

Trails and Economic Development

Showcasing Impact

Moderated by Scott Goldstein, Senior Director of Government Relations, RTC

July 23rd



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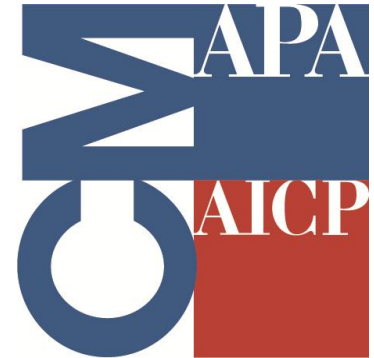
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Trails and Economic Development: Showcasing Impact

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Agenda

1. Introductions

2. Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation

Emily Meadows, Statewide Recreation Planning Coordinator

3. Athens-Limestone County Tourism Association

Stephanie Reynolds, Tourism Specialist

4. Visit Eau Claire

Kennedy Domerchie, Outdoors Development Manager

5. Q&A

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



Emily Meadows

Statewide Recreation Planning
Coordinator, Utah Division of
Outdoor Recreation



Stephanie Reynolds

Tourism Specialist, Athens-
Limestone Tourism Association,
Alabama



Kennedy Domerchie

Outdoor Development Manager,
Visit Eau Claire, Wisconsin



Utah's Outdoor Recreation Economy and Division of Outdoor Recreation

Emily Meadows
Statewide Outdoor Recreation Planning Coordinator
emeadows@utah.gov



Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation

recreation.utah.gov

Overview & History

2013- Utah creates first Office of Outdoor Recreation

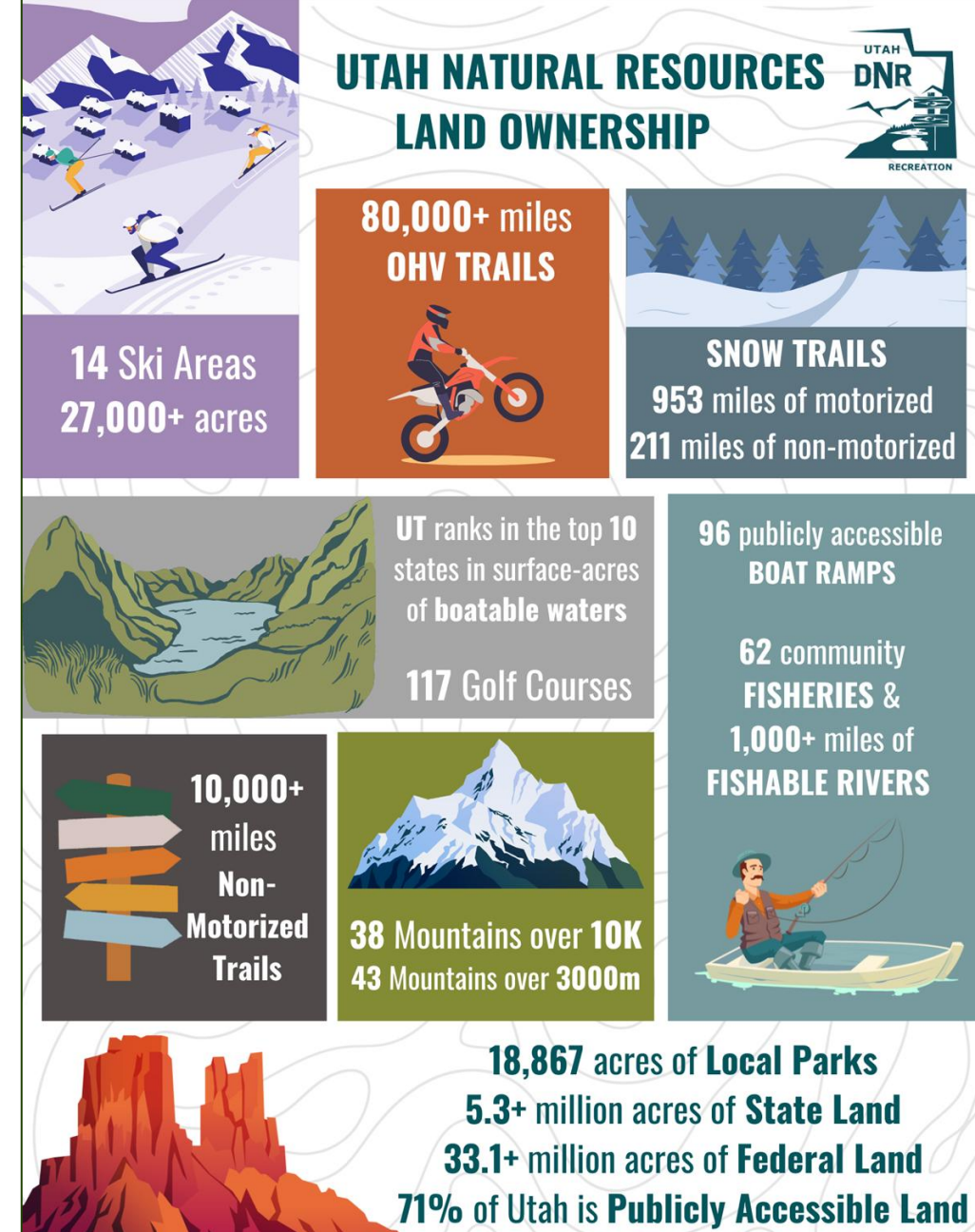
2022- Recognizing the growing importance of outdoor recreation to Utah's economy and quality of life, the Utah State Legislature established the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation.

- The Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR) is the state's leading authority on outdoor recreation, working to enhance, promote, and ensure safe, sustainable access to Utah's vast outdoor resources.
- We serve as a central hub for outdoor education, infrastructure support, grant funding, and trail stewardship, collaborating with local communities and land managers across the state.

