



A SUMMIT OF OPPORTUNITY:

How we drive the outdoor recreation economy
forward together

Wednesday, July 23, 2025



Gov. DeWine announces grant funding for southern Ohio riverfront development



The Baileys Trail System in Ohio will be one of the largest MTB trail systems in the Eastern USA

The Baileys Trail System near Athens, Ohio, will boast 88 miles of interconnected bike-optimized singletrack trails once it's complete.

LOCAL

'This is just the beginning!' Ohio to revamp Mahoning Valley waterfront recreation areas

March 10, 2023

The Shift: Arkansas looks

in
res

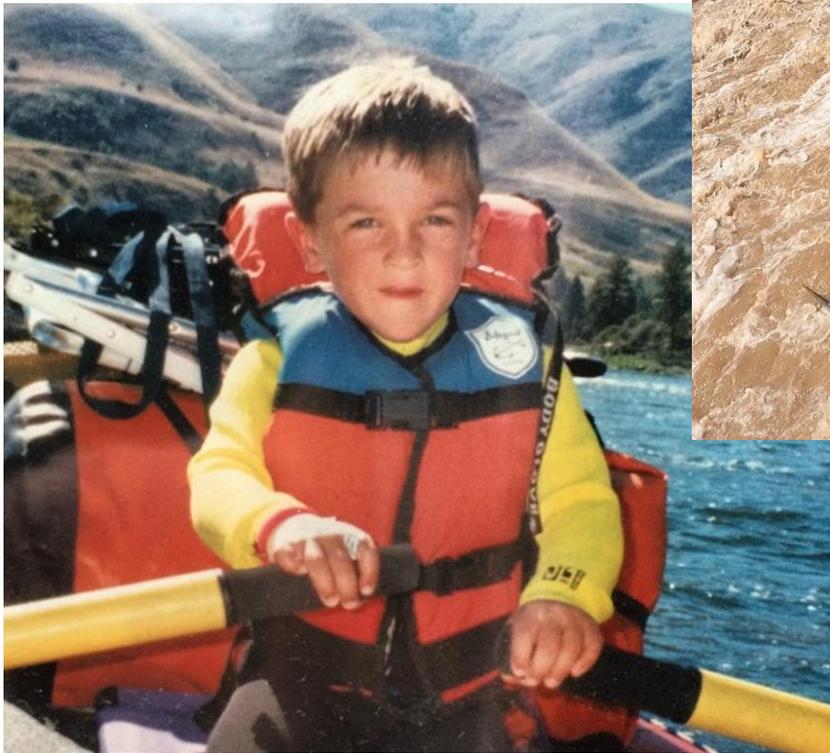
and Minnesota's
dustry

a top 10 state in

teams

d
or

- 1) Returning to our roots: the benefits of the Great Outdoors**
 - 2) Outdoor Recreation -> Quality of Life -> Economic Development**
 - 3) A path forward for outdoor recreation**
-



Main Salmon River, Idaho, 1997



Teton Science Schools

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Wind River Range,
Wyoming





Grand Teton

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Yale SCHOOL OF THE ENVIRONMENT

