

Outdoor Businesses Report Strong Demand as Communities Invest in the Outdoor Economy

States and local governments increasingly link outdoor recreation to job creation, talent attraction, and long-term economic resilience

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, January 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Outdoor recreation businesses across the United States are reporting steady demand as states and communities expand investments in trails, waterways, public lands, and outdoor access—positioning recreation as a core economic development strategy rather than a niche tourism asset.



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From rural gateway towns to mid-sized metros, outdoor recreation is increasingly viewed as a driver of small business growth, workforce attraction, and community identity. Operators listed on OutdoorAdventures.pro say interest in guided trips, rentals, and experiential offerings remains strong, particularly in regions where public-sector initiatives have aligned infrastructure, marketing, and business support.

“Outdoor recreation is no longer a side conversation in economic development,” said Rod Crider, president of the Rowan Economic Development Council in North Carolina. “It has become part of how communities compete for people, investment, and quality of life.”

Over the past decade, more than 20 states have launched formal outdoor recreation offices or initiatives, many modeled on early leaders such as Utah and Colorado. These offices focus on coordinating policy, expanding access, supporting entrepreneurs, and measuring the economic impact of outdoor activity.

In Arkansas, the state’s long-standing commitment to trails and outdoor infrastructure has been closely tied to economic strategy. The state has invested heavily in trail systems, river access, and

outdoor placemaking, particularly in Northwest Arkansas.

“Outdoor recreation has helped transform communities and attract talent,” former Arkansas Secretary of Commerce Mike Preston said publicly. “It’s not just about tourism. It’s about building places where people want to live and work.”

Similarly, West Virginia has leaned into outdoor recreation as a tool for economic diversification. The state created the West Virginia Outdoor Economic Development Collaborative to support outdoor businesses, guide policy, and connect recreation to workforce development.

“Outdoor recreation is a powerful economic engine for West Virginia,” said Brad Reed, former executive director of the collaborative, in public remarks. “It supports small businesses, creates jobs, and helps communities tell a new story about who they are and where they’re going.”

In the Great Lakes region, states have increasingly linked outdoor recreation to both tourism and talent strategies. Michigan established the Michigan Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry to coordinate outdoor policy, support businesses, and promote access to the state’s extensive natural assets.

“Outdoor recreation is a critical part of Michigan’s economy and our quality of life,” said Brad Garmon, director of the office, in public statements. “It supports jobs, attracts visitors, and helps make Michigan a place people want to stay.”

Local communities are also building their own outdoor economies. Towns investing in riverwalks, trail networks, climbing parks, and paddling access say those assets often spark private investment in outfitters, lodging, restaurants, and retail.

Outdoor business owners say these initiatives create a ripple effect. Public investment lowers



If you are looking for an outdoor adventure such as hiking, camping, and rock climbing, this platform will help you locate an experienced and reliable outfitter regardless of skill or experience level.



OutdoorAdventures.pro connects outdoor enthusiasts with companies that supply the services and gear to make memorable experiences.

barriers to entry, while coordinated marketing helps small operators reach new audiences.

"When communities invest in access and infrastructure, businesses follow," said Nicky Black, an outdoor outfitter listed on OutdoorAdventures.pro. "It creates a virtuous cycle that benefits residents and visitors alike."

Economic developers note that outdoor recreation increasingly intersects with workforce attraction, particularly as remote and hybrid work allow professionals to choose where they live. Access to nature, recreation, and authentic experiences has become a differentiator in talent recruitment.

"People are making lifestyle-driven location decisions," said Crider. "Outdoor amenities are part of that equation."

Platforms like OutdoorAdventures.pro play a growing role in this ecosystem by helping consumers discover local operators and experiences while giving small businesses digital visibility they may not otherwise have. Operators say targeted platforms help them compete with larger brands and national booking sites by highlighting local expertise and authentic experiences.

As more states and communities formalize outdoor recreation strategies, industry leaders say continued collaboration between public agencies, nonprofits, and private businesses will be essential.

"Outdoor recreation delivers the strongest returns when it's approached as part of a broader economic strategy," said Crider. "Communities that align access, infrastructure, and small business support are seeing benefits that extend well beyond tourism."

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