2025- Since being established, the DOR continues to expand building our Boating and OHV Education programs, Every Kid Outdoors Adventure Challenge, Planning and Adopt the Outdoor Programs and more!



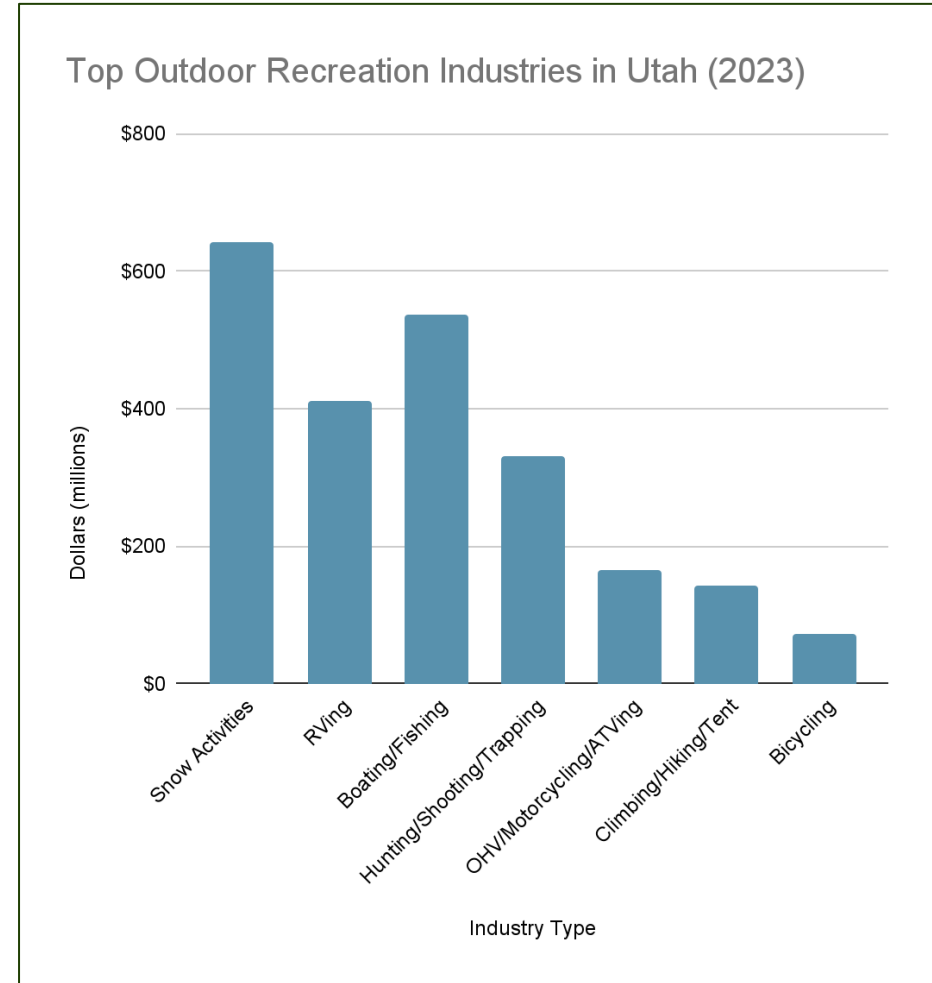
Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation



recreation.utah.gov

Key Highlights

- \$9.5 billion in value-added, now contributing 3.4% of Utah's GDP, supporting 71,898 jobs.
- **Top industries include**
 - Snow activities \$643 million;
 - RVing \$412 million;
 - Boating/Fishing \$537 million;
 - Hunting/Shooting/Trapping \$331 million;
 - OHV/Motorcycling/ATVing \$166 million;
 - Climbing/Hiking/Tent Camping \$143 million;
 - Bicycling \$73 million
- Bicycling saw a 43% increase in value-added from 2022, reflecting a growing trend in cycling participation across Utah.
- Utah ranks 3rd in the nation for winter sports, which remains the top industry in the state's outdoor recreation economy.