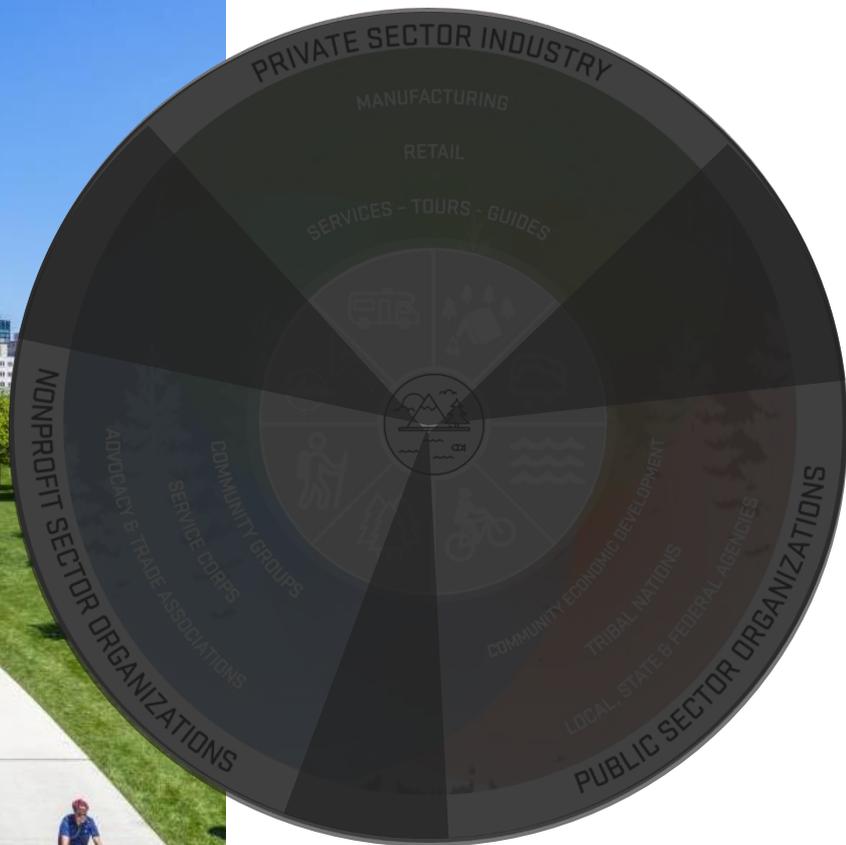


1) Returning to our roots: the benefits of the Great Outdoors

"Demand for overnight accommodations at public parks is far greater than the supply. The demand is surging. ...Americans are seeking the outdoors as never before. And this is only a foretaste of what is to come. Not only will there be many more people; they will want to do more and they will have more money and time to do it with."

Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, 1962

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Technical Specialists

These are people who love solving design challenges, working to build things, seeing the tangible results of their labor, and don't mind being behind the scenes.

- Boat and RV Technicians
- Ski Lift Technicians
- Software Engineers and Web Developers
- Accountants
- Biologists/Ecologists
- Manufacturing/Engineering
- Trail, Infrastructure, and Facility Design
- Permitting and Planning
- Landscape Architects and Engineers
- GIS/Cartography
- Shipping Logistics
- Business Analytics

Public Engagement

These are people who get their energy being around other people, and like aspects of storytelling and interpretation to be involved in their work. They are most satisfied when people around them have great days in the outdoors.

- Sales and Customer Service
- Education/Interpretation
- Community Managers
- Cultural Storytellers
- Public Affairs
- Communications and Development
- Travel Advisors
- Event Planning
- Client Relations
- Concessions Operators
- Guiding and Outfitting

Integrators

These sorts of workers aren't easily captured in one box—they have aspects of public facing and internal work woven into their job. They like crafting plans for the future, solving challenges, and communicating with a diverse set of stakeholders about the importance of the outdoors.

- Land Managers
- Community Economic Development
- Environmental Justice
- Recreation Management
- Social Scientists
- Risk Management
- Product Design and Development
- Corporate Sustainability
- Outdoor Recreation/Conservation Policy
- User Experience/User Interface

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Hammock Gear



H2O Boss Charters

Erie Outfitters



Falls Outdoor Company

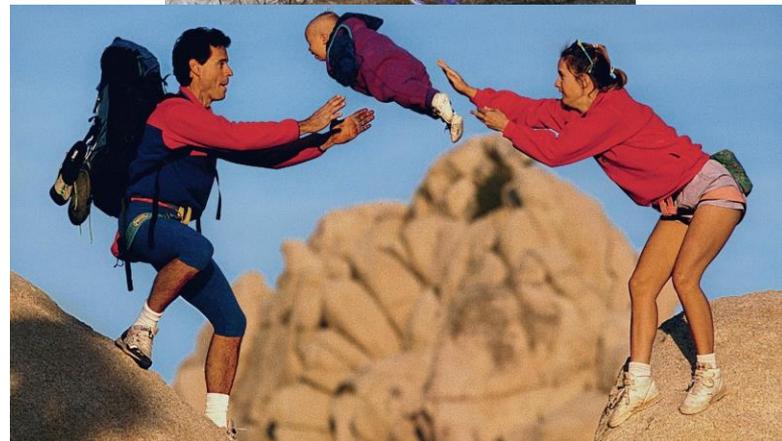
Marietta Adventure Company



Rocky Brands



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CHRIS PERKINS

Vice President of Programs

Drive an agenda that expands recreational access, improves infrastructure, conserves public resources and grows the outdoor recreation economy.



