

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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PPORA Announces Release of New Report Elevating the Importance of Outdoor Recreation to Local Economies

A new report highlights the many ways that communities across the country benefit from increased investment in outdoor recreation.

Colorado Springs, CO (June 25, 2021) – The Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance (PPORA), one of several outdoor business alliances across the nation who together have formed the State Outdoor Business Alliance Network (SOBAN), is pleased to share a new report demonstrating that outdoor recreation contributes to economic success in many ways and will help lead recovery from the pandemic. SOBAN is a network of business organizations that share knowledge, opportunities, and best practices to strengthen commerce, infrastructure, and participation in the outdoors.

The report was produced by Headwaters Economics - a Bozeman, MT-based independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research group. SOBAN member organizations, the REI Foundation, and national industry groups support the report that demonstrates pathways to the future outdoor recreation economy.

Nationwide, in 2019, outdoor recreation employed almost 5.2 million people who earned more than \$226.3 billion dollars. For comparison, outdoor recreation employs about the same number of people as are employed in the nation's hospitals, and twice the number employed in farming. The report highlights information from states around the country that illustrates the positive benefits of the outdoor recreation economy.

The State of Wyoming is literally the geographic definition of Outdoor Recreation waiting to happen. According to a recently completed multiplier-effect study by the University of Wyoming College of Agriculture, the total economic impact of twelve businesses started by individuals who were drawn here by outdoor recreation opportunities totaled more than \$17 million in 2019 and has created over 115 FTE in this community of around 8,000 people. These businesses - in manufacturing, specialty recreation retailers,

restaurants and lodging, fitness and training, and more - represent a significant portion of the Lander economy. - Mike Kusiek, Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Business Alliance

Investments in outdoor recreation, like workforce and infrastructure development, can pay dividends. The SOBAN report notes that infrastructure like trails, fishing access, and boat launches bring visitor spending that directly supports many types of jobs, businesses, local government and tribal entities in even the most remote community gateways to public lands. - Lee Hart, Executive Director, [Alaska Outdoor Alliance](#)

In 2013, we realized that dozens of outdoor companies were headquartered in western North Carolina, but nobody realized how many there were, or had them organized. In the 8 years since, we've seen tens of millions of dollars in new investment (over \$6M in the first 5 months of 2021 alone!) in our rural mountain region, and now have identified over 350 outdoor industry companies based here. The outdoors is a primary driver for rural entrepreneurship and job creation. Our job is to make sure everyone works together, learns from one another, and can access the capital and training they need to keep growing. - Noah Wilson, Program Director, [Growing Outdoors Partnership](#)

Diversity, equity and inclusion are so important today to advance the outdoor recreation economy. In New Mexico, our legislators established the Outdoor Equity Fund, the first in the nation, to ensure underserved kids are given opportunities to experience the great outdoors. The latest legislative session authorized over \$800,000 for the grant program. These funds will enable 30,000 New Mexico youth to get outdoors, truly making a positive impact on their lives. – James Glover, Co-Director, [endeavOR New Mexico](#).

What we've realized in Montana is that our outdoors are a significant contributor to our diverse and growing economy. The 225 businesses affiliated with Business for Montana's Outdoors represent over 4500 jobs, and not all directly related to outdoor recreation industries. Industries like technology, healthcare, finance, and manufacturing are reliant on access to the outdoors, healthy landscapes, and the outdoor amenity lifestyle that draws innovative companies and high paying jobs to Montana communities. - Marne Hayes, Executive Director, [Business for Montana's Outdoors](#)

As the state with the oldest average age of our population, we see Maine's outdoors as a powerful lure in our ability to attract and retain a younger workforce. Outdoor recreation amenities are a selling point for both prospective residents and businesses that want to be able to blur the lines between work and play. - Jenny Kordick, Executive Director, [Maine Outdoor Brands](#).

Downtowns and villages that were positioned as outdoor recreation destinations prior to the pandemic have fared better in the economic recovery as people sought out communities offering a high quality of life for remote working or relocation. As the diversified outdoor sector continues to grow, it is being recognized and invested in as a priority economic development strategy for Vermont. - Kelly Ault, Executive Director, [Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance](#).

With more public land than any other state east of the Mississippi, outdoor recreation plays a vital role in the mental and physical health of every Michigander. While physical activity has long been established as having a positive effect on people with mental health challenges, studies have found that effect increases significantly in an outdoor rather than indoor setting. Investments in outdoor recreation, the businesses and organizations who support them, play an extremely vital role in how thriving communities do their best work for the health outcomes of their people. - Jonathan Jarosz, Executive Director, [Land of Outsiders](#)

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ABOUT THE REPORT:

This report was made possible by these SOBAN organizations and industry partners: Alaska Outdoor Alliance, Business for Montana's Outdoors, Granite Outdoor Alliance, Growing Outdoors Partnership (NC), Land of Outsiders (MI), Maine Outdoor Brands, Outdoor Foundation, Outdoor Industry Association, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance, REI Foundation, Utah Outdoor Association, Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance, Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Business Alliance.

ABOUT SOBAN:

The State Outdoor Business Alliance Network (SOBAN) is made up of 24 state outdoor business alliances from Alaska to New Mexico, North Carolina to Maine, and two industry groups in British Columbia, working to advance a vision for America's outdoor recreation economy that includes robust economies, thriving outdoor places, and inclusive outdoor recreation opportunities for all people. For more information, visit www.SOBAN.org