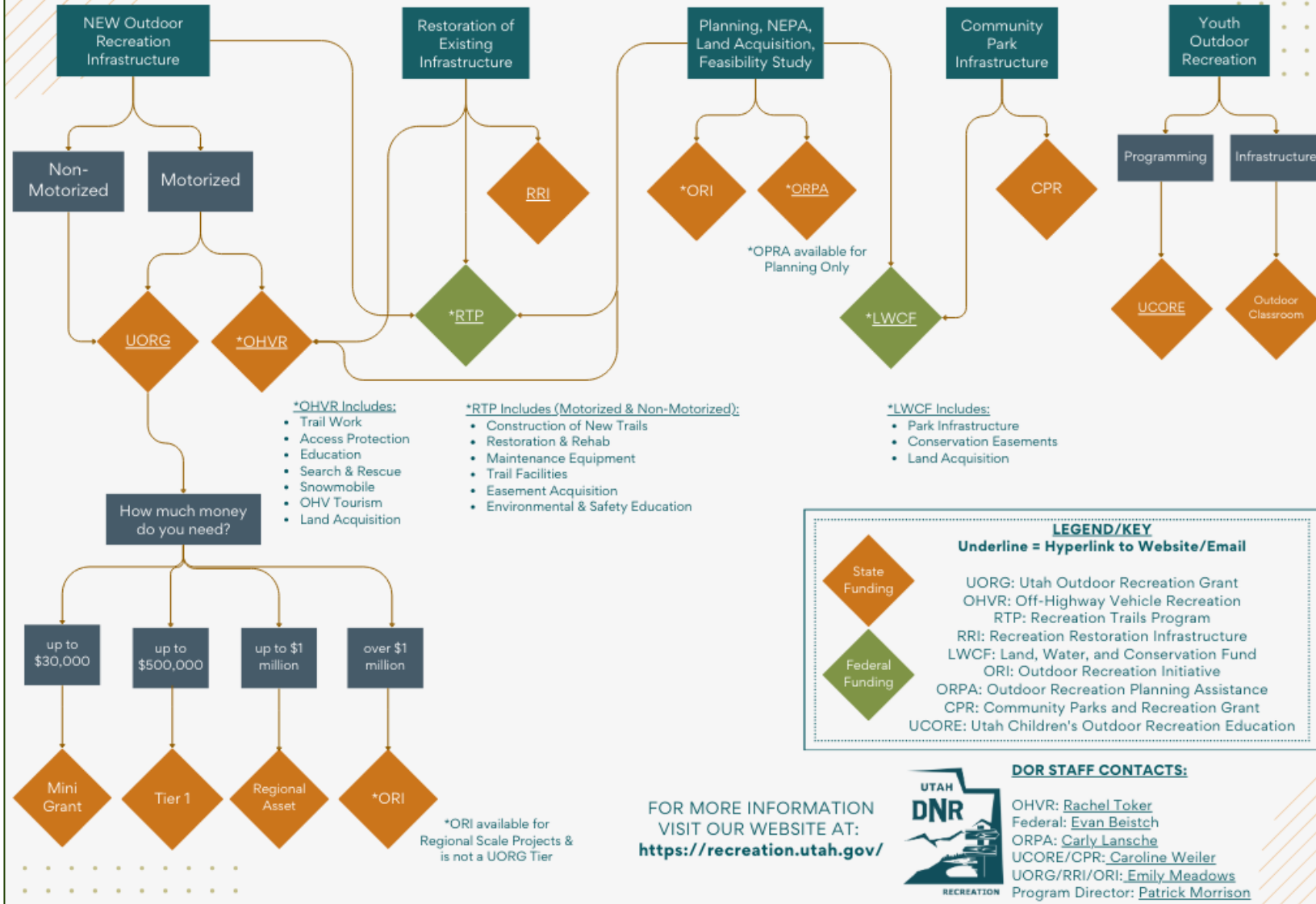
Policies & Priorities

The Division's mission is to ensure health, safety, enjoyment, and economic benefit through life-enriching, high-quality outdoor recreation for all of Utah's residents and visitors.

- **Grant Funding and Economic Impact**
 - In 2025, the Division awarded over \$23 million across 142 outdoor recreation projects statewide (in all 29 counties), supporting local communities in developing and maintaining outdoor infrastructure.
 - These grants help fund trail construction, boating access, OHV infrastructure, climbing facilities, signage, safety improvements, and recreation planning, among others.
- **Outdoor Recreation Planning Assistance**
 - In 2025, the Division awarded \$1.5 million to 21 outdoor recreation planning projects, the majority of which to pay for Recreation or Trail Master Plans across the state.
 - First ever Regional Recreation Long-Range Planning effort



What Type of Project Do You Want to Fund?



Statewide Trail Crew & Technical Trail Training Programs

- **Trail Crew**

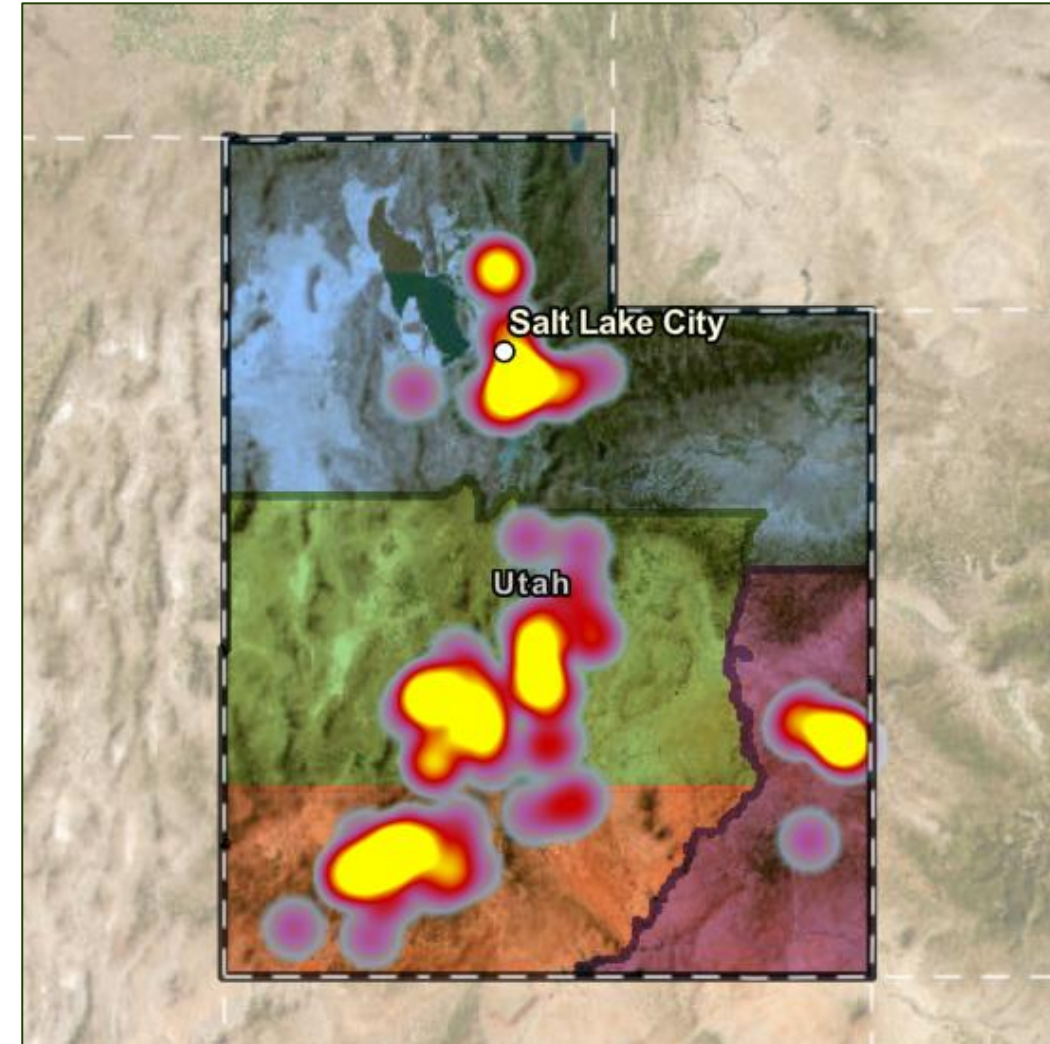
- In just two years, our trail crew program expanded from one team to four regional trail crews based in Cedar City, Moab, Richfield, and Salt Lake City, improving capacity and response time for local projects.

