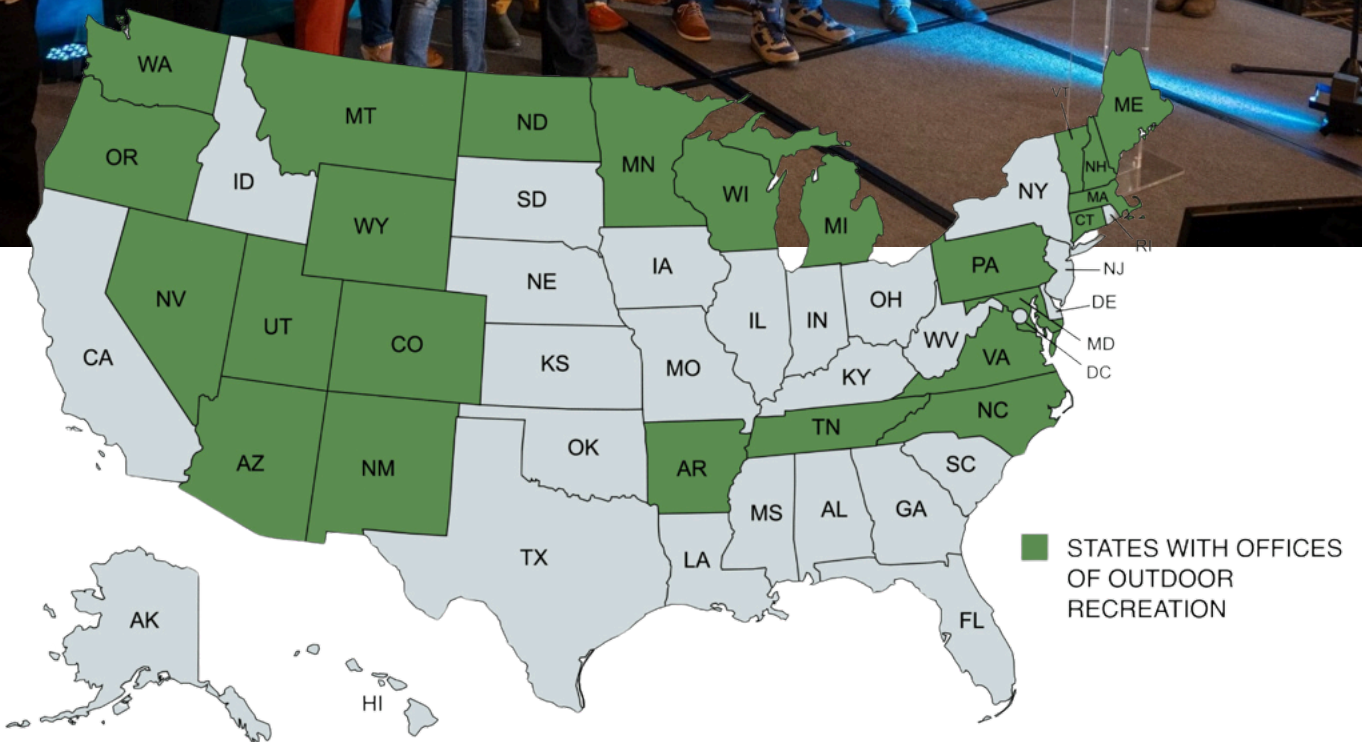


# HOW TO CREATE AN OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

CONFLUENCE OF STATES



# OFFICES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

**24 states have created Offices of Outdoor Recreation** to coordinate outdoor recreation efforts in economic development, conservation, education, public health, and more. There isn't only one way to create these offices: they have been created through legislation, budget line item, executive order, or gubernatorial action.

While other agencies may focus exclusively on natural resource or recreation management, tourism promotion, public health, or economic development, **no other state-level office is built with the mandate and expertise to tap into and sustain this fast-growing \$1.2 trillion industry** and coordinate across outdoor recreation programs and partnerships to expand the benefits of outdoor recreation and enhance state competitiveness.

