

News Release

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New Study Shows Outdoor Recreation Contributes \$1.15 Billion to Northwest Michigan Economy

TRAVERSE CITY, MI – The outdoor economy employs 4,712 workers in the 10 counties of northwest Lower Michigan and contributed \$1.15 billion to the Gross Regional Product in 2022. That information comes from a new *Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact Study for Northwest Michigan*. The study was developed by Networks Northwest in partnership with the Alliance for Economic Success, the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce, the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, and Traverse Connect.

The study looks at the importance of outdoor recreation as an economic driver in the region. It provides baseline data and quantifies the impact of the outdoor economy. The study also includes recommendations for expanding on the strengths and opportunities in the industry.

“This study showcases the critical importance of the outdoor recreation industry in Northwest Michigan, as well as its potential for further business opportunity,” said Janie McNabb, CEO, Networks Northwest. “These recommendations underscore the need to work collaboratively for the benefit of both our economy and our natural resources.”

Findings and recommendations are based on a thorough analysis of labor market information, demographic data, business and industry trends, as well as individual interviews and a survey of more than 200 local companies.

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“The Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact Study aims to gain insight into the opportunities available in the recreational sector in our region,” said Stacie Bytwork, President, Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce and Networks Northwest board member. “This study assists with developing a plan to attract growth and make us stand out as a place of choice. With our numerous unique recreational assets in the region, we are grateful to be a part of this process and excited to work collaboratively towards implementing strategies that will benefit both our region and individual communities.”

The study shows that the region has almost double the concentration of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employment than national averages for regions of similar size. The region is 32% above the national average for spending on boats, trailers, campers, and recreational vehicles, and surpasses the national average in other sports equipment, and water sports equipment.

Opportunities for business investment and development are recommended in the following categories: Camping and camping equipment; bicycles; sports, recreation, and exercise equipment; and rental/repair of sports, recreation, and exercise equipment. 72.2% of businesses surveyed for the study have plans to grow or expand their businesses in the next three years.

A full copy of the study is available at nwm.org/OutdoorRec.

The project was funded by a 2023 Michigan Economic Development Corporation Collaborative Development Council Regional Grant.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by emailing Dan Boss at dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org and stating preferences for resolution, file format, and file size. Or phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: networksnorthwest.org/media

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10-county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works!, APEX Accelerator (formerly PTAC), various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities’ requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our website, networksnorthwest.org. Networks Northwest’s member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.