- **2024 Trail Crew Highlights:**

- Over 500 miles of trail work completed on 126 trail projects
- Nearly 400 miles on motorized trails and 115 miles on non-motorized trails
- 3,800+ hours enhancing motorized trails
- Over 400 volunteer hours contributed
- 24 Jobs provided

- **Conferences, Technical Trainings & Field Workshops**

- Utah Trails Forum - working group of federal, state, local and non-profits. Organize Utah Trails Conference and MWTC.
- Host technical trainings like rockwork, trail design in arid terrain, drainage, etc.



Case Study Examples

Paiute ATV Trail System

- 1,276 miles of trail covering 4 counties in Central Utah and connecting 16 communities.
- Collecting data on the Paiute Trails since 1995 using trail counters and game cameras, along with sign-in sheets at historic sites on the trail.

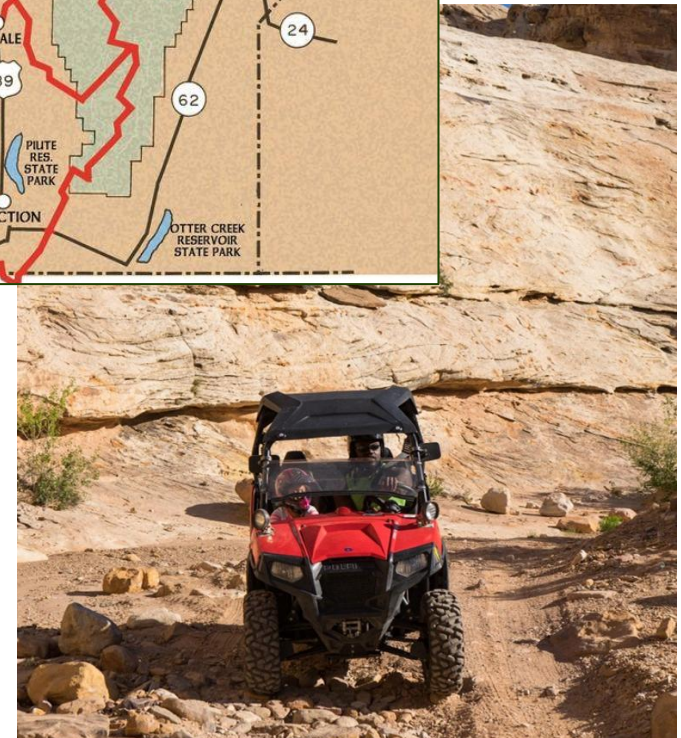
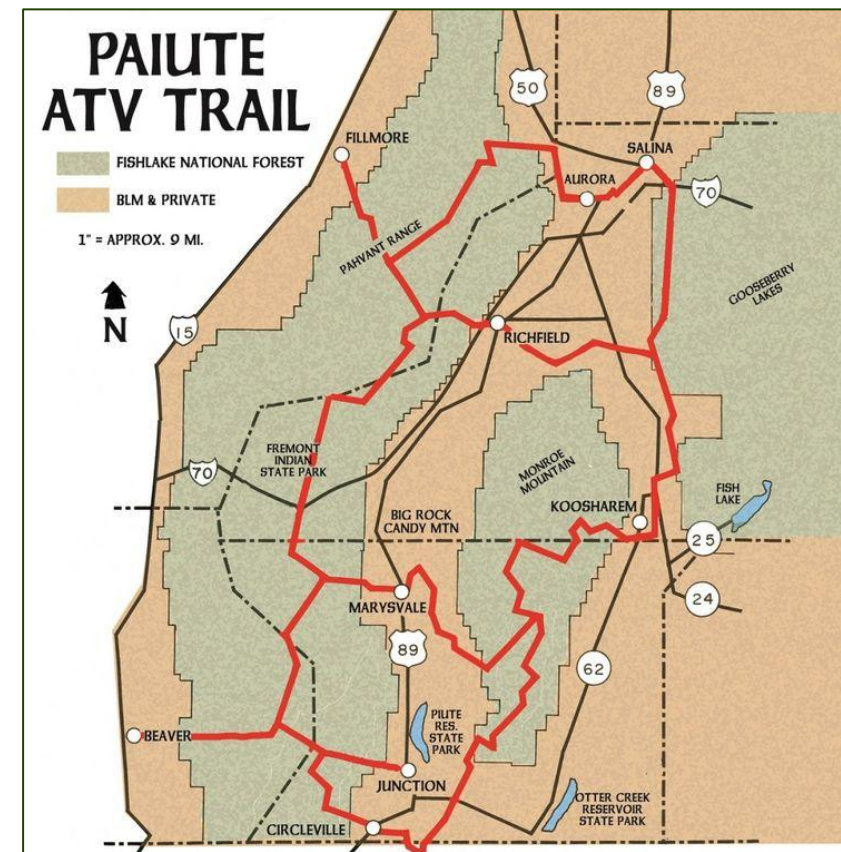
1995- 23,600 riders (single occupancy machine)

2017- 162,000 riders (UTV- up to 6 riders)

- A rider from outside UT spent an average \$392.97 per day
- A rider from within UT spent an average \$90.85 per day
- A rider within the 4 counties spent an average of \$64.19 per day

2020- 80% of riders make up the first two groups and 20% in the last. ATV riders spent almost \$33 million while riding the Paiute trails

2024- Wildfires shut down 3 main access points to the trail system in Marysville. Big economic impact due to closures – down 50% for many businesses.



