

June 17, 2026

Travel Wisconsin Updates:

- **Travel Wisconsin's Economic Impact Report** was released last week announcing 2025 economic impact data. The tourism industry generated a record-high \$27 billion in total economic impact, or about \$74 million a day, surpassing the [previous](#) record of \$25.8 billion set in 2024, which itself was a record year. This is the fourth consecutive year the state's tourism industry has seen record-breaking economic impact. You can view the full report on Travel Wisconsin's Industry website – industry.travelwisconsin.com.
- **Travel Wisconsin Trail Report:**
- Background:
 - o The "Wisconsin Trail Report" is the only Travel Wisconsin seasonal report that is currently active (Winter Snow is thankfully closed, and Fall Color is coming)
 - o The report has two sections- covering both hiking and biking across the state.
 - o The Wisconsin Trail Report; "Biking" section covers paved routes and trails, gravel routes and trails and mountain biking trails statewide.
 - o Travel Wisconsin is promoting the Wisconsin Trail Report through multiple strategies including Paid Media efforts, social media and call outs across all communication channels including both our industry and public facing newsletters. We also leverage Trail Report coverage through PR efforts such as our weekly WTMJ Segments and interviews.
 - o The report is currently showing strong performance with 183,234. Total Active Users (36% to last year's total) and engaged sessions are nearly to half of what we saw in the entire season last year.
 - o Map clicks have gone over 20,000 and are already at 58% to goal.
 - o Because of the active weather we have been experiencing this season, timely updates are important, especially on singletrack.
 - o Currently- 134 reports are actively being updated. 52 of 72 counties are currently represented.
 - o **"Missing counties" include Douglas, Iron, Florence, Barron, Rusk, Taylor, St. Croix, Pierce, Buffalo, Jackson, Kewaunee, Vernon, Crawford, Adams, Waushara, Marquette and Columbia.**
 - o We are in communication with Sara Rigelman about adding reporters for DNR properties,
 - o These are some important counties, and we would welcome any efforts to help report on area trails.
 - o Reports not only focus on the trails, but they also showcase nearby restaurants, shops and accommodations, encouraging travelers to explore and support the local community. For instance, the Heart of Vilas County Bike Trail System generated \$25.7 million in economic impact.
 - o **Getting Started is Easy!**
It's simple to become a seasonal reporter. Just a few minutes each week, from spring through fall, is all it takes to share trail conditions, seasonal highlights, and tips. We provide easy-to-use tools and all the support you need.

- o I can send out a short **registration form** today to get started and become part of the Wisconsin Trail Report team!
- The Wisconsin Department of Tourism celebrated **National Travel and Tourism Week** the first week of May with industry partners from around the state. The Travel Wisconsin team and Governor Evers made stops in 14 communities.
 - o Governor Evers joined the Travel Wisconsin team and representatives from Ride Wisconsin Gravel, Visit Wausau and Bill Bertram from Wausau and Marathon County Parks & Recreation Foundation President and IRONBULL Founder. The group rode a section of the Athens Graventure trail - a 30-mile family-friendly trail in Marathon County.
 - o The Governor also visited Mountain Outfitters bike shop in West Bend yesterday to talk about our overall economic impact numbers with a focus on the economic impact of outdoor recreation as it relates to tourism in Wisconsin.
 - o Our public relations efforts for NTTW secured 28 media hits.
- Speaking of **media hits**, our PR team worked with the media to produce several top-line articles about biking in Wisconsin:
 - o Chicago Sun Times – [Where to Take Your Bike on Vacation in the Home of the Rails-To-Trails Movement](#)
 - o Milwaukee Magazine – The Elroy Sparta Trail – [One of the Top Cycling Routes in Wisconsin](#)
 - o Afar Magazine – [Take This Cheese Themed Bike Ride for 60 Miles of Pizza Farms, Dairy Shops and Creameries.](#)
- Visit the **refreshed [TravelWisconsin.com](#)** to see how Wisconsin’s amazing biking experiences are represented and listed. This refreshed [TravelWisconsin.com](#) allows us to elevate our marketing strategy by inspiring more travelers to choose Wisconsin as their next vacation destination.
 - o Let us know if you have bike events, bike trails, bike shops and other biking experiences to add to [TravelWisconsin.com](#).
 - o Information about our free listing service is [here](#).
- **Ready Set Go Sports Grant** – The Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) grant program assists destinations in securing competitive sporting events that are not regularly held in Wisconsin and require an upfront financial commitment.
 - o \$30,000 max grant per community.
 - o Grant Deadlines: Feb 1, April 1, **Sept 1**.
 - o Detail [here](#).
- **Meeting Means Business Grant** – The Meetings Mean Business (MMB) grant program helps destinations by providing financial assistance for facility costs or host destination expenses as you bid for regional and national meetings or conventions.
 - o \$30,000 max grant per community. Grant
 - o Deadlines: Feb 1, April 1, **Sept 1**.
 - o Details [here](#).
- **JEM Grant** – The Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grant Program funds promotions or events for nonprofit organizations. Each category reimburses Wisconsin nonprofit organizations for eligible promotional expenses for New Events, Existing Events, One Time One of Kind Events, Sales Promotions and Destination Marketing Projects.

