

[Having trouble viewing this email? Click here to view it in your browser](#)



## A Note from the Director

During several recent visits with outdoor recreation businesses and stakeholders around the state, it's been inspiring to see the innovation and creativity leading the industry forward. The first-hand look at the amazing projects, products, and services of Wisconsin's outdoor industry and the enthusiasm of stakeholders to meet the newfound interest and demand for outdoor recreation is simply exciting.

Despite the growth in the outdoor recreation sector, hiring continues to be a struggle in various sectors and geographic regions. To ensure Wisconsin's perspectives and needs are considered in this national conversation, complete the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's Outdoor Industry Workforce Assessment by October 8th. [Click here to take the survey](#) administered by Oregon State University.

As the industry works to fill positions, the Office is working to develop resources and assistance for our stakeholders' recruitment toolboxes. Promoting the attractiveness

of outdoor recreation communities is one of those tools, as is information about the four-season lifestyle and recreational amenities in each community, both of which can be influential in a job seeker's decision making. We hope you find this [presentation template](#) useful in your next recruitment effort, and additional resources are listed below. We also encourage you to reach out to us for any additional requests.

As we head into fall, we hope you find the time to take advantage of what Wisconsin's outdoors has to offer in this colorful season!



Mary Monroe Brown  
Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation

We're a growing office that wants to talk to all outdoor recreation related businesses & organizations. 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 Counties Attract Residents & Talent

Since the onset of the pandemic, the outdoor industry has been able find the so-called silver linings in what has been an unprecedented situation. Positive outlooks and creative innovations allowed companies and organizations to pivot around obstacles and keep things moving forward, welcoming more and more new people into the outdoors. While supply chain issues are still present, the industry has met this challenge head on and been credited for helping keep sectors of the economy afloat.

As the journey continues, it's evident the outdoor industry isn't immune to the workforce shortage being experienced across the nation. For many reasons, ranging

from housing, lack of childcare to career changes and more, businesses of all types are finding it difficult to fill vacancies.

To be competitive in the hiring market, employers, and even cities and regions, are getting creative. A major Wisconsin printing company is advertising its open positions on billboards with a \$2,000 hiring bonus. In [Northwest Arkansas](#), people that relocate to the region for work can apply for a \$10,000 reward and a new bike or membership to a museum; in [West Virginia](#), a similar program offers \$10,000 up front plus free outdoor recreation for a year, and another \$2,000 for staying a full year.

With 7.1 million more Americans drawn outside last year (a total of 160.7 million) coupled with the boom of “Zoom towns,” outdoor recreation is a value proposition the industry has long known but is now being leveraged as an incentive for talent recruitment.



*Trails can offer a number of recreational opportunities attractive to residents and job seekers when developed with a strategic system that balances multiple users.*

A [2019 report from Headwaters Economics](#) revealed that nationwide, on average, “recreation counties” (as defined by the [USDA’s Economic Research Service](#) as having large recreation-related economies) especially in rural areas were more successful in attracting residents than “non-recreation counties.” While many communities have seen the economic benefit of outdoor recreation that comes from visitor spending, many have not fully understood the long-term economic benefits of drawing new visitors and businesses. The study also showed earnings per job was less in recreation counties, but it grew six times faster than in non-recreation counties.

As rural communities fight the trend of declining population and as businesses work to attract talent, investing in and promoting outdoor recreation offerings can be an important part of the economic development plan.

---

## “ What We're Hearing ”

*“When Coni and I were living in Arizona around 2009 and thinking about where we wanted to live permanently, we agreed that the Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin would be ideal. It has plenty of career and outdoor recreation opportunities to fit our interests and lifestyle. Best decision ever; we appreciate the sense of community, appreciation for natural resources, and welcoming embrace that thrives here. After traveling, hunting or fishing in nearly all states, various countries and three continents, we're happy to call Wisconsin home.”*

**Mark LaBarbera**

**Author, Producer, and Founder of the Outdoor Heritage Education Center**

---

## Workforce & Funding Resources

---

**Workforce Recruitment & Development**

---

### **Workforce Innovation Grant**

Grants of up to \$10 million are available to regional workforce development entities to design and implement innovative plans that tackle region-specific, pressing workforce challenges. Programs should be long-term and may address issues such as childcare deserts, housing shortages, lack of transportation, skills training, career coaching, and more.