ORR'S FOOTPRINT AT THE FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL

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2023, National

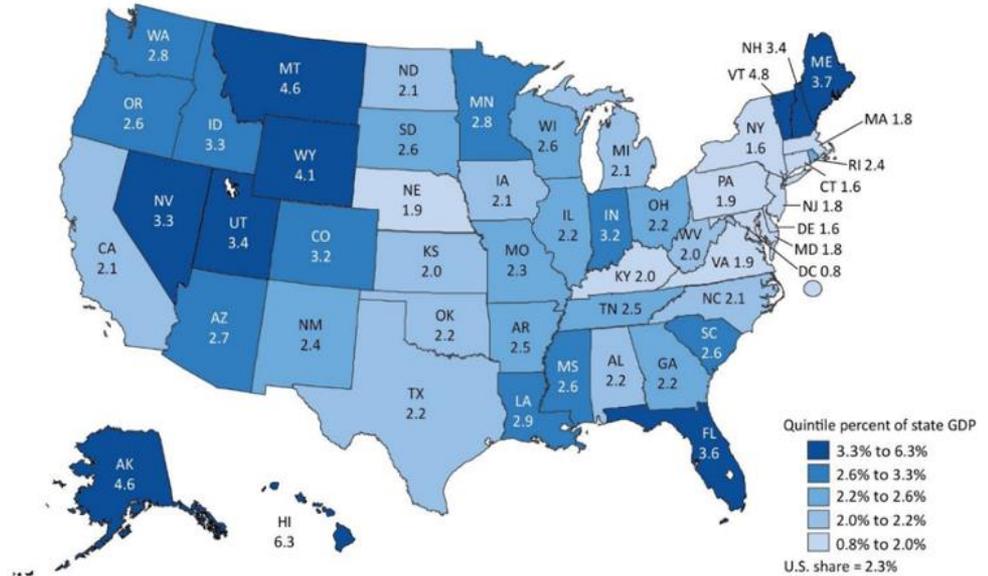
\$1.2 Trillion Gross Output

2.3% of U.S. GDP

5 Million Jobs

3.1% of U.S. Employment

State Outdoor Recreation Value Added as a Percent of State GDP, 2023

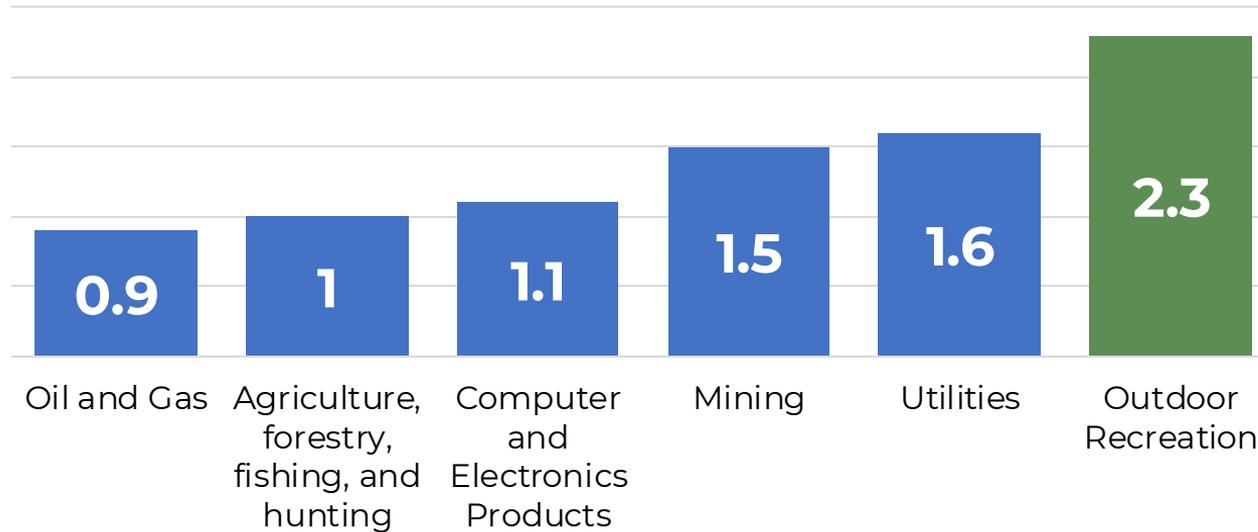


U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis



	Outdoor Recreation Economy	U.S. Economy
Growth in GDP	+3.6%	+2.9%

Contribution to U.S. GDP, 2023 (%)



2023	GDP, (% share)	Employment
Ohio	\$19.3 billion, (2.2%)	147,986

GDP (\$ Million)



MEASURING OHIO'S RECREATION ECONOMY

7th Largest in Size of GDP

23rd in Annual GDP Growth, 2012-2023 (5.6% Annually)

KATHY WILLIS SCIENCE DEC 21, 2024 5:00 AM

To Improve Your Gut Microbiome, Spend More Time in Nature

Microbes found in green spaces can transfer into your body, increasing bacterial diversity and potentially boosting the strength of the immune system.