- o JEM Grants deadlines are Feb 1, April 1, **August 1, Sept 1** (Destination Marketing) and November 1
- o Details [here](#).
- **Industry Newsletter** – Please sign up to receive Travel Wisconsin’s industry newsletter highlighting important and timely news relevant to Wisconsin’s tourism and recreation industry.
 - o Sign up [here](#).

Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation Updates (6/17/26)

Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation - Website Launch

- The Office launched a brand-new website on May 5.
- It’s designed to better serve the outdoor recreation industry and partners across the state and is reflective of Wisconsin’s remarkable outdoor offerings and robust outdoor industry.
- The new site includes improved design and functionality of key elements, such as the [Outdoor Business Directory](#), an upgraded searchable and filterable [Resource Library](#) and a brand-new [News & Stories](#) section where we can amplify the incredible work happening around Wisconsin.

Do-It-Yourself Economic Impact Program

- The Office kicked off the third round of the Do-It-Yourself Economic Impact Program. This program is designed to assist communities with conducting their own economic impact study on an outdoor recreation asset in their community. Communities can attend a public workshop to learn more and apply for the practicum.
- Over 50 people attended the workshops in February and were invited to apply to the practicum to receive 1:1 coaching to conduct an economic impact analysis.
- This spring, 3 communities were selected for 1:1 coaching, including:
 - The Wisconsin River Trail Organization in Boscobel. This team is assessing the economic impact of their existing trail system to inform messaging and strategic investments for the planned future trail.
 - The second team is a partnership between Visit Eau Claire, Explore Menomonie, Go Chippewa and the City of Eau Claire’s Economic Development Division to measure the economic impact of the Chippewa Valley State Trail System, which includes the Chippewa River, Old Abe and Red Cedar State Trails.
 - The third team, Lodi & Lake Chamber, is studying the economic impact of their outdoor recreation assets, including the Ice Age Trail, bike trails, ATV/UTV, and more, to inform future main street developments.
- Teams are collecting data now through Labor Day and will analyze and write reports, which will be released in January 2027.

Wisconsin Governor’s Outdoor Industry Awards

- The [Wisconsin Governor's Outdoor Industry Awards](#) celebrate the people, businesses, organizations and places leading the state’s outdoor recreation industry across seven categories, including;
 - Destination of the Year
 - Outdoor Business of the Year

- Trailblazer of the Year
- Tandem Award for Collaboration
- Big Tent Award
- First Ascent Award for Innovation
- Rising Star Award
- The nomination period was open in April with 66 nominations submitted. All nominees and winners will be recognized at a celebration event on June 24 in conjunction with Great Outdoors Month.

Wisconsin Healthy Communities Summit – April 23-24, 2026

- Hosted every other year by the Office and the Wisconsin Bike Fed, the Healthy Communities Summit is focused on building healthier, thriving communities through outdoor recreation.
- Held on April 23-24, 2026, in Wausau with nearly 150 attendees and 9 breakout sessions.
- Featured keynote speakers:
 - [Rebecca Rusch](#) is an athlete performance and mindset expert with over three decades of experience as a world champion adventure athlete, exploring the limits of strength, resilience, and human potential in mountain biking, adventure racing, climbing, and paddling. Her Emmy-winning documentary Blood Road follows her journey to her father's crash site in Laos, a journey that transformed loss into healing and deepened her belief in movement as medicine.
 - [Carter Lavin](#) is a climate and transportation advocate and consultant who works with organizations and community leaders to build strategy, organize effectively, and create safer, greener, more accessible communities. His work focuses on advancing car-free and alternative transportation solutions such as bike lanes, bus lanes, safer crosswalks, wider sidewalks, and car-free public spaces. He is the author of *If You Want to Win, You've Got to Fight*.
- 6 Field trips got attendees outside to learn about successful projects in the greater Wausau area.

Keep in Touch

- [Travel Wisconsin newsletter](#)
- [Wisconsin Outside monthly newsletter](#)
- Follow the [Office of Outdoor Recreation on LinkedIn](#)