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Outdoor recreation is an essential economic driver in North Carolina, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Fifth consecutive year of economic data shows outdoor industry provides job growth, builds healthy communities, and supports the economy at the state and national levels.

NORTH CAROLINA. — November 10, 2022 — The U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) has released [economic data](#) for 2021 demonstrating outdoor recreation’s powerful and positive economic impact on the U.S. economy. Despite less than ideal conditions surrounding inflation, workforce, and global supply chains, North Carolina’s outdoor recreation economy showed strong growth in 2021, with a 22.6% increase in total outdoor recreation spending that outpaced the national average of 21.7%, according to the BEA Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account. This year’s report shows that, by BEA measured metrics, outdoor recreation creates **\$11.8 billion** in value added for North Carolina, accounts for **1.8%** of its GDP, and supports over **130,000 jobs**.

“This new data shows that the outdoor recreation sector continues to be a powerful economic force in North Carolina,” said Amy Allison, director of the MADE X MTNS (Made By Mountains) Partnership. “By investing in public lands and infrastructure, building outdoor-centric communities, and supporting outdoor recreation businesses and entrepreneurs, we continue to advance North Carolina’s status as the Outdoor Industry Capital of the East!”

At a national level, these new numbers show outdoor recreation generates **\$862 billion** in economic output, accounts for 3% of U.S. wage and salary employment, and supports more than 4.5 million jobs. This means the outdoor recreation economy contributes more to the U.S. economy than farming, oil and gas extraction, mining, and utilities. ([ORR Website](#))

North Carolina has continued to see year-over-year gains in core outdoor recreation sectors, supported by an interconnected network of land management, economic development, entrepreneurial support, business alliances, conservation, tourism, user group advocacy and more. Cycling, boating and fishing, canoeing and kayaking, hiking and camping, hunting, shooting and trapping, and other outdoor recreational activities have all seen consistent year-over-year growth in economic impact and participation. This includes impressive gains from 2020 to 2021 as access, opportunities, and statewide outdoor investment have expanded.

“The MADE X MTNS Partnership will continue to work to support the growth of the outdoor recreation economy so that the outdoor sector remains a pillar of the region’s economic prosperity,” said Amy Allison. “Access to public lands is fundamental for economic vitality, as well as communities’ and residents’ health and wellness. Outdoor recreation continues to be a

driving force for entrepreneurship, workforce development, talent retention and recruitment, and the cultivation of thriving outdoor recreation communities.”

The coordinated efforts of the MADE X MTNS Partnership, Outdoor Gear Builders of WNC, NC Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, NC Outdoor Recreation Coalition, Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Dogwood Health Trust further fortify North Carolina’s strong national standing in the outdoor economy.

The recent data shows that, in 2021:

- North Carolina ranked 11th among all states in regards to outdoor recreation’s value-added economic impact.
- North Carolina ranked 9th among all states on *employment growth*, out-pacing national averages (13.8% vs national average of 13%).
- North Carolina out-paced national averages on *compensation* (17.2% annual growth, totaling \$5.9 billion, vs. national increase of 16.2%).

At the state level, these consistently positive annual reports display the return on investing in our natural spaces, public health, and fostering an environment conducive to entrepreneurship, small business growth, and workforce quality of life. Communities across North Carolina are benefiting from access to the outdoors, and are, in turn, encouraging new business starts and/or recruitments, becoming economic and job creation drivers.

This is the fifth consecutive year that BEA has released government data on this critical industry sector. This year’s report shows how the outdoor industry, which played a vital economic and social role throughout the pandemic, has since sustained strong growth and has continued to bolster local economies. The outdoor recreation economy remains a national economic pillar and a consistent job creator worthy of continued investment.

See the full [national](#) and [state](#) report, and visit madexmtns.com for more information about our mission to grow the outdoor economy across North Carolina’s Appalachian region.

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About WNC: MADE X MTNS Partnership

The WNC: MADE X MTNS (Made By Mountains) Partnership is working to expand the outdoor industry and economy across North Carolina’s Appalachian region and catalyze regional development by building vibrant outdoor communities, driving outdoor industry growth, and empowering regional storytelling. The Partnership includes [Outdoor Gear Builders of WNC](#), [Mountain BizWorks](#), and the [NC Outdoor Recreation Industry Office](#), as well as numerous stakeholders including regional universities, rural communities, economic development, and conservation organizations. With support from the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) and [Dogwood Health Trust](#), the WNC: MADE X MTNS Partnership celebrates, supports, and builds a stronger sense of pride around our region, our people, and the extraordinary outdoor recreation industry and culture that these mountains have made. For more information, visit madexmtns.com or [@madexmtns](#)