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**WISCONSIN OUTSIDE** | December 2023 - January 2024

## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As another fantastic and record-breaking year comes to a close, it is bittersweet to share that after more than four years of leading the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation, I've decided to step away from my director role as of December 15. Standing up Wisconsin's Office of Outdoor Recreation in my home state has truly made my heart sing, especially as we look back on all that we've accomplished together since the Office's inception in 2019.

In this role, I've been continually inspired by the work of partners across the state, and by your support and insights which led us to many "firsts:" the first-ever report on the [economic impact of outdoor recreation](#) in Wisconsin, the first [business directory](#) for Wisconsin's outdoor industry, the launch of the first [Trail Report](#) on TravelWisconsin.com, the first [workforce attraction](#) tool to leverage Wisconsin's outdoors and the cutting-edge outdoor recreation inventory and [Wisconsin Explorer Tool](#).

Under the unique and valuable structure of the Office being housed within the Department of Tourism and the transformational leadership of Secretary Anne Sayers, the Office has been recognized nationally over the years including among my peers in the Outdoor Recreation Learning Network convened by the National Governors Association, recently at the Outdoor Economy Conference which showcased our economic impact report, and being named as one of the "Top 25 Most Extraordinary

Minds” by the HSMAI Adrian Awards in 2021 (the “Oscars” of the travel industry). Most importantly, I am proud of the relationships we’ve built, and it has truly been an honor to serve and support you.

During this transition, I am pleased to announce Cassie Mordini will step in as interim director. Cassie was the first hire we made and, like me, has a passion for the outdoors, a background in the industry and delivers a high level of expertise in this work. I have every confidence she will be an exceptional leader, and the Office won’t miss a beat with Cassie at the helm. In fact, she will be supported by our newest team member, Taylor Foster, who comes to the Office with an impressive background in urban planning, event planning and communications. You can read more about Taylor in the welcome below.

The Department will plan to post the Director position soon, so stay tuned. In the interim, feel free to contact Cassie [via email](#) or at (608) 575-5240.

As I sign off, I’m reflecting on another incredible year for our industry. The new and historic figures from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (see more below) are a testament to the importance of the outdoors and the outdoor recreation economy to Wisconsin. Outdoor recreation is more than just a fun thing to do. It is big business, and it’s a solution for our local communities driving tourism, workforce attraction and retention, and providing quality of life benefits for our residents. Please accept my deep gratitude for your support and my admiration of your amazing work that continues to grow Wisconsin’s outdoor recreation economy.

I hope to see you on the trails.

Happy Trails,



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](#).

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# Outdoor Recreation: A Force for Wisconsin's Economy

Outdoor recreation continues to be a driving force for Wisconsin's economy, and the latest release of data from the [Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account](#) from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) shows that it contributed a record-breaking \$9.8 billion to the state's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022, growing 6.8% over the previous record set in 2021.

It was the highest contribution by the outdoor recreation sector since 2018 when the BEA started measuring the industry's economic impact and releasing the figures annually. All topline metrics for the outdoor recreation industry in Wisconsin were record-breaking:

- \$9.8 billion contributed to Wisconsin's GDP (up 6.8%)
- 2.5% of Wisconsin's GDP (up 0.1%)
- 94,042 jobs supported (up 3.6%)
- 3.1% of state employment (up 0.1%)
- \$4.7 billion in employee compensation (up 5.3%)

Wisconsin's Motorcycling/ATVing sector contributes over \$1 billion and ranks first among all states. The top contributing sectors by activity in Wisconsin's outdoor recreation are shown below.



Snowmobiling, which is included in the "Other Snow Activities" category, showed a whopping 72% growth in 2022. Given these figures measure value added, or GDP, the production of goods (and their cost) is often the greatest contributing factor to these calculations. Having manufacturing locations, such as the Polaris facility in Osceola which handles power train design and engine assembly for all their product lines for ATVs, UTVs and snowmobiles, makes a significant impact on these figures. However, participation can have an effect, as well, and can be measured by purchases made for services or gear. For example, the skiing and snowboarding category rebounded in 2021, and growth continued in 2022 with another 20.3% increase. And notably, travel

and tourism, as well as local trips (trips less than 50 miles), associated with outdoor recreation grew to nearly \$3 billion in 2022, increasing by 14.2% and 8.7%, respectively.

Nationally, the outdoor recreation industry posted record-breaking numbers, too. For the first time, the outdoor industry contributed more than \$1 trillion in gross output to the U.S. economy, which accounted for 2.2% of the nation's GDP. It grew nearly 2.5 times faster than the U.S. economy as a whole, at 4.8% versus just 1.9% for the U.S. economy. And nationwide, the industry employed nearly 5 million people.

“Our industry continues to provide benefits to communities across the country – big, small, urban and rural alike. We are thrilled to once again see the data reflect what we hear every day, that outdoor recreation is not a nice to have – but a necessity for healthy people, places and economies,” said Jessica Turner, President of [Outdoor Recreation Roundtable](#).

These historic figures reinforce the importance of the outdoors and the outdoor recreation economy to Wisconsin and the nation. To learn more about the wide-ranging impacts of outdoor recreation, visit our [website](#) or download the 2022 economic impact infographic [here](#).

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## 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 December industry highlights:



**Nonprofit:** [Willow Kinni Mountain Bike Club](#)

- The Willow Kinni (WIKI) Mountain Bike Club plans, builds and maintains over 40 miles of year-round mountain bike trails at Willow River and Kinnickinnic state parks near Hudson. This volunteer and donation-powered club also helps maintain and groom ski trails.

**Manufacturer:** [St. Croix Rod](#)



- Headquartered in Park Falls since 1948, St. Croix Rod designs and manufactures fishing rods for freshwater,

saltwater, fly and ice fishing. Each rod is crafted, assembled and tested by 32 pairs of hands. Today the family-run brand includes accessories and apparel.

**Guides, Tours, Rentals:** [Mel's Trading Post](#)



- Situated in downtown Rhineland and operated by a lifelong resident, Mel's Trading Post offers bike, paddle sports, snowshoe and cross-country ski rentals. Visitors can get outdoor gear serviced and gather tips about silent sports activities in the Northwoods.

**Retailer:** [Antigo Yamaha](#)



- Motorcycles, UTVs, ATVs, snowmobiles and more are available at the showrooms at Antigo Yamaha and North Country Yamaha, which includes new and pre-owned Yamaha brands of outdoor sport vehicles. Service and fabrication are also available at both locations.

**Destinations:** [Ariens Nordic Center](#)



- Ariens Nordic Center in Brillion features 5 kilometers of lighted trails for cross-country skiing and winter fat biking, a 20-point Kurvinen Biathlon Target System, a robust snowmaking system and paved multi-use trails. The Center rents equipment, offers lessons and hosts special events.

*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.*



## Welcome Taylor!

*Taylor joins the Office of Outdoor Recreation as the new Program & Outreach Specialist*

The Office is pleased to introduce you to our newest team member, Taylor Foster. With a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science from Edgewood College and a Master of

Science Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Taylor brings with her a wealth of knowledge and skills that will help the Office elevate our service to the industry. She most recently served as a Communications Specialist for the Wisconsin DNR, helping to promote the Wisconsin State Park System. She was also instrumental in the organization and launch of the OutWiGo Green event that welcomed over 1,800 participants to the park system to learn about outdoor recreation activities, organizations and more.

In her spare time, you'll find Taylor outside gardening, climbing or hiking. Taylor also serves as a board member for the Friends of Devil's Lake State Park and the Wisconsin Climbing Association.

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## INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY NEWS

### **Trails Gala Raises \$90K for Area Outdoor & Youth Organizations in Eau Claire Area**

The collaborative event featured "vision talks" by each of the nine organizations benefitting from the night's proceeds, as well as a keynote from Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation Director Mary Monroe Brown. [Read the article](#) or [view the event recap](#).

### **Wigwam Mills Has Made "Filet Mignon" Quality Socks for More than 100 Years**

The family-owned business shares a behind-the-scenes tour of how the socks are made and how employees are behind the quality of every pair. [Read the article](#).

### **Learn to Ski and Snowboard Week Kicks Off Dec. 17**

Fourteen participating resorts will run specials during the week of Dec. 17 - Dec. 21 that includes a lift ticket, rental equipment and a lesson for a discounted rate. [Learn more](#).

### **Ariens Nordic Center Kicks off Ski Season**

*Silent Sports Magazine* shares an inside account of the new facility and how the team is kicking off the ski season with events and more. [Read the article](#).

### **2024 State Park Admission Stickers and State Trail Passes Now on Sale**

For holiday gifts or to help users be prepared for their first visit in 2024, state park admission stickers and trail passes for 2024 went on sale on Nov. 24. [Learn more](#).

### **National Park Service Awards Semiquincentennial Grant to Aztalan State Park**

The National Historic Landmark in Jefferson County will receive over \$300,000 for preservation projects on the property, which is home to the remains of a multi-component, multi-ethnic precontact Native American village site. [Learn more](#).

### **Grants from Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund Announced**

Established to protect, restore and improve habitat, the fund is built through voluntary contributions by the public when they purchase hunting or fishing licenses. Several grants were

recently awarded. [Learn more.](#)

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## RESOURCES

### **U.S. Department of Transportation Webinar on Grant Opportunities on Dec. 5**

The webinar will spotlight new resources including the Benefit-Cost Analysis Tool, the new Rural Grant Application Toolkit as well as grant application tips for the Safe Streets and Roadways for All program. [Learn more and register.](#)

### **Webinar Series by Professional Trail Builders Association and American Trails**

The free webinar series covers various topics concerning trail design, construction, risk management and trail assessment. [Learn more.](#)

### **Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) Grant Program**

The RSG program from the Department of Tourism assists destinations in securing competitive sporting events that require a financial commitment to host. Applications are due Jan. 1. [Learn more.](#)

### **Trails Capacity Program Application Period Open**

Funding is available for trail maintenance, stewardship training and trail research and education. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Applications are due Jan. 15. [Learn more.](#)

### **Matching Awards Program (MAP) of the National Forest Foundation**

MAP: Connecting People to Forests focuses primarily on in-person community engagement and completion of stewardship activities. The program aims to create lasting change that allows communities, especially underserved communities, opportunities to benefit from activities on National Forest System lands or adjacent public lands. Applications are due Jan. 16. [Learn more.](#)

### **Sport Fish Restoration Grant**

Funding is available for boat ramp construction and renovation, channel dredging, parking lots, accessible paths, lighting and restroom facilities. Applications are due Feb. 1. [Learn more.](#)

### **AARP Community Challenge Will Open in January**

Funding is available for projects designed to achieve one or more of the following: create vibrant public spaces, focus on diversity and inclusion, deliver a range of transportation or mobility options, public infrastructure, accessible and affordable housing developments, increase civic engagement and more. [Learn more.](#)

### **Safe Streets For All (SS4A) Federal Funding Expected to Open in February**

Funding is available to create or update a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan or to implement measures in an established plan. [Learn more.](#)

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# EVENTS

Sat Dec 2	<a href="#"><u>Learn to Hunt Pheasants</u></a>	Poynette
Sat Dec 2	<a href="#"><u>Welcome Winter Hike @ Willow River</u></a>	Hudson
Sat Dec 2	<a href="#"><u>Twilight Hike @ Devil's Lake</u></a>	Baraboo
Sat-Sun Dec 2-3	<a href="#"><u>Hoofer Ski &amp; Snowboard Resale</u></a>	Madison
Fri-Sun Dec 8-10	<a href="#"><u>Wisconsin Ice Fishing Expo</u></a>	Oshkosh
Sat Dec 9	<a href="#"><u>Tracking Hikes @ Scuppernong Springs</u></a>	Dousman
Sat Dec 9	<a href="#"><u>Hugh Jass Race 2: Trek HQ</u></a>	Waterloo
Sat Dec 16	<a href="#"><u>WinMan Early Bird Race</u></a>	Winchester
Sat Dec 16	<a href="#"><u>Winter Wonders - Learn to Ski</u></a>	Poynette
Sat Dec 16	<a href="#"><u>Winter Fest @ Havenwoods</u></a>	Milwaukee
Fri Dec 29	<a href="#"><u>Ski Clinics - Adult and Youth</u></a>	Winchester
Sat Dec 30	<a href="#"><u>Hugh Jass Race 3: Kegel-Alpha Trails</u></a>	Franklin
Sat Jan 6	<a href="#"><u>Pat's Landing Tipper Tourney</u></a>	Hayward
Sat Jan 6	<a href="#"><u>North End Snowshoe Classic</u></a>	Cable
Sat Jan 6	<a href="#"><u>Candlelight Ski, Hike and Snowshoe</u></a>	Baraboo
Thu-Sun Jan 11-14	<a href="#"><u>Vintage World Championship Snowmobile</u></a>	Eagle River
Sat Jan 13	<a href="#"><u>Kickapoo Valley Reserve Winter Festival</u></a>	La Farge
Sat Jan 13	<a href="#"><u>Seeley Hills Classic Ski Race</u></a>	Cable
Sat Jan 13	<a href="#"><u>Candlelight Hike @ Rib Mountain</u></a>	Wausau
Sat-Sun Jan 13-14	<a href="#"><u>Bald Eagle Watching Days</u></a>	Prairie Du Sac
Thu-Sun Jan 18-21	<a href="#"><u>World Championship Snowmobile Derby</u></a>	Eagle River
Fri Jan 19	<a href="#"><u>Luminary Cross-Country Ski</u></a>	Madison
Sat-Sun Jan 20-21	<a href="#"><u>Free Fishing Weekend</u></a>	Statewide
Sat-Sun Jan 20-21	<a href="#"><u>World Championship Pro Enduro</u></a>	Eagle River
Sat Jan 20	<a href="#"><u>Candlelight Ski and Hike</u></a>	Eagle
Sat Jan 20	<a href="#"><u>Hugh Jass Race 4: Regner Park</u></a>	West Bend
Sat Jan 27	<a href="#"><u>Ironbull Ring of Snow Challenge</u></a>	Wausau
Sat Jan 27	<a href="#"><u>Family Shoe and S'more</u></a>	Winchester
Sat Jan 27	<a href="#"><u>Birkie Tour and Night Race</u></a>	Winchester

Add your events to [TravelWisconsin.com](http://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](mailto: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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