Case Study Examples

Pahvant MTB Trail System, 38 miles of single-track

Located in Richfield, Sevier County, UT

2019- Funded Phase 1 (\$80,000)

- Diversified the area's recreational opportunities expanding from focus on motorized recreation.

2020- Funded Phase 2 (\$100,000) Total Project Cost \$250,000

- NICA Course expansion
- 1,200-1,500 NICA participants, 1-2 times/year
- \$1 million in spending- hotels, restaurants, grocery stores etc.

2021- Funded Phase 3 (\$330,070)

2023- Funded Trailhead Restroom Facility (\$150,000)

Total project cost: \$1,288,909

2024- Funded Trail Expansion Feasibility Study (\$72,000)

- Over 75% increase of trail usage (Strava)



THANK YOU

Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation

Emily Meadows

Statewide Outdoor Recreation Planning Coordinator

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Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation

recreation.utah.gov

VISIT EAU CLAIRE

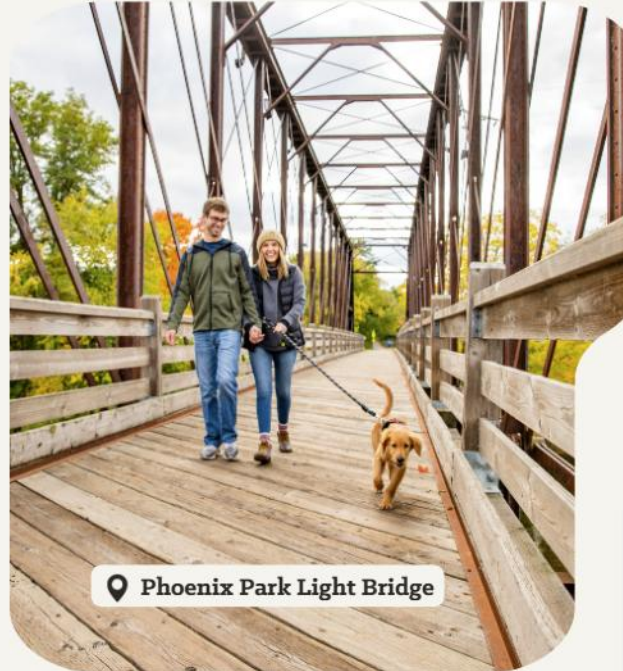
📍 Eau Claire Sculpture Tour



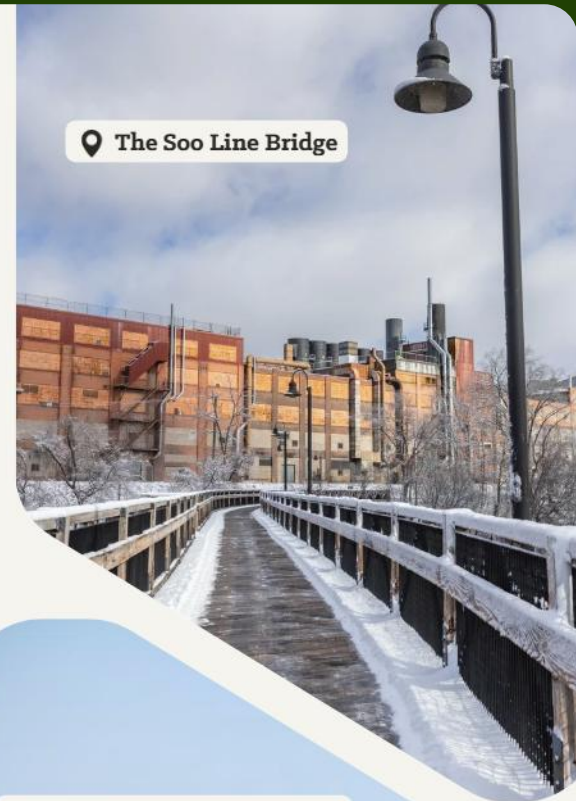
📍 The High Bridge



📍 Phoenix Park Light Bridge



📍 The Soo Line Bridge



📍 ColorBlock Mural Program



📍 Chippewa River State Trail



**LEAVE NO PATH
UNEXPLORED:
DISCOVER THE
OUTDOORS IN
EAU CLAIRE, WI**

OUTDOOR RECREATION IN WISCONSIN



The infographic features a blue background with white silhouettes of a city skyline at the top and a lake with a sailboat and trees at the bottom. The central focus is a large white box containing the text '\$11.2 BILLION' in blue, with a large blue dollar sign to its left. To the right of this box, the text 'Year over year growth: +9.4%' is displayed in blue. Below this, the text 'TO STATE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)' is written in bold black. A paragraph of text follows, detailing the record-breaking year for the outdoor recreation industry in 2023. At the bottom, two statistics are presented in white text on a blue background: '1 IN 40 JOBS SUSTAINED BY OUTDOOR RECREATION' and '96K+ FULL-TIME & PART-TIME JOBS', with a year-over-year growth of +3.4% noted below the second statistic.

