

# Gov. Evers: Announces Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry sees third record-breaking year in a row with record \$12 billion economic impact

Posted on Monday, Mar 9, 2026

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, together with Wisconsin Department of Tourism Secretary Anne Sayers and Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation Director Cassie Mordini, announced another record-breaking year for Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry in 2024. According to the latest data from the [Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account](#) from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), outdoor recreation contributed more than \$12 billion to Wisconsin's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2024, a 3.8 percent increase over the previous record-breaking year in 2023.

Gov. Evers in January [sent a letter](#) to the Trump Administration urging the BEA to release the 2024 Outdoor Recreation Economic Data, which was delayed for months by the Trump Administration. Due to the Trump Administration's continued obstruction of important economic data reporting, industry partners in Wisconsin were left to plan and make decisions with an inadequate view of the business and economic landscape.

"Across every corner of Wisconsin, from our lakes and rivers to our parks, trails, and snowy slopes, outdoor recreation is a part of our DNA, and it's essential to the health and well-being of our economy and our communities," said Gov. Evers. "Outdoor recreation draws visitors from near and far in all four seasons, supporting local businesses, creating local jobs, and showcasing everything that

makes Wisconsin the special place it is. While unnecessary delays slowed the release of this data down, this record-breaking growth highlights the strength and momentum of outdoor recreation in Wisconsin, and now, with the Office of Outdoor Recreation being made permanent, it's full speed ahead so we can make sure our state remains a top destination where families, travelers, and businesses can thrive for generations to come.”

Wisconsin's statewide travel and tourism industry has continued to see record-breaking years under Gov. Evers and the Evers Administration. In 2024, Wisconsin tourism [celebrated](#) a record-high \$25.8 billion in total economic impact, surpassing the previous record years in 2023 and 2022. The state also welcomed a record-breaking 114.4 million visits and generated a record \$1.7 billion in state and local revenue, making it a hat-trick year.

Gov. Evers has made investing in the state's more than \$25 billion tourism industry, including the outdoor recreation industry, a top priority of his administration. In his very first budget as governor, Gov. Evers created the Office of Outdoor Recreation at the Wisconsin Department of Tourism in 2019 to serve as a central hub for Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry, working with stakeholders and providing resources to bolster Wisconsin as a top outdoor recreation destination. The final 2025-27 Biennial Budget, signed by Gov. Evers last year, finally provided funding and staffing necessary to make the Office of Outdoor Recreation a permanent office for the first time in state history.

“Outdoor recreation continues to be one of the top reasons visitors choose Wisconsin,” said Secretary Sayers. “Whether it's casting a line at sunrise, exploring a new trail with friends, or gearing up for a weekend on the water, the outdoors is where lasting memories are made in our state. This continued growth reflects not only our incredible natural assets but also the dedicated guides, outfitters, manufacturers, and tourism professionals who bring these experiences to life. Through the leadership of the Office of Outdoor Recreation and our partners statewide, we are strengthening this essential sector and reinforcing Wisconsin's reputation as a premier outdoor destination.”

Additionally, all topline metrics for the outdoor recreation industry in 2024 in Wisconsin were record-breaking, including a record-breaking number of jobs supported and wages paid:

- \$12 billion contributed to Wisconsin's GDP—up 3.8 percent;

- 100,139 jobs supported—up 1.6 percent; and
- \$5.7 billion in employee compensation—up 5.3 percent.

“Wisconsin’s outdoor industry continues to raise the bar,” said Office of Outdoor Recreation Director Mordini. “Our state has built a strong, collaborative ecosystem of manufacturers, retailers, outfitters, tourism partners, and community leaders who understand that the outdoors is both an economic engine and a quality-of-life asset. This growth is a testament to their leadership, resilience, and shared commitment to keeping Wisconsin at the forefront of outdoor recreation.”

The report showed that Wisconsin’s outdoor recreation industry grew in a majority of activities across the board. Top contributing sectors by activity in Wisconsin’s outdoor recreation economy in 2024 included:

- Multi-use apparel and accessories: \$1.3 billion
- Motorcycling and ATVing: \$1 billion
- Boating and fishing: \$1 billion
- Game areas: \$539 million
- Guided tours and outfitted travel: \$498 million
- RVing: \$435 million
- Hunting and shooting: \$378 million
- Climbing, hiking, and tent camping: \$174 million
- Equestrian: \$170 million
- Bicycling: \$137 million

In addition to another record-breaking economic growth, travel and tourism spending tied to outdoor recreation trips more than 50 miles from home grew by 7.2 percent in 2024, while local outdoor recreation trips within 50 miles of home increased by 2.3 percent year over year.

Further, earlier this year, Gov. Evers, along with the Office of Outdoor Recreation, [released reports](#) from the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Economic Impact Program, finding visitors and residents contribute over \$49.1 million in economic activity through outdoor recreation at unique outdoor recreation destinations in Dane, Door, Iron, Oconto, Oneida, and Vilas counties. The Office of Outdoor Recreation launched the DIY Economic Impact Program in 2024 as a pilot to assist local governments and nonprofits in documenting the value of outdoor recreation. Following the success of its first year, the Office of Outdoor Recreation invited a second cohort of outdoor stakeholders to participate in the program

throughout 2025.

Additional information on Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry is available on the Office of Outdoor Recreation's website: <https://outdoorrecreation.wi.gov/Pages/Resources/Report.aspx>.

For the national report and state-level data and tables, visit the Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account section of the BEA website at: <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).