Offices of Outdoor Recreation provide a **centralized and dedicated home** to coordinate efforts across agencies, identify new opportunities for economic growth, connect all communities to the benefits of time outside, and promote responsible recreation in a state's most treasured places.

# Key Steps

1

## Build a bipartisan recreation economy coalition

Your state needs a **coalition of people and organizations who love outdoor recreation** and who would benefit from an official office or division. These should be businesses, nonprofits, and leaders from all corners of the state who can speak to the importance of your state's outdoor recreation economy, across the political spectrum, across all recreation activities. Creating an office like this doesn't mean you agree on everything—it means that you all believe that the outdoors deserves a place in state government.

**And business voices are critical here**—the sooner your state's biggest outdoor businesses are at the table, the better. Michigan's office was helped in large part thanks to a tweet from Carhartt at Governor Whitmer to create an office.

2

## Create a Mission

What is it that your state's outdoor recreation economy needs?

In developing a mission statement, start with the pillars of the Confluence of States, the organization that represents current state offices of outdoor rec: **economic development, public health, access and opportunity, workforce development, and conservation.**



### Example Mission: Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's Office of Outdoor Recreation is working with businesses, economic developers, recreation leaders, and government to advance its outdoor economy by building capacity across three strategic focus areas:

- **Build Capacity of Pennsylvania's Outdoor Industry**
- **Build Capacity to Use Outdoor Recreation as Driver of Community and Economic Development**
- **Build Capacity to Deliver Inclusive and Equitable Wellbeing in and Through the Outdoors**

3

## Find Your Allies in Government

From that coalition, who knows a state legislator who loves to get outside? Who on the governor's team loves to get outdoors? Is it the governor? What donors or political figures are involved in outdoor recreation who might help out?

Doing this kind of research to understand who your allies are **can shave months or years off the process** and generate meetings with a friendly audience.

# Key Steps

4

## Choose Your Path and Agency

Every office has been formed through legislation, executive action, or the budget process. Once you know your allies in government who will go to bat for outdoor recreation, **unite around the path that will get you the structure you need.** What agency home will best help the office or division reach its goals? Other states have created these offices in economic development, parks, environmental conservation, and tourism, among others.

Check out [Page 7 of this resource](#) to see where offices of outdoor recreation are currently housed.



### Example Agency: Arkansas

Arkansas' Office of Outdoor Recreation was created in 2021 via Executive Action in the **Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism**. This home best supports the office's mission to further establish Arkansas as a top destination for outdoor recreation and to ensure outdoor businesses continue to thrive, and enables it to award community grants through the Office of Outdoor Recreation Grant Program.

5

## Ask for Help

**Connect with the 24 states** who have already created these offices to share words of wisdom (contact info below). [ORR, our partners, and the Confluence of States](#) have many resources to support you in your work and both organizations can connect you with other states in similar situations.

The biggest themes of successful states are: **right messenger, right message, right time.** Your effort and coalition needs to consider who from your team is the best to drive home the benefits of outdoor recreation at any given time with a given audience.



### Example Coalition: Massachusetts

Organizations who came together to ask Governor Baker for an office of outdoor recreation included:

- MA Boat Parts Retailer and Service Shop
- MA Marina Operator
- MA Conservation Organization
- MA Campground Association
- MA Marine Association
- MA RV Association
- MA Outdoor Media Publication
- National Outdoor Trade Associations

# Example Vision, Mission, and Purpose



## Vision

**Your State's \$X.X dollar** outdoor recreation economy will grow **X%** by 2030 (**+\$X dollar**) by activating outdoor recreation infrastructure, stakeholders, and initiatives and providing and promoting outstanding access to recreation activities on public and private lands and waters to residents and visitors alike.

## Mission

Grow and sustain **your state's \$X.X dollar** outdoor recreation economy and enhance quality of life and public health for **your state's communities** by streamlining, aligning, and activating outdoor recreation opportunities across public and private stakeholders.