Improving Public Health



PASSED THE HOUSE! ✓
PASSED THE SENATE! ✓
SIGNED INTO
LAW! ✓



- **Forest Service Climbing Guidance**

e Trails
Connectivity at

recreation

Communities

hips to Modernize
grounds

**Visitor Centers on
lands and Waters**

uncil on Outdoor
)

Visitation Data

nits and Fees

Special Recreation
d Communities

Legacy Partnership

or Recreation

Liaisons

- **Volunteers in the National Forests and
Public Land Act**

OUTDOOR RECREATION PACKAGE IN U.S. CONGRESS

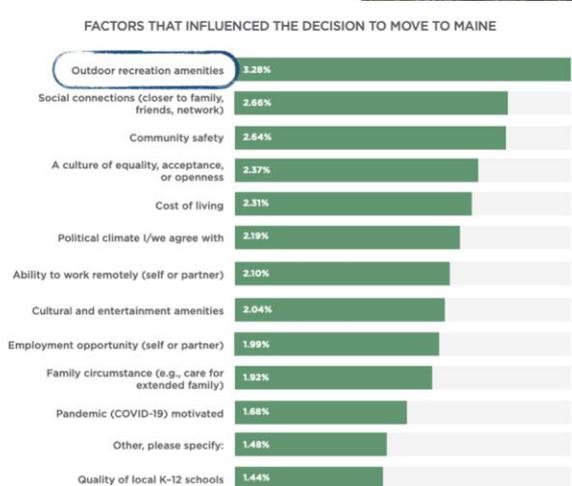
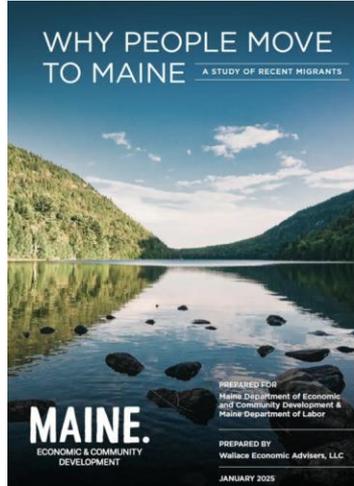
1) Returning to our roots: the benefits of the Great Outdoors



2) Outdoor Recreation -> Quality of Life -> Economic Development

The outdoors is Utah tech firms' No. 1 recruiting tool

State leaders extol the economic importance of “protecting and preserving” Utah’s outdoor opportunities.



OUTDOOR RECREATION IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE



OUTDOOR RECREATION IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE

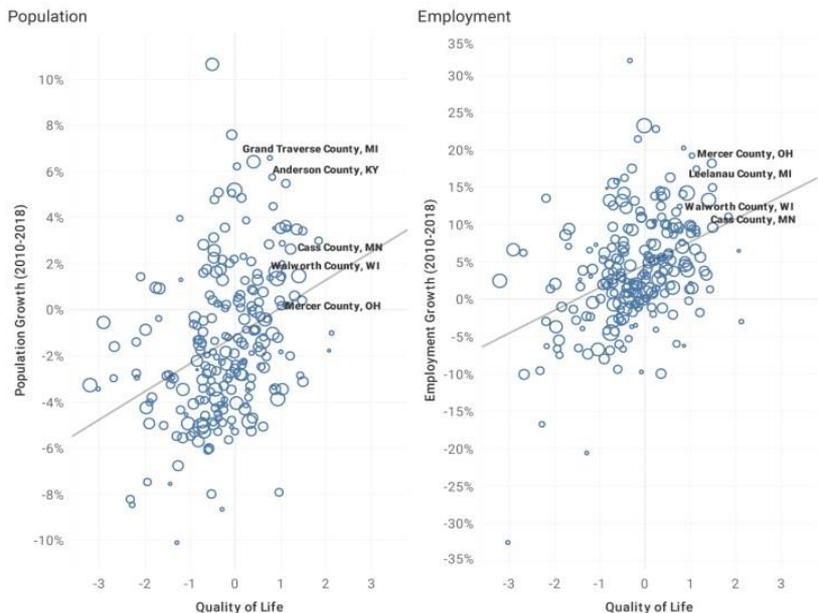
*“But now there is compelling new data that these **traditional economic development tools may be ineffective compared to investments in quality of life and place.***

