

Dept. of Natural Resources: Find Your Adventure, Go Wild In Wisconsin

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MADISON, Wis. – People are connecting with Wisconsin’s great outdoors more than ever as the state continues to navigate the COVID-19 public health emergency.

For those who need a place for space, Wisconsin has lots to offer. With 49 state parks, 15 state forests, 44 state trails, 84,000 miles of rivers and streams, and roughly 15,000 lakes, Wisconsin offers residents and visitors innumerable opportunities to Find Your Adventure and Go Wild In Wisconsin.

“Being outdoors not only does wonders for our health and well-being during these uncertain times, it helps support local small businesses that depend on park visitors,” said DNR Secretary Preston D. Cole. “Wisconsin’s parks and trails are public treasures, and it is vital that we continue to invest in the preservation and enhancement of these public lands enjoyed by so many, not just right now but for generations to come.”

Since COVID-19 began impacting people’s lives in mid-March, visits to Wisconsin State Parks have totaled more than 6.4 million. Weekend attendance on May 16-17 was up more than 44% compared to the previous year and that percentage continued to rise to 52% by June 13-14 as camping reopened on state properties.

The DNR has also recorded a dramatic uptick in camping reservations with 73% of campsites reserved July 1 to the 31 in 2020 compared to 62% in the same period in 2019. Since camping re-opened June 10, campers have utilized a total of 203,296 site nights (number of campsites x nights reserved).

Fishing and hunting have always been a Wisconsin tradition, and many have found it a rewarding outlet. So far in 2020, 1.4 million individuals have purchased fishing licenses, a 14% increase over the same time frame in 2019.

Turkey licenses have reached a 3-year-high with more than 400,000 licenses issued, a 10% increase over spring 2019 numbers. Preliminary totals show Wisconsin turkey hunters registered 44,963 birds during the 2020 spring turkey hunting season, nearly a 17% increase from the 38,576 birds registered in the 2019 spring season. The 2020 youth season resulted in a total of 2,880 birds registered, up 47% from 1,953 in 2019. Harvest increased significantly across all zones and time periods compared to 2019 levels.

The economic impact of outdoor recreation in Wisconsin is notable. Annually, it adds an estimated \$7.8 billion boost to the state's GDP and supports more than 93,000 jobs according to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

"If there is a silver lining in the pandemic, it is that getting outside has never felt so important to so many people – and Wisconsin is fortunate to have countless outdoor offerings," said Director Mary Monroe Brown, of the Wisconsin Tourism Office of Outdoor Recreation. "Welcoming and cultivating this new group to become life-long outdoorists is a monumental opportunity not only for the outdoor recreation industry but also for Wisconsin's economy. The Office of Outdoor Recreation is grateful to work alongside such a robust agency as the Department of Natural Resources as a key partner in those efforts."

[TravelWisconsin.com](https://www.travelwisconsin.com), the Department of Tourism's premiere state travel website has seen percent increases in the triple digits of people searching for great trails, hikes and waterfalls.

Visitors to our state parks are asked to check our website for park capacity updates, changes to access and current health and safety precautions before they head out. Learn more about the wonderful opportunities available for outdoor enjoyment by visiting dnr.wisconsin.gov.