**Deadline to apply:** October 25, 2021 at 5:00 PM CST for Round 1

[Learn more here.](#)

### **Wisconsin Fast Forward Grant**

Grants from \$5,000 to \$400,000 to businesses of any size and from any sector to reimburse costs associated with customized occupational training for unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers.

**Deadline to apply:** October 18, 2021 at 3:00 PM CST

[Learn more here.](#)

### **Outdoor Industry-Specific Job Boards**

Consider the following websites as additional outreach strategies to draw candidates interested in the outdoor industry.

[Outdoor Industry Jobs](#)

[Occupation Wild](#)

[Camber Outdoors](#)

[Outdoor Industry Association](#)

---

### **Business Funding Opportunities**

---

#### **Main Street Bounce Back Grant**

Grants of up to \$10,000 to new or existing businesses and nonprofits that move into currently vacant properties in Wisconsin downtowns and commercial corridors.

**Deadline to apply:** Contact [WEDC's regional partners.](#)

[Learn more here.](#)

#### **Select American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grants from Wisconsin**

The following opportunities may be applicable to certain outdoor businesses and organizations.

- **Event Venue Grant** for event venues generating at least 33 percent revenue from ticket sales, rental fees, or catering charges. [Learn more here.](#)
- **Live Event Small Business Grant** for non-venue businesses generating at least 50 percent of revenue through provision of goods and/or services to live events. [Learn more here.](#)
- **Summer Camps Grant** for owner/operators of summer camps that operated for a minimum of 21 contiguous days. Programs that are solely day camps are not eligible. [Learn more here.](#)

---

## Industry & Community News

### **Saris Foundation Funds First Bike Park, Project of Baird Creek Preservation**

The [new foundation](#) aims to get more kids on bikes and to build their resiliency and self-confidence through active time outside. [Baird Creek Preservation](#) plans to partner with local organizations and youth clubs for educational program offerings. [Read the story.](#)

### **Wisconsin Outdoor Journalist Wins Newsweek's Future of Travel Award**

James Edward Mills of the [Joy Trip Project](#) and author of *The Adventure Gap*, was named a winner of Newsweek's Future of Travel Award for Storytelling for his work to capture people of color as adventurers and thrill seekers. [Read about the award.](#)

### **Outdoor Retailer Seeking Innovation Award Nominations**

Cutting edge products and retail services will be judged on four criteria: spark, desire, function, and impact. The winners will be announced during the awards ceremony at the Outdoor Retailer Show in January. [Learn more.](#)

---

## Events

*Note: In-person events may change due to precautions based on COVID-19 guidance. Please see each individual event for more information.*

### **Mammoth Hike Challenge | October 1 – 31 | Ice Age Trail**

Through the month of October, participants are challenged to hike 41 miles of the Ice Age Trail and visit at least three Trail Communities. Register individually or as a team to earn a limited-edition patch and completion certificate. [Learn more and register.](#)

### **Trails to Trout Tournament | October 2 – 10 | Sparta**

Combining two of the Sparta area's strengths, biking and fishing, the Trails to Trout Tournament encourages cyclists, anglers, and all to get outside and enjoy the fall season. Anglers will submit their catch via an app for a chance to win a Wyatt fat bike retrofitted for fishing. [Learn more.](#)

### **2021 National Outdoor Recreation Conference | November 8 – 10 | Virtual**

In these pivotal times for outdoor recreation, the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP) presents the conference theme, "Outdoor Recreation: From Resilience to Transformation." [Learn more and register.](#)

---

## Resources

### **Outdoor Industry Association's 2021 Participation Trends Report**

The report, released this summer, shows an increase of 7.1 million people in 2020 over the previous year, but the one-year gains haven't changed the long-term trends and challenges the industry has faced. [Read the report.](#)

---

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation is part of the  
Wisconsin Department of Tourism



Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation | 3319 West Beltline Highway | Madison, WI 53713

[Website](#) | [1-800-432-8747](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)