*Our research on smaller communities has found that community amenities such as **recreation opportunities**, cultural activities, and excellent services (e.g., good schools, transportation options) are likely bigger contributors to healthy local economies than traditional “business-friendly” measures.”*

BROOKINGS

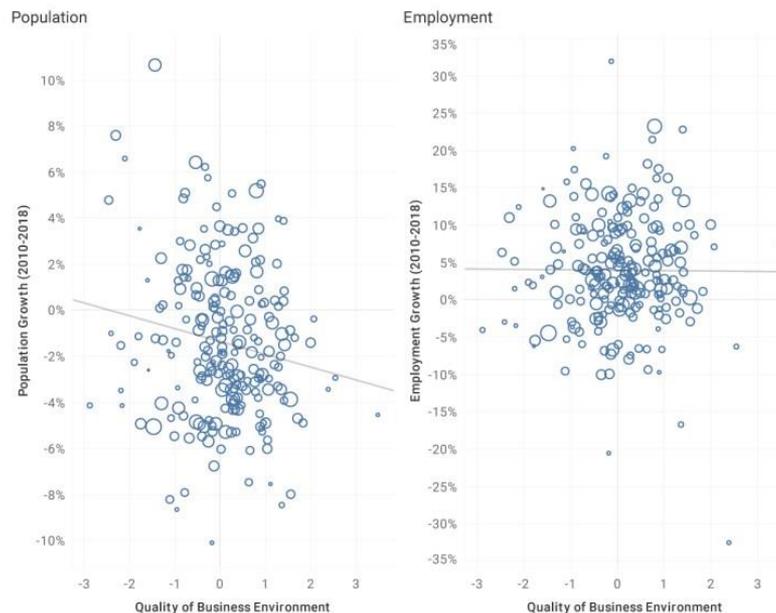
OUTDOOR RECREATION IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE

Figure 1. Higher quality of life is associated with higher population and employment growth



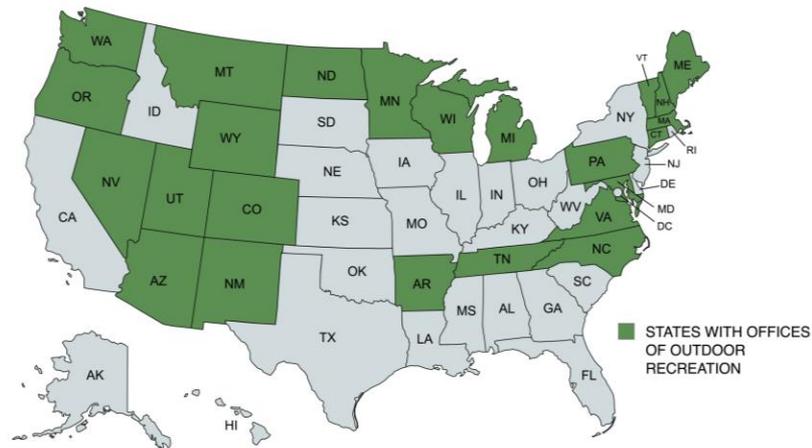
Source: Authors' calculations using Census Bureau data

Figure 2. Higher quality of business environment is not associated with higher population or employment growth

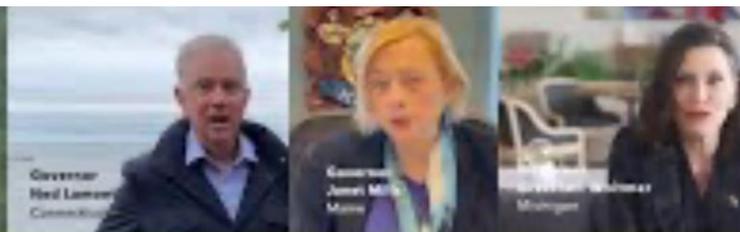


Source: Authors' calculations using Census Bureau data

Current State Offices of Outdoor Recreation



24 States



recreationroundtable.org/25

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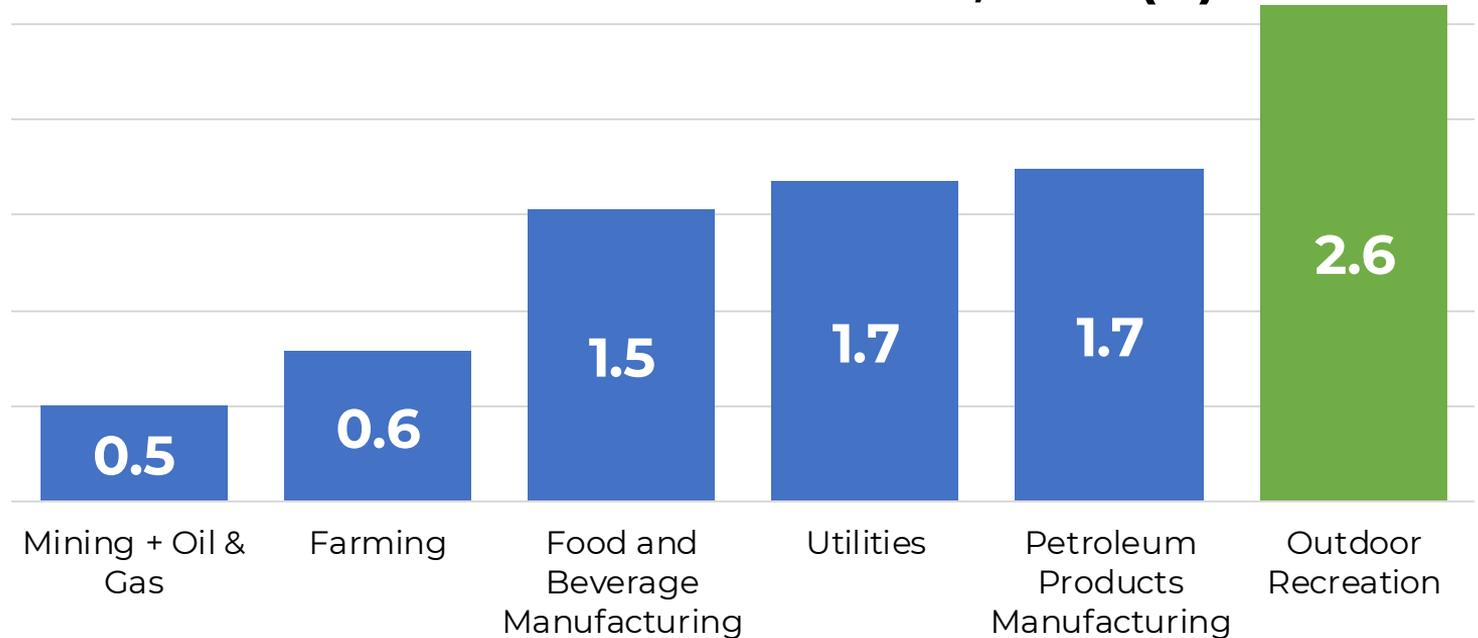


A scenic outdoor recreation scene in a desert landscape. On the left, a black SUV with 'GENERAL' written on the side is parked. In the center, two people are walking towards the camera, each carrying a kayak (one green, one blue) on their back. On the right, a blue mountain bicycle is mounted on a rack. The background features rolling hills and a prominent mountain peak under a clear sky.

**25
In
2025**

**A Bipartisan
Outdoor
Recreation
Movement**

Contribution to Ohio GDP, 2023 (%)



ISSUING A CHALLENGE FOR A NEW STATE OFFICE



Outdoor business
recruitment and retention

Growing rural economic
development

Tourism promotion

Workforce development

Public health and safety

Outdoor recreation
business services

Conservation and
stewardship, and

Improved access for all
Ohioans to outdoor
recreation

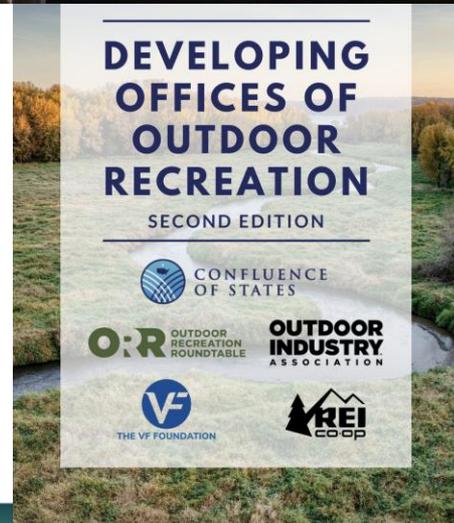
New resources define best practices for establishing and supporting state offices of outdoor recreation



CONFLUENCE OF STATES **O:R** OUTDOOR RECREATION ROUNDTABLE **OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION**

HOW TO CREATE AN OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

CONFLUENCE OF STATES





Welcome to the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's Rural Economic Development Toolkit. Click "Introduction" below to get started.

First Edition (2021)



Welcome to the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's Rural Economic Development Toolkit.

Click "Introduction" below to get started.

Second Edition (2024)

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Where are you located?





DEFINE THE PROCESS

Elk Country
Visitors Center,
PA Wilds



PLAN PROACTIVELY

Beckley,
West Virginia



SPOTLIGHT GREAT WORK

Old Fort, North Carolina
(Photo Darrel Cassell)



SPOTLIGHT GREAT WORK

PA Wilds, Pennsylvania



SPOTLIGHT GREAT WORK

Athens County, Ohio

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"It's important to ask these questions of communities — if you want to maintain the culture you have today, is it going to be a limit to growth? Is it going to be a restriction of commercially zoned parcels?"

There are ways a community can lock down size — but it can be difficult to lock down culture. Early collective visioning is super important — so that you are creating what you want to see, and avoiding unintended consequences."

— Emily Niehaus, Former Mayor, Moab, UT



Lessons from the Field: Using Data to Make the Case



To capture the attention of funders, communities can effectively wield a variety of data sources to illustrate the economic, social, and public health opportunity. Communities should consider using data to answer the following questions:

- What does success look like for our community?
- What trends will continue if we do nothing?
- What untapped potential is out there?
- What will we need to manage for?



1. IDENTIFY & EMPOWER LOCAL CHAMPIONS



2. MAKE OUTDOOR RECREATION A "MUST HAVE"



3. BUILD COLLABORATIVES



4. GUARANTEE BUY-IN AND DEPENDABILITY



5. GENERATE PUBLIC SUPPORT



6. PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



7. CREATE A BRAND



8. IDENTIFY FUNDING PARTNERS



9. ACHIEVE BUY-IN FROM THE STATE



10. PLAN FOR DESTINATION MANAGEMENT & VALUE CAPTURE



11. TAKE ON INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS



12. ATTRACT AND SUPPORT OUTDOOR BUSINESSES

THINKING BIGGER:
ACTIVATING THE RURAL
DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM
FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

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NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Pittsburgh, PA



The Trail Map for Rural Development in America

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Education
Community Vision
Financing &
Implementation
Resilience
Innovation



Trail Map
For Rural Development in America

HURRICANE HELENE RECOVERY GRANTS
Supported by Richard King Mellon Foundation
and The VF Foundation



Old Fort, NC

2) Outdoor Recreation -> Quality of Life -> Economic Development

3) A path forward for outdoor recreation



Many more recreationists Fewer lifelong devotees



More and more people are visiting national parks

The number of recreational visits at US national parks is up nearly 16 percent, compared to 2010, even though it briefly dipped during the pandemic.

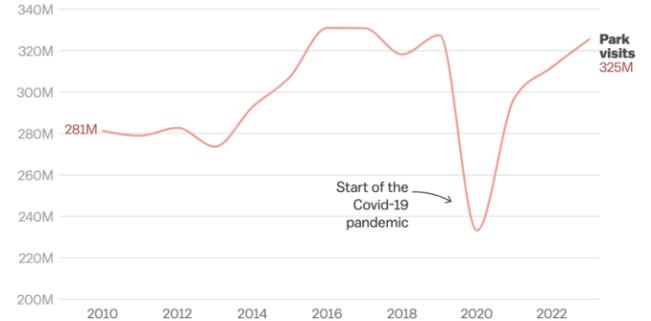


Chart: Benji Jones/Vox • Source: National Parks Conservation Association/National Park Service

Yet the National Park Service has been losing workers — even before the latest cuts

Staffing, as measured by the number of full-time equivalent employees, has fallen since 2010.

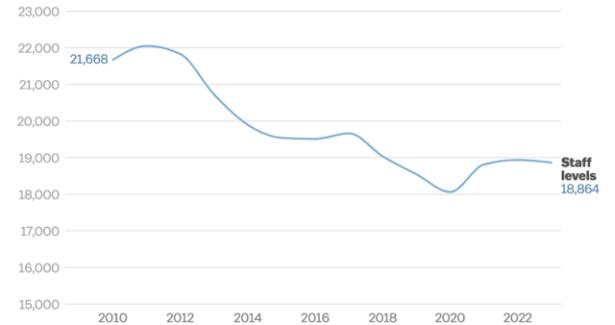


Chart: Benji Jones/Vox • Source: National Parks Conservation Association/US Department of the Interior

Trade/Tariff Certainty

Public Lands Protection

Adequate Staffing/Access

Nature/Health

**Supporting and
Sustaining State Offices
of Outdoor Recreation**





Roadmap

For a 21st Century Outdoor Workforce



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WORKFORCE PROFILES

To capture the real people behind these statistics and trends across the outdoor recreation industry, we're showcasing a wide variety of professionals in this career path module. Dive into career paths from across the outdoor industry through the profiles at right.

J.DARYL ANTHONY	KEN STAMPS	TERESA MARTINEZ	PATRICK GREEN	KRIS ELLIOTT
CAITI ANDERSON	SHANNON WATERS	KENNEDY REDDICK, JR	ANGELA PILKINGTON	LIZ OGILVIE
TIM SCOTT	ROBIN HALL	ALICIA SMITH	O:R OUTDOOR RECREATION ROUNDTABLE	

OUTDOOR REC DRIVES JOBS

Careers in the Recreation Economy

The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable partnered with Oregon State University's Center for the Outdoor Recreation Economy to look deeper into the career paths, workforce needs, and future opportunities across America's outdoor recreation economy.

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recreationroundtable.org

ORR Outdoor Industry Career Programs

✓ This resource, developed by the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, displays the full range of 2022 views
Published 2 days ago

Key

- Bachelor's Degrees
- Master's and Ph.D. Degrees
- Associate's/Technician Progr...
- Certificates and Trainings
- Other

Adventure Education/Guidi...



**DEFINE OUTDOOR SKILLS AND
CLOSE THE SKILLS GAP**

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**BUILD AN OUTDOOR
WORKFORCE FOR ALL**



CRAFT WINNING NARRATIVES ON OUTDOOR WORK



AFFORDABILITY AND HOUSING

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ROUNDTABLE



**BRAD & ALYS SMITH OUTDOOR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COLLABORATIVE**



**NEW
OUTDOOR
RECREATION
WORKFORCE
CONSORTIUM**

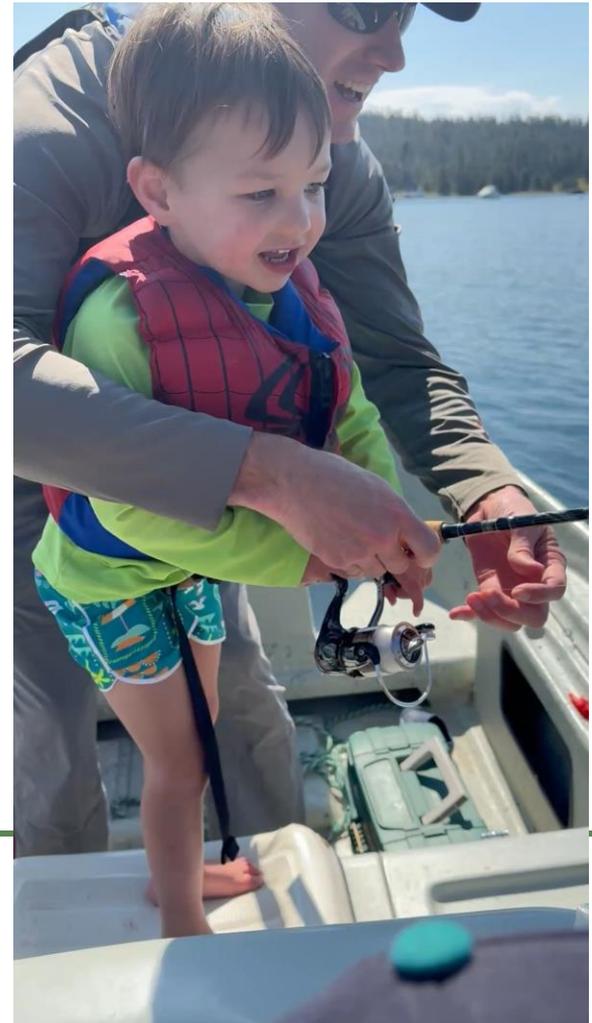


What you can do this week:

- **Connect and learn from** your rec economy colleagues across sectors
- Help build the plan for an **Ohio Office of Outdoor Recreation Economy**
- **Show Up!**

- 1) Returning to our roots: the benefits of the Great Outdoors**
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-

We are in the Business of Joy



Chris Perkins

cperkins@recreationroundtable.org

THANK YOU