaboration and to underscore the symbiotic relationship between conservation efforts and sports like hunting and fishing, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Office of Conservation Investment launched its Partner with a Payer program.

Partner with a Payer is designed to connect industry professionals with state and federal agencies and to help connect the dots between excise taxes and the outcomes. Through field tours, industry professionals experience the power of conservation first-hand. Through facility tours, state fish and wildlife agency representatives observe the industry at work. These shared experiences build relationships and reinforce the mutual benefits of industry growth and wildlife and habitat conservation.

[Henry Repeating Arms](#), which [transferred all of its operations to Wisconsin](#) this spring, recently hosted a group tour of its facilities in Rice Lake through Partner with a Payer because it believes in the program's value for its business, customers and the outdoors they enjoy.

"The Partner with a Payer program highlights the impact of one of the world's greatest examples of a public-private partnership, which many of our customers may not even realize they are contributing to. It shows how manufacturers like us, the customers who use our firearms, and conservationists are all pulling in the same direction to preserve America's hunting and shooting sports heritage for generations to come," said Anthony Imperato, Founder and CEO, Henry Repeating Arms. "This is especially meaningful to us in Wisconsin, where every Henry rifle is built, and we see the results firsthand through the work of the Wisconsin DNR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and countless dedicated volunteers."

Spending time outside connects people to the natural world and – through organizations and programs like these – to each other. Strong networks of participants, educators, business owners and community leaders are essential to fostering and sustaining positive engagement in outdoor recreation.

Wisconsin Healthy Communities Summit

Last Call for Proposals!

Submissions due Monday, November 10

As a member of the *Wisconsin Outside* network, you have a unique perspective on how outdoor recreation supports healthy, vibrant communities in the state. Don't miss the chance to share your knowledge, experience and innovative ideas at the [2026 Wisconsin Healthy Communities Summit](#) on April 23-24 in Wausau!

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation and the Wisconsin Bike Fed are actively seeking presenters to lead breakout sessions for an engaged audience of outdoor industry and health professionals, planners, advocates, and business and community leaders.

Proposals are due by Monday, November 10, at 5 p.m. Submit yours today!

[Submit a Proposal](#)

P.S. Keep an eye out for event registration, coming soon!



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: [Pheasants Forever - Wisconsin](#)

- Pheasants Forever is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to wildlife habitat. It has more than 750 chapters across the U.S., including in Wisconsin, that support habitat improvements, public access, education and conservation advocacy. [Find a chapter near you.](#)



Guides, Tours, Rentals: [Clam Lake Guide & Taxidermy](#)

- Clam Lake Guide & Taxidermy provides fully guided hunts in Northern Wisconsin for a variety of game in the Clam Lake area and in the heart of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.



Retailer: [Wisconsin Landcrafters](#)

- Wisconsin Landcrafters offers land improvement services to prepare areas for hunting, wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation needs. They offer custom-built tree stands, elevated hunting cabins and more.



Manufacturer: [Vulture Systems](#)

- Menomonee Falls-based Vulture Systems makes multi-use sensors to help detect the location and movement of game during ice fishing, bank fishing, trapping and hunting.



Destinations: [Woodland Archer LLC](#)

- Located in Eagle River, Woodland Archer provides a place for archers of all ages to safely practice bowhunting. The range features a six-target broadhead practice range, a 15-target practice range and a 20-target field course.

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

[Wisconsin one step closer to finishing its share of the North Country National Scenic Trail](#)

- National Park Service purchases 317 acres to secure a segment of the trail in northern Wisconsin | *Wisconsin Public Radio*

[Outdoor Retailer Partners with Industry Leadership for a Reimagined Minneapolis Show, Aug. 19–21, 2026](#)

- Industry veterans, Sunny Stroeer and Paul Gagner, to co-lead new era of Outdoor Retailer, along with community stakeholders | *OutdoorRetailer.com*

[Milwaukee County Parks Awarded \\$827,376 Through Wisconsin DNR and National](#)

RESOURCES

[Thrive Rural Wisconsin Program](#) – Community Interest Form due November 13

Administered by the Office of Rural Prosperity, the Thrive Rural program helps rural and Tribal communities bring together local leadership, define shared goals and access resources. This no-cost program provides project management support, technical assistance and an exclusive opportunity to apply for a WEDC Capacity Building Grant. Eligibility restrictions apply.

[Knowles-Nelson Stewardship](#) – Grants to Friends Groups Applications due November 15

The Stewardship grant supports projects that improve facilities, build new recreation projects and restore habitat on state properties. Grants are awarded for up to 50% of project costs.

[State Park and Forest Heritage Trust Fund](#) – Applications due November 15

Administered by the Department of Natural Resources, this grant is available to Friends Groups with an established endowment fund to benefit the State Park Property. Funds can support programming, restoration and more.

[Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative](#) – Applications due December 15

Supporting outdoor enthusiasts, the Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative's mission is to provide practical support for efforts that promote safe, responsible use of off-highway vehicles, educate the public on proper recreational land use and wildlife conservation practices and protect appropriate and sustainable access to public lands. The next quarter funding cycle is open October 1-December 15.

JOB LISTINGS

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

[Community Program Educator](#), The Nature Place, La Crosse

[Development Director](#), Woodland Dunes Nature Center and Preserve, Inc., Two Rivers

[Marketing & Communications Manager](#), Lands' End Outfitters, Dodgeville

[Online Sales Support Specialist – Angler Guide](#), St. Croix Rod, Park Falls

[Park Technician](#), City of Stevens Point, Stevens Point

[Recreation Coordinator](#), Village of Mount Horeb, Mount Horeb

[Regional Biologist](#), Ducks Unlimited, Madison

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

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