\$11.2 BILLION

Year over year growth: **+9.4%**

TO STATE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)

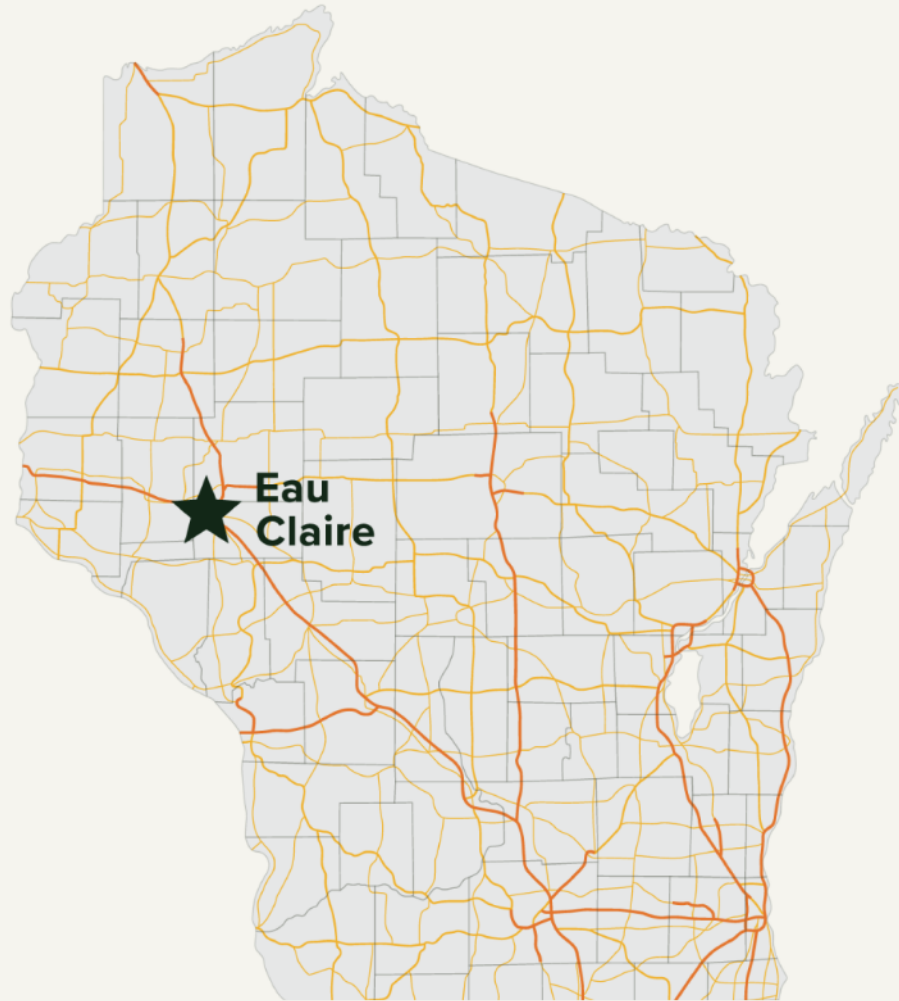
Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry had a record-breaking year in 2023, contributing \$11.2 billion to the state's GDP and surpassing the previous record set in 2022 by 9.4%. Outdoor recreation supported 96,867 jobs accounting for 3.2% of all jobs in Wisconsin. These historic numbers reinforce the importance of the outdoors and the outdoor industry to the Wisconsin economy and Wisconsinites.

1 IN 40 JOBS SUSTAINED BY
OUTDOOR RECREATION

96K+ FULL-TIME &
PART-TIME JOBS

Year over year growth: **+3.4%**

VISIT EAU CLAIRE



- Population of ~80,000 including Altoona
- 1.5 hours from Twin Cities
- 5 hours from Chicago
- Music festivals, public art, and outdoor recreation

EAU CLAIRE:

The Economic Significance of the City's Paved Trails and Public Art



Executive Summary

As the largest city in western Wisconsin, Eau Claire focuses on building quality of life for its 70,000 residents and visitors. The city of Eau Claire has invested in over 17 miles of unpaved recreational trails and 57 miles of paved trails that wind throughout the city. The trail network spurs spending at local businesses, provides access to waterways and public art and contributes to the area's broad outdoor recreation appeal that attracts new residents. To further enhance quality of life, the local visitors bureau, Visit Eau Claire, has installed free outdoor public art along the trails, in the downtown area and beyond, bringing vibrancy to the city.

These quality-of-life investments create significant impacts. Users of paved city trails support \$4.1 million in local business activity through their spending at restaurants, coffee shops and other downtown businesses. The results also found that the trail network appeals to a wide age demographic and encourages most trail users to engage with other amenities such as area parks. Additionally, from a summer 2024 survey of residents and trail users, 29% of respondents who moved to Eau Claire from more than 40 miles away cited outdoor recreation as a key factor in their decision.

Trails and art not only support local businesses but also strengthen the community by providing accessible, year-round recreational opportunities that enhance residents' quality of life and attract new visitors and residents to the city.

Studying how Eau Claire's trails are used illuminates the benefits of investing in outdoor recreation and public art. It also points to ways to continue fueling additional outdoor recreation infrastructure while maintaining existing high-quality opportunities and assets for residents.

**Eau Claire trails
generate over
\$4.12 million for
the area's economy**



Eau Claire Trails

Eau Claire is a city of clear water, bridges and bike trails. Eau Claire welcomes all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts to experience the city's diverse outdoor experiences, including the 70-plus miles of recreational trails that connect scenic nature destinations to downtown life and everything in between. From the everyday paved city trails to exhilarating mountain biking trails and even serene cross-country ski routes, Eau Claire caters to all kinds of trail users all year round.

Trails are a key part of Eau Claire's identity, and their economic impact has drawn attention from both the city of Eau Claire and Visit Eau Claire. By analyzing surveys of visitors and residents conducted in the summer of 2024, as well as trail counter data, they calculated average spending by residents and visitors on trail days, revealing the significant role trails play in the local economy. This data not only provides valuable insights to area businesses on the value of trails, but it helps bridge the gap in how stakeholders think about the relationship between outdoor recreation and economic development.