## Purpose

Work collaboratively between **your state's** state agencies and private partners to address new opportunities to connect **your state's** residents and visitors to outdoor recreation opportunities across the state.

## Proposed Year 1 Outputs

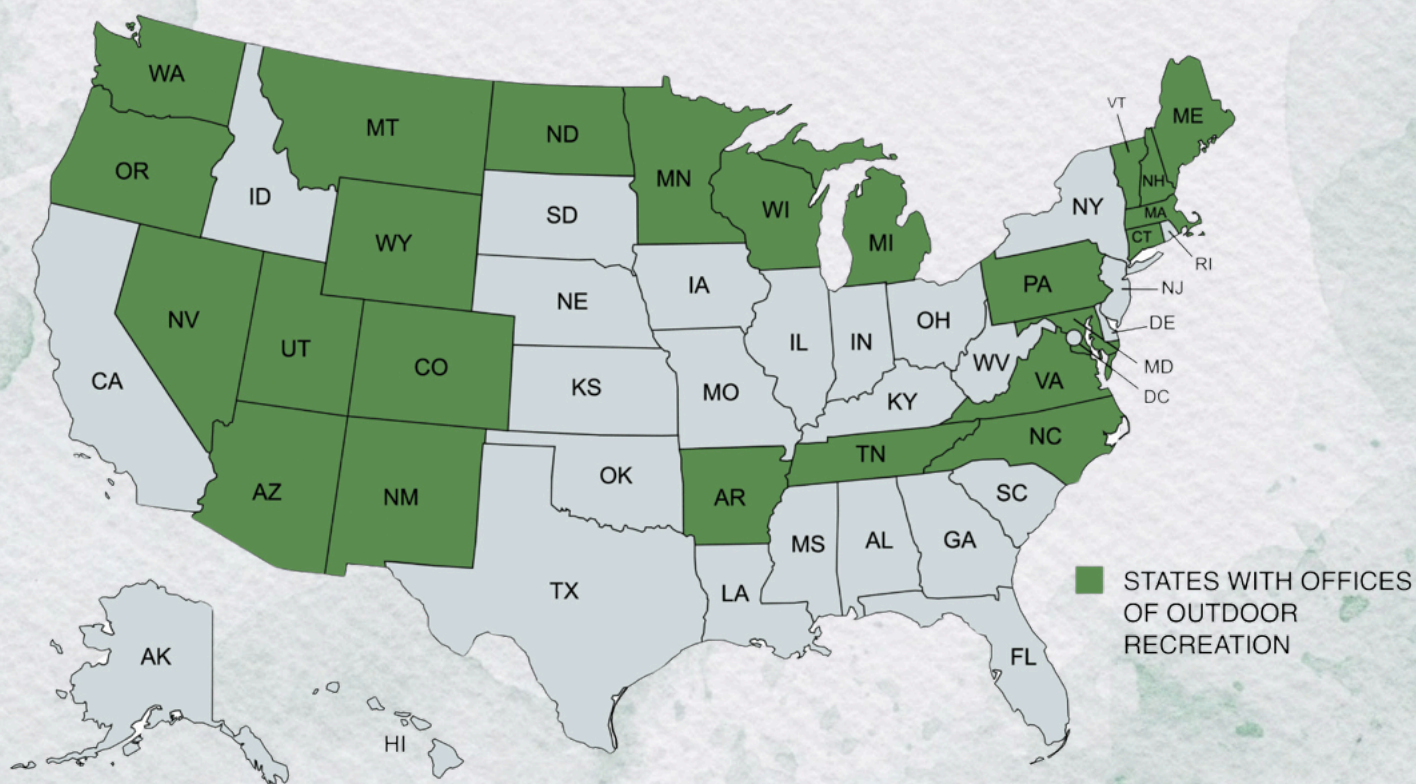
1. Structure: Create formalized office and name director. Can utilize existing headcount and vacant positions across agencies (including Department of Economic Development, Division of Tourism, Department of Natural Resources).
2. Community: Form **State** Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council of 15 prominent public and private recreation organizations and advocates from diverse communities across the state. Identify convening frequency and structure.
3. Priorities: Identify key opportunities in all regions urban and rural to grow and sustain **your state's** outdoor recreation economy, including but not limited to:
  - a. Recruitment and retention of workers and businesses
  - b. Growing rural economic development
  - c. Tourism promotion
  - d. Workforce development
  - e. Public health and safety
  - f. Outdoor recreation business services
  - g. Conservation and stewardship, and
  - h. Improved access for all **your state's** communities to outdoor recreation
4. Convening: Convene statewide partners across **your state** in-person to ensure collaboration while providing dedicated project management for outdoor initiatives, projects, and programs.
5. Support: Seek, apply for, and manage grants to fill funding gaps in outdoor recreation projects and programs that further statewide goals and enhance **Your State's** outdoor recreation economy.

Find the [impact of your state's recreation economy here](#)

# STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT OFFICES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION



## STATE OFFICES CREATED



## THEMES FOR CREATING OFFICES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

The following themes characterize strategies that states have utilized to create offices of outdoor recreation and educate others on the value this investment would make for their states:

- **Leveraging Economic Power**
- **Achieving Bipartisanship**
- **Helping Coordinate Efforts**
- **Championing State's Natural Beauty**
- **Elevating the Outdoors for All**
- **Supporting Education and Workforce Development**

# HOW TO EXPLAIN THE VALUE OF THESE OFFICES



## LEVERAGING ECONOMIC POWER

- From 2022 to 2023, outdoor recreation real GDP grew 3.6% compared to 2.9% for the U.S. economy and jobs growing 3.3% compared to 1.8%. [See your state's growth here](#). Offices of outdoor recreation can capitalize on this growth and grow economic resiliency across rural, suburban, and urban communities.
- Support rural communities as they work to develop and maintain a sustainable, year-round outdoor economy. Explore the [ORR Rural Development Toolkit](#).
- Address barriers to business success and enhance growth, drive talent attraction and retention across all sectors.

## ACHIEVING BIPARTISANSHIP

- Garner bipartisan support: Legislation regarding outdoor recreation is popular across the aisle.
- Establish a bipartisan outdoor recreation caucus in state legislature. Ex. [Colorado](#)

## HELPING COORDINATE EFFORTS

- Offices break down silos and align efforts across various public, private, and non-profit stakeholders.
- States often develop offices after creating task force and advisory councils to determine how an office will operate in existing government structures.
- Offices can help foster greater collaboration among diverse recreation groups and with adjacent rural industries like agriculture and forestry.

## CHAMPIONING STATE'S NATURAL BEAUTY

- Uphold the state's conservation legacy by working with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to advocate for conservation and stewardship of land, air, water, and wildlife.
- Celebrate the natural beauty of each state including state parks, outdoor destinations, and top activities.
- Support the development and maintenance of outdoor recreation infrastructure like parks, trails, marinas, campgrounds, etc. around the state, increasing access to recreation and open space for residents and visitors.
- Balance improved outdoor recreation access with resource protection.

## ELEVATING THE OUTDOORS FOR ALL

- Offices help address social determinants of health by increasing outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Increased access to green space leads to better health outcomes and access to more families.
- Parks and outdoor recreation occur in the city as much as in rural confines. Offices work to promote sustainable backcountry and close-to-home access.
- Work to address and overcome systemic barriers to recreation and create more opportunities for outdoor access in underserved communities.

## SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Support environmental and outdoor learning for all ages.
- Educate stakeholders about the importance of outdoor recreation.
- Promote workforce training programs for technical training across the spectrum of outdoor industry careers. There is a growing skills gap in the outdoor workforce and thousands of vacant jobs, which outdoor recreation offices can work to fill through partnerships with employers, higher education institutions, etc.

# MESSAGING THEMES UTILIZED BY EXISTING OFFICES

## UTAH OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...leverages outdoor recreation as a significant contribution to Utah's economy, highlights growing importance of the outdoors to Utah's economic prosperity and quality of life, improves access to natural spaces"*

## COLORADO OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY OFFICE

*"...provides a central point of contact, delivers resources at the state level for the diverse constituents, businesses, and communities that rely on the continued health of the outdoor recreation economy, supports higher quality of life"*

## WASHINGTON POLICY ADVISOR FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*"...focuses on economic development in the outdoor industry, places a high value on the natural environment, coordinates efforts across agencies from the Governor's Office"*

## WYOMING OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...grows Wyoming's strong outdoor recreation economy, highlights natural beauty, improves recreation infrastructure in the state's second largest industry, implemented recommendations from the Outdoor Recreation Task Force"*

## MONTANA OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...increases the visibility and economic activity of Montana's outdoor recreation, establishes clean air, clean water and access to public lands and rivers as economic drivers, supports quality of life, helps create new jobs in the state"*

## NORTH CAROLINA OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY OFFICE

*"...works to grow and support the outdoor recreation economy at the state level, bolsters economic development, supports education and workforce training programs"*

## OREGON OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...represents outdoor recreation in state government, serves as a resource to businesses and nonprofit organizations, advocates for the outdoors, implements recommendations from Governor's Task Force on the Outdoors"*

## VERMONT OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC COLLABORATIVE

*"...convenes public/private stakeholders to champion outdoor recreation and accomplish major efforts that promote prudent stewardship, support business and community success, and grow participation among all demographics."*

## MAINE OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...grows the outdoor recreation economy, builds Maine's outdoor recreation brand as part of a coordinated effort with partners from the public and private sectors, works closely with outdoor business alliance to accomplish key initiatives"*

## MICHIGAN OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY OFFICE

*"...works with industry partners to identify and grow businesses, anticipate emerging trends, create effective policy and elevate outdoor recreation business opportunities and resources"*

## NEVADA DIVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...supports conservation of natural environment, grows Nevada's economy through outdoor recreation, educates the public about responsible recreation and healthy and active lives enriched by the outdoors"*

## NEW HAMPSHIRE OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

*"...highlights diverse outdoor economy, focuses on economic development, workforce and business recruitment, tourism, protecting New Hampshire's outdoor experiences"*

## NEW MEXICO OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

*"...increases economic development, tourism and ecotourism, recruits new outdoor businesses to relocate to New Mexico, promotes education about outdoor recreation's benefits to enhance public health"*

## VIRGINIA OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...operates cross agency collaboration to support the outdoor industry, economic development, talent attraction and retention, improves quality of life through the lens of outdoor recreation, highlights natural beauty for tourism"*

## WISCONSIN OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...serves as a central hub for Wisconsin's outdoor industry, draws connections among outdoor stakeholders, natural assets and abundant wildlife, raises the state's natural profile and ensures a robust outdoor economy benefits"*

## ARKANSAS OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...grows the outdoor recreation economy, works with partners to improve health outcomes, and promotes awareness of the range of recreational experiences the state has to offer, highlights natural beauty"*

## MARYLAND OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...supports and enhances outdoor recreation opportunities across the state, educates stakeholders on the economic benefits, implements recommendations from the Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission"*

## MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

*"...delivers a strong commitment to Massachusetts's outdoor economy, prioritizes public health and wellness, highlights equitable access to the outdoors, increases collaboration and investments in the outdoor recreation industry"*



# Pathways of Offices of Outdoor Recreation

| Pathway   | About  | States   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Budget Line Item via Legislative Process</b> | Office of Outdoor Recreation created at a state agency or in the Governor's office through funding in an appropriations bill.  | Maine, Maryland, North Carolina, Wisconsin   |
| <b>Director First, Then Office</b>              | Establishing an office by first hiring a Director of Outdoor Recreation, then after some time to establish their value, support with official office and own budget. | Pennsylvania   |
| <b>Executive Order/Action</b>                   | Offices or positions created through an executive order (i.e. gubernatorial proclamation), press conference, or other actions within the executive branch.           | Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Wyoming |
| <b>Legislation</b>                              | Offices or advisors created through legislation, either initially or after pilot program.  | Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington  |

# Structures of Office of Outdoor Recreation

| Structure                                    | About  | States  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Advisor to the Governor</b>               | A policy advisor for outdoor recreation operating within the Office of the Governor supporting the outdoor recreation sector in the state.                                     | Virginia, Washington  |
| <b>Division/Office of Outdoor Recreation</b> | A division or office of outdoor recreation dedicated to expanding and supporting a state's recreation economy.   | Arizona, Arkansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Wisconsin, Wyoming |
| <b>Industry Office</b>                       | An office of outdoor recreation with a focus on the state's outdoor industry. Offices have been placed within various agencies from natural resources to economic development. | Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina                                  |
| <b>Interagency Partnership</b>               | A collaboration between multiple agencies, facilitated by one or multiple staff people, to expand and support a state's outdoor economy.                                       | Minnesota, Vermont  |

# Example Pathways

## **Pathway: Create Budget Line Item via Legislative Process | Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation was created under the 2019-2021 state budget. Under the current budget, the office and its staff are renewed every two years. The Office, within the Department of Tourism, acts as a central hub for Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry, drawing connections between the brands that call Wisconsin home, the outdoor recreation activities they support, and the communities in which they recreate.

## **Pathway: Director First, Then Office | Pennsylvania**

Recognizing the importance of economic and many other benefits of outdoor recreation to the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania established the position of Director of Outdoor Recreation within the office of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in 2021. The director's mission was to expand and ensure the benefits of outdoor recreation for all Pennsylvanians as individuals, communities, and a Commonwealth. The office was then formally created in 2023 with the Governor and partners at a press conference.

## **Pathway: Executive Order | Vermont**

The Vermont Outdoor Recreation Collaborative (VOREC) was established by executive order in 2017. VOREC serves as an advisor to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The collaborative's mission is to engage with businesses, government, the nonprofit sector, and the public to identify specific outcomes that promote business opportunities, increase participation opportunities, and strengthen the quality and stewardship of Vermont's recreational resources.

## **Pathway: Legislation | New Mexico**

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed SB462, creating New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), into law on April 2, 2019. The ORD, created with wide bipartisan appeal, is tasked with increasing outdoor-recreation-based economic development, tourism and ecotourism, recruiting new outdoor businesses to relocate to New Mexico, and promoting education about outdoor recreation's benefits to enhance public health.

# Example Structures

## **Structure: Advisor to the Governor | *Washington***

In 2015, the Washington legislature created a Policy Advisor for Outdoor Recreation and Economic Development. This advisor operates within the Office of the Governor, and is charged with serving as the state lead on economic development issues relating to the outdoor recreation sector in Washington.

## **Structure: Office of Outdoor Recreation | *Wyoming***

In 2016, Governor Matthew H. Mead charged the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources (SPCR) with spearheading an Outdoor Recreation Task Force to study and make recommendations on the state's outdoor recreation needs. That study recommended the creation of an Office of Outdoor Recreation and led to its establishment in 2017. The Office aims to diversify Wyoming's economy by expanding, enhancing, and promoting responsible recreational opportunities through collaboration, outreach, and coordination with stakeholders.

## **Structure: Interagency Partnership | *Minnesota***

The Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Partnership (ORIP) was formed in spring 2023 as a direct result of recommendations made by both the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Task Force and the Governor's Council on Economic Expansion. ORIP is an inter-agency collaboration between Explore Minnesota Tourism, the Department of Natural Resources, The Department of Employment and Economic Development, and Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation.

## **Structure: Industry Office | *Michigan***

Governor Gretchen Whitmer created the Michigan Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry in 2019, building on the previous administration's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation (2012) and the appointment of the Michigan Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council (2018). The Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry works with industry partners from many sectors to anticipate emerging trends, create effective policy, and elevate outdoor recreation opportunities and resources across Michigan.

# Offices Created Since 2013

2013

**Utah** Division of Outdoor Recreation

2015

**Colorado** Outdoor Recreation Industry Office

**Washington** Senior Policy Advisor for Outdoor Recreation and Economic Development

**Wyoming** Office of Outdoor Recreation

2017

**Montana** Office of Outdoor Recreation

**North Carolina** Outdoor Economy Office

**Oregon** Office of Outdoor Recreation

**Vermont** Outdoor Recreation Collaborative

2018

**Maine** Office of Outdoor Recreation

**Michigan** Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry

**Nevada** Division of Outdoor Recreation

**New Hampshire** Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development

**New Mexico** Outdoor Recreation Division

**Virginia** Office of Outdoor Recreation

2020

**Wisconsin** Office of Outdoor Recreation

2021

**Arkansas** Office of Outdoor Recreation

**Maryland** Office of Outdoor Recreation

2022

**Massachusetts** Office of Outdoor Recreation

2023

**Minnesota** Outdoor Recreation Industry Partnership

**Pennsylvania** Office of Outdoor Recreation

2024

**Arizona** Office of Outdoor Recreation

**Connecticut** Office of Outdoor Industry & Experiences

**North Dakota** Office of Outdoor Recreation

**Tennessee** Office of Outdoor Recreation

2025

**Your State**

# NEXT STEPS TO SUPPORT YOUR EFFORTS

## LEARN WHY OUTDOOR RECREATION MATTERS TO YOUR STATE

Understanding the value of outdoor recreation in one's state is an important first step that equips you with data and research you can point to for why your state needs an office of outdoor recreation. There is federal data and research out there that can help make the case for why your state should invest in outdoor recreation efforts. Additionally, each state has a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) to understand outdoor recreation needs.

[Bureau of Economic Analysis Data](#)

[Outdoor Workforce Hub](#)

[Rural Development Toolkit](#)

[SCORP Library](#)

[Value of States Offices of Outdoor Recreation](#)

## GET CONNECTED

Once you have the data and research, feel free to set up a call with one of many national organizations focused on outdoor recreation. They are outdoor recreation professionals excited to hear from you. The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable and Outdoor Industry Association advocate for policies that support outdoor recreation businesses and organizations, and they work to increase public awareness of the importance of outdoor recreation.

[Outdoor Recreation Roundtable](#)

[Outdoor Industry Association](#)

[REI Co-op](#)

[Statewide Outdoor Business Alliance Network](#)

The NGA Outdoor Recreation Learning Network helps governors and their outdoor recreation staff explore strategies to leverage their unique outdoors. REI Co-op also has a staff member dedicated to supporting state and local efforts. They help fund outdoor business alliances and work closely with ORR and OIA to advocate for collective change. Lastly, the Statewide Outdoor Business Alliance Network is a coalition of state outdoor business alliances across the country that strive to create a thriving outdoor economy that benefits both businesses and the communities they serve.

[Outdoor Recreation Learning Network](#)

## JOIN THE CONFLUENCE OF STATES

The Confluence of States is a bipartisan network of 20 state offices of outdoor recreation guided by five pillars: conservation and stewardship; education and workforce training; economic development; public health and wellness; and opportunity and experience. Each state has signed the Confluence Accords helping set a foundation for each office of outdoor recreation.

[Confluence Accords](#)

[Guidebook on Developing Offices of Outdoor Recreation](#)

[Newsletter + Resources](#)

The Confluence offers prospective state memberships for leaders in the process of developing their offices of outdoor recreation. Prospective members are matched a sponsor state and serve as a resource for meeting the Confluence Accords.



# CONTACT INFORMATION

## **Arizona**

[E-mail](#) | [Website](#)

## **Arkansas**

[E-mail](#) | [Website](#)

## **Colorado**

[E-mail](#) | [Website](#)

## **Connecticut**

[E-mail](#) | [Website](#)

## **Maine**

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## **Wyoming**

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