

A special publication by the



# SUPPORTING WISCONSIN'S VITAL OUTDOOR ECONOMY

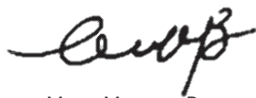
Economic Data and Impact Report 2020-2022

# A Note from the Director

Outdoor recreation is core to the Wisconsin lifestyle, and the outdoors has long been the narrative of our story - from our agricultural and forestry roots to the development of the Northwoods as an outdoor vacation destination to the hatching of world-renowned outdoor brands. The outdoors is the place we live, work, play and visit. Often thought of as a nice-to-have - just a fun thing to do - outdoor recreation is so much more. It is a driving force for Wisconsin's economy.

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation was established to recognize the significant role outdoor recreation plays in driving tourism, attracting residents, workers and businesses, generating jobs and offering a better quality of life for Wisconsinites. It builds on a national trend recognizing the outdoor industry that was jumpstarted by research and consumer reports produced by the Outdoor Industry Association. As awareness of the scope and size of the industry grew, the first states created offices dedicated to supporting the outdoor recreation industry in 2013. In 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis was directed by Congress to form an outdoor recreation satellite account and released the first data showing the outdoor recreation industry's contributions alongside other common industries like oil and gas, air transportation, motor vehicle manufacturing and more.

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation is on the leading edge of this trend as the 14th office established in the country. Since 2019, the Office has worked to build a strong, robust network for the state's outdoor industry. With a dedicated focus on this industry that supports sectors beyond, the Office is fostering innovative collaborations to drive deeper impact. As envisioned for the Office, it has become the place communities, businesses and organizations turn to for tools, resources, connections and guidance. The Office is committed to the work to ensure a thriving outdoor industry, for a thriving Wisconsin, for decades to come.



Mary Monroe Brown  
Director, Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation



## Engaging the Industry



1,031 outdoor business and organization listings

1,841 newsletter subscribers



303 stakeholder introduction meetings

5 webinars & 372 participants



5 toolkits & publications

5,072 website users accessed tools and resources



557% increase in pageviews of the Wisconsin Trail Report

OutdoorRecreation.wi.gov



## About the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation was created in 2019 to provide a central industry resource for an important and valued sector of the state's economy. Formed with a vision to be the hub for the outdoor industry, the Office draws essential links between the places, activities and the businesses of outdoor recreation to advance the industry. The Office provides resources, tools and connections to support the efforts of partners - destinations, businesses, manufacturers, guides and nonprofits.

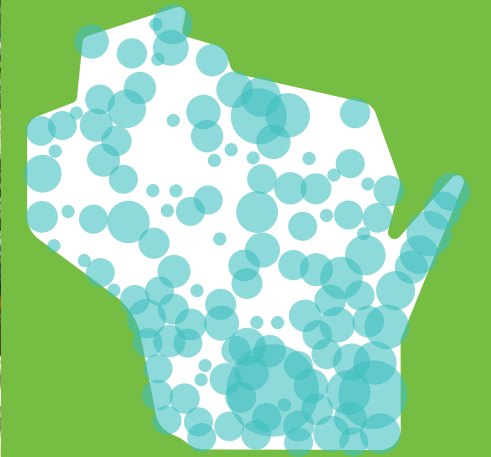
As a top driver of tourism and a key factor in relocation decision-making, outdoor recreation gives Wisconsin a competitive edge and enhances the quality of life for residents. The Office works to unite and uplift this diverse industry for the economic health of the state and overall well-being of Wisconsinites.

**VISION:** Wisconsin is a top outdoor recreation state.

**MISSION:** To support and uplift the outdoor recreation industry and its partners for the economic health and overall well-being of the state and its residents.

*"The Office plays a key role in being the brain center, the hub for connection, of all key players in the boating world."*

Michelle Dauchy  
Vice President of Customer Experience  
Mercury Marine  
Fond du Lac, WI



## Covering the State

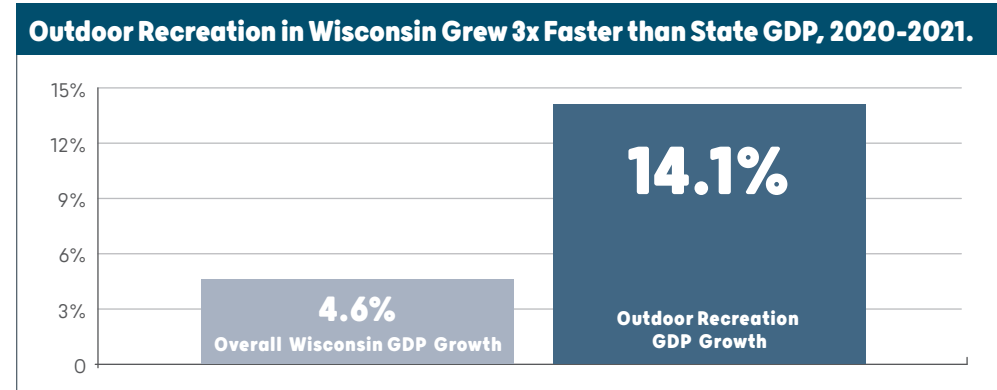
Every day the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation is working with outdoor recreation businesses and organizations, meeting with stakeholders, providing industry updates at conferences, recruiting and supporting Wisconsin Trail Report volunteers and advising communities on outdoor recreation infrastructure projects that stimulate economic development. Those efforts are represented as dots where outdoor businesses and organizations are located and shows how the Office is engaging with the industry in every corner of the state.

# A Big & Growing Economic Engine

In 2021, Wisconsin's outdoor recreation economy contributed \$8.7 billion, or 2.4%, to the state's gross domestic product (GDP). This is a 14.1% increase from 2020.

## An essential driver of Wisconsin's economic recovery

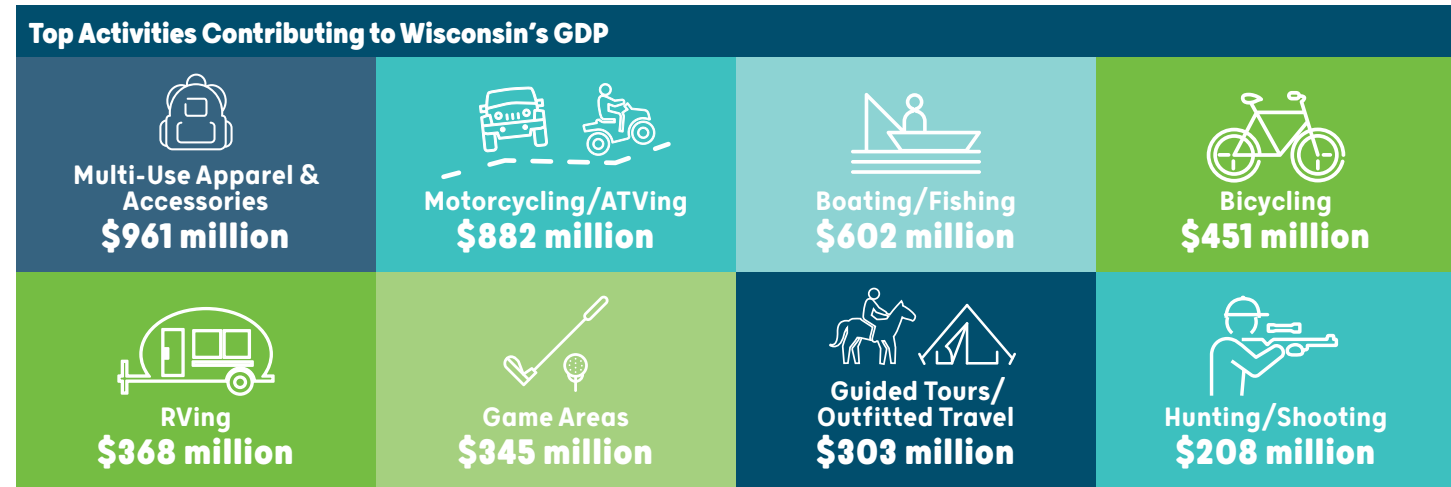
Between 2020 and 2021, Wisconsin's outdoor recreation economy grew faster than the overall state economy. GDP from outdoor recreation grew by 14.1% while overall state GDP grew by 4.6%. Jobs in outdoor recreation increased by 9.7%, compared to 2.4% for all jobs. Jobs in outdoor recreation were led by gains in hospitality (arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services; up 21%), transportation (up 16%) and manufacturing (up 10%).



## Wisconsin leads the nation

Wisconsin's motorcycling and ATVing industry ranks number one in the country for value added to the state's economy, contributing \$882 million to the state's GDP in 2021. Wisconsin's bicycling industry is second in the United States in value added to the state's economy, bringing \$451 million to the state's GDP.

The value added from climbing, hiking and tent camping grew the fastest of all conventional activities, increasing by 27% to \$127 million in 2021.



## Tourism and outdoor recreation: inextricably linked

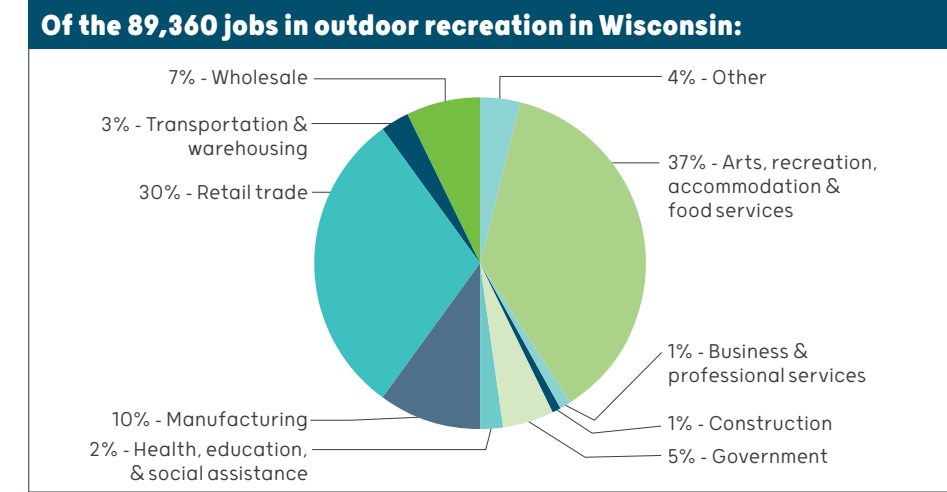
Outdoor recreation is consistently a leading driver of tourism in Wisconsin, attracting out-of-state visitors and inspiring residents to travel for outdoor recreation within the state. In 2020, Wisconsin was one of only seven states to see an increase in value added from local outdoor recreation-related trips (within 50 miles of home). The value added from local trips grew even more in 2021, increasing by 12.2% to \$771 million.

Travel and tourism (trips more than 50 miles from home) make up nearly one-quarter of outdoor recreation's contribution to Wisconsin's GDP, growing by 40% to \$2 billion in 2021 as travel surged back. Continued interest in the outdoors and the associated travel spending are major contributors to Wisconsin's \$20.9 billion tourism economy.



## Job creation across diverse sectors

Wisconsin's outdoor recreation economy employs nearly 90,000 Wisconsinites across diverse sectors. Outdoor recreation supports a wide variety of jobs including manufacturers who make outdoor equipment, sales associates that sell gear, guides who take anglers out on fishing trips, campground operators, professors teaching outdoor recreation-specific courses and more.



## National powerhouse in outdoor recreation manufacturing

Wisconsin's manufacturing sector has been a consistently vital part of the state's outdoor recreation economy for the past decade. Manufacturing made up 10% of all outdoor recreation jobs, ranking fourth in the country. Even during the pandemic, manufacturing grew.

The total number of manufacturing jobs increased by 11% to 8,928 between 2019 and 2021. Manufacturing jobs, on average, pay 13% higher wages than other jobs in Wisconsin.

Interest in purchasing outdoor gear remains strong across the United States. Wisconsin is the home of many prominent outdoor companies, and their manufacturing operations are an important sector of the state's economy. Outdoor recreation manufacturers provide jobs in both urban and rural areas in Wisconsin.

The analyses on this page were provided by Headwaters Economics, an independent, nonpartisan research group ([headwaterseconomics.org](http://headwaterseconomics.org)). Data shown here and on the back cover related to gross domestic product, value added and employment are from the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account and Regional Economic Accounts, 2022. Data related to the economics of tourism in Wisconsin are from Longwoods International, 2021 *Travel USA Visitor Profile*, produced for Travel Wisconsin and from Tourism Economics, 2022. *The Wisconsin Visitor Industry*, produced for Wisconsin Department of Tourism. Data related to participation trends, another way to measure the industry, are from the Outdoor Foundation, 2022 *Outdoor Participation Trends Report* and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, personal communications, 2022 and *Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2019-2023*, 2019.



## Record participation persists

Outdoor recreation grew during the pandemic and shows no signs of declining. Nationally, the outdoor participant base has increased 6.9% since early 2020. New participants are more diverse ethnically and by age. Senior participants (age 65 and older) are the fastest-growing age category nationally. The most popular outdoor activities nationally are running, hiking, fishing, biking and camping.

In Wisconsin, more than 22 million visitors enjoyed state parks in 2021—an increase of 26% from 2019.



# Supporting an Essential & Growing Industry

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation aligns partners around four key tenets, or impact areas, to create engagement and advancements in the industry. Major outcomes from these collaborative efforts are highlighted below.

## Four Key Tenets | Major Outcome Highlights



### Invite

Invite residents, visitors, businesses and workforce talent to live, work and play in Wisconsin – to experience the state’s natural places and vast outdoor recreation offerings – to stimulate economic development.

#### Outcome Highlight:

Assisting employers in the outdoor industry and beyond, free tools like *Live + Work Where You Play: Outside in Wisconsin* help attract talent by showcasing the state’s compelling outdoor recreation offerings.



### Connect

Connect people to Wisconsin’s natural places and outdoor recreation opportunities through access and education with a focus on inclusion.

#### Outcome Highlight:

Recording over 275,000 pageviews in its first two seasons, the Wisconsin Trail Report is making trail condition information accessible to residents and travelers as they plan their day on the trails and build out itineraries with stops at coffee shops, restaurants and area attractions that drive local commerce.



### Thrive

Thrive when active lifestyles and outdoor recreation are promoted to create healthy individuals and communities.

#### Outcome Highlight:

Sparking conversations between the outdoor and health industries to explore ways to create thriving, healthy communities is ongoing after outdoor industry and health professionals converged at the first-ever Wisconsin Healthy Communities Summit.



### Sustain

Sustain Wisconsin’s invaluable natural assets by encouraging outdoor recreation, the connection to place and the preservation of healthy lands and waters.

#### Outcome Highlight:

Engaging the industry in the work to cultivate responsible and welcoming outdoorists, the #AdventureWithCare campaign is a consistent message shared by partners statewide and encourages care for both land and people.



“When we’re recruiting, we actually have the people we want to hire look at the Office’s website to understand this important industry in Wisconsin.”

Scott Forristall  
CEO  
St. Croix Rod  
Park Falls, WI

Photo: St. Croix Rod

# Building a Strong Network

In just a few short years, the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation built the network of Wisconsin’s outdoor industry from scratch. Through innovative thinking and strategic outreach, the Office is creating one-of-a-kind resources and collaborative partnerships that simultaneously connect the industry and create efficiencies. The timeline below illustrates the hard-hitting work that is uplifting this important economic sector for Wisconsin.



**Big plans for future work are on the horizon as the Office advances tangible progress within the areas of the four tenets, strengthening and growing the Wisconsin’s outdoor industry.**

**\$8.7  
billion**  
to Wisconsin's GDP

**14%  
growth**  
in 2021

**89,360  
jobs**  
supported

**95% of  
Wisconsinites**  
participate in  
outdoor recreation  
each year

## The Path Ahead

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation is supporting the places people recreate, the businesses that make and sell outdoor gear, as well as the professionals that guide adventures and steward natural spaces. This work is critically important to the success of both the outdoor recreation and tourism industries to grow Wisconsin's economy.

The Office is uniquely positioned to identify and cultivate cross-sector initiatives that address economic development, talent attraction, workforce development, stewardship and education that can propel the outdoor industry forward and increase the quality of life for Wisconsinites.



The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation uplifts the state's outdoor recreation industry and its partners for the economic health and overall well-being of the state and its residents. Providing resources, tools, guidance and inspiration, the Office is a central hub for the industry drawing connections between the brands that call Wisconsin home, the outdoor recreation activities they support and the communities in which we recreate.

[OutdoorRecreation.wi.gov](https://OutdoorRecreation.wi.gov)