A Gateway to Businesses

The Eau Claire trail system is well-used and loved by locals. Trail counters registered over 232,000 users in 2024, and trail user and visitor surveys indicated 99% of respondents lived within 40 miles of the city. The highest percentage of users are between the ages of 36 and 55 (42%), followed by those over 55 (32%) and younger adults aged 21-35 (24%). Trail use is relatively balanced between genders, with 52% female and 44% male participants. Most respondents have been Eau Claire residents for 10 or more years (57%), reflecting a long-term community engagement with the trails.

Users typically visit the trails in small groups or alone, spending 1-2 hours per visit, with walking/hiking (93%) and biking (70%) being the most popular activities. The trails also serve as gateways to other local attractions, with 84% of users also visiting area parks, and over half enjoying wineries, festivals, kayaking and wildlife viewing. Among the many activities set up along trails are the Eau Claire Sculpture Tour and ColorBlock mural program, with 37% of respondents reporting intentionally seeking out Eau Claire's free public art by way of trails. Trail users often spend money at local businesses, with 56% visiting restaurants, 55% frequenting coffee shops and 35% visiting downtown businesses on trail days.

Outdoor recreation is an essential part of life in Eau Claire, driving not only individual wellness but also supporting the local economy through frequent trail-related spending.

About Trail Users



Respondents were:

Female 52%
Male 44%

Top Trails Visited

Paved City Trails . . . 90%
Lowes Creek 60%
Putnam Trail 53%

Trail Use Frequency

71% use the trail daily or weekly

Daily 26%
Weekly 44%

73% spent 1-2 hours for each trail visit

37% use the trails to view Eau Claire's free public art, including the Eau Claire Sculpture Tour and ColorBlock mural program

2024 Visit Eau Claire Trail User and Visitor Surveys

VISIT EAU CLAIRE

EAU CLAIRE'S PAVED TRAIL SYSTEM & FREE PUBLIC ART

- Over **57 MILES** of paved trails wind throughout the city
- Generates over **\$4.12 MILLION** for the area's economy annually
- **37%** of survey respondents report using the trails to view the Eau Claire Sculpture Tour and murals throughout the city



VISIT EAU CLAIRE

EAU CLAIRE'S PAVED TRAIL SYSTEM & FREE PUBLIC ART

- The trails also serve as gateways to other local attractions, with **84%** of respondents also visiting area parks, **OVER 50%** enjoying wineries, festivals, kayaking and wildlife viewing.
- Has around **233K ANNUAL USERS**, supports **56 JOBS**, and **\$1.9 MILLION** in labor income.
- **29%** of respondents who moved to Eau Claire outside of a 40 mile radius reported outdoor recreation being a moderate to significant factor in their decision to relocate



VISIT EQU CLAIRE



cool. CLEAR.
CULTURE

THANK YOU!



Feel free to reach me at:

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Athens-Limestone
County Tourism

ELKMONT, AL

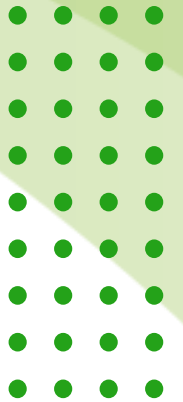
An investigation on
the economic impact
of the Richard Martin
Trail--a Rails to Trails
Endeavor



Take a Walk With Us...

The Richard Martin Trail is a Rails To Trails Conservancy project in North Alabama.

It is 11 miles long beginning in Athens, Alabama and ending at the Alabama/Tennessee state line in Veto, Alabama. Elkmont is the halfway point.





Richard Martin of the Richard Martin Trail

Fun Fact: Harriet Ross was hired as a promoter of the trail project. One of her initiatives was “Blaze the Trail with Pennies” project for school children. They brought in 1.6 million pennies that all had to be counted.



Trail Project was begun in 1989



Partnered with RTC, Athens City Clerk, and TVA



Project was “finished” in 2009 and was ranked 11th in the nation by the RTC in 2015

Why Focus on Elkmont, Not Athens?

- > Athens is the main trailhead but the trail does not start in the city center
- > The trail goes straight through the Elkmont town center
- > It is easier to see the direct daily impact of the trail





“Nobody comes from 40 miles away to see your new sidewalk, but they will come for the trail.”

Elkmont Mayor Tracy Compton

- “People come to Elkmont when they normally wouldn’t. And they come back”
- The Trail is the Centerpiece of Elkmont
- The Trail prevents isolation.
- Worst downside: Occasional horse droppings
- Town request: Dedicated restrooms. Town will pay for electricity.

Donna Wavaho Gas Station

The gas station is a main draw for trail guests, because it is easy to pick up water and snacks. She is greatly concerned about the safety of guests in terms of water access.

Business improved
when they started
accepting cards.

Their business on the
weekends is about 80/20
locals vs guests

Historic markers on
trail are a must.



Some businesses find direct benefits from the trail more difficult even if they are on the trail as they do not cater to trail guests directly.



She praised the trail and has had some minor success



She recommends having “Trailhead Market” days.



She thinks Elkmont needs more places for hikers to eat.

Jada Bliss and Birch Boutique



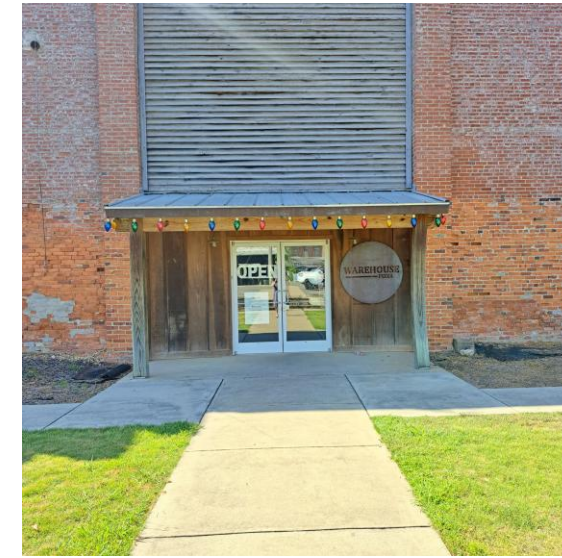
Warehouse Pizza

Provides wood fired pizza, ice cream, cold drinks, salads, milkshakes, and snacks and is directly on the trail

➤ The restaurant runs alongside the trail and has stairs that lead from trail.

➤ This has a tremendous potential for increased sales but have not taken advantage

➤ Banners advertising healthy (and less healthy) options would pull trail guests.



HORSES...

Horse people tend to travel in groups, drive longer distances, and generally have disposable income.

Businesses can be horse friendly, such as providing free carrots or treats, have hitching posts, or providing water and shade.

By far the biggest complaint from those interviewed were “We need more hitching posts!”.

A caution: We have run into two separate issues when local government did a trail upgrade project without consulting stakeholders, especially horse people. Consider becoming that “go-to” person who will be known as the one to consult regarding trail changes.



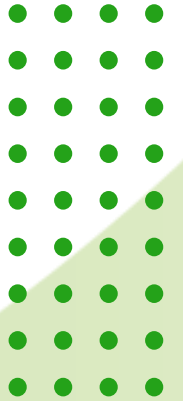
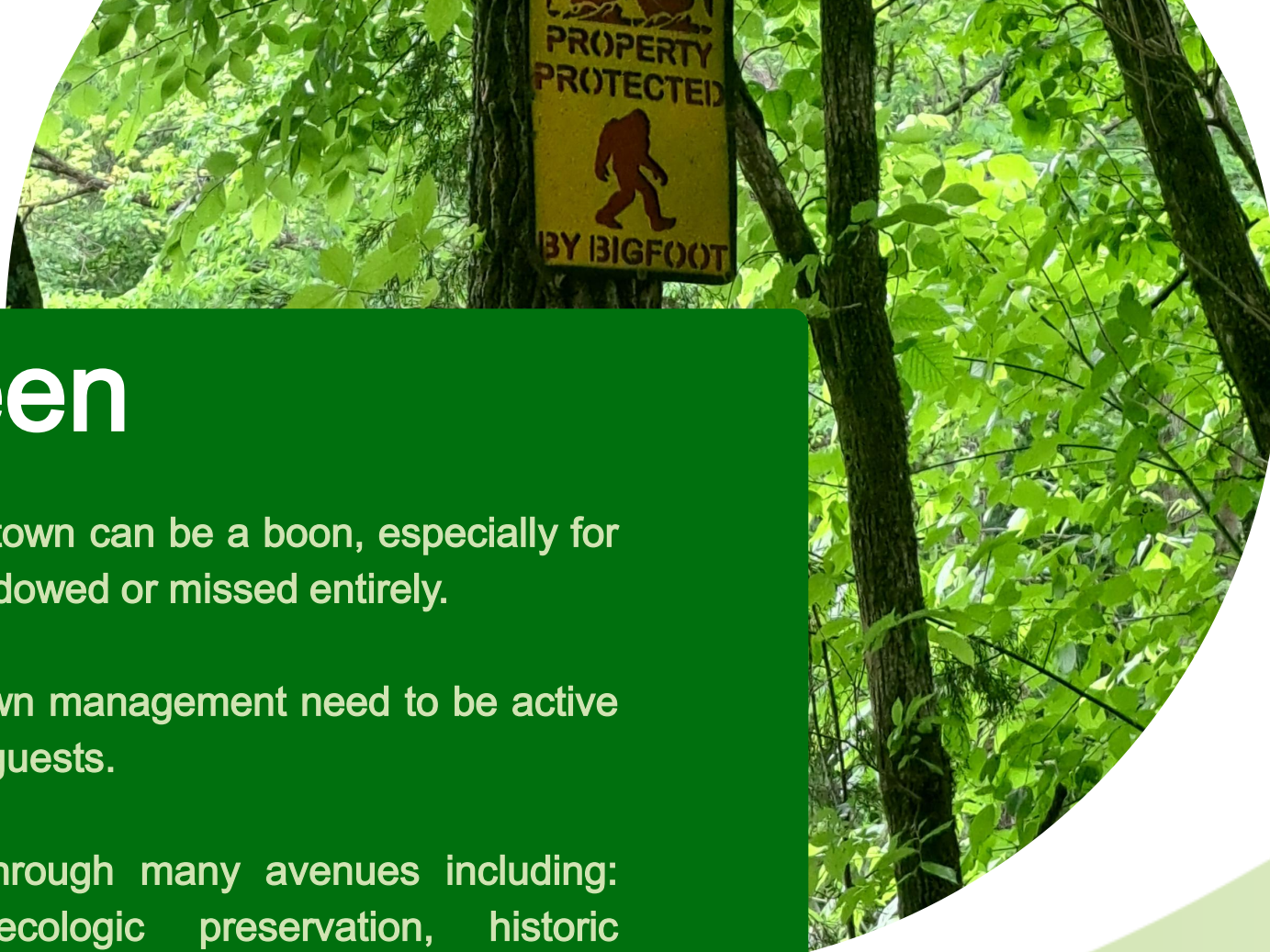
Seeing Green

Placing a trail directly through town can be a boon, especially for smaller towns that are overshadowed or missed entirely.

However, store owners and town management need to be active in capitalizing on marketing to guests.

Funding can be requested through many avenues including: emergency management, ecologic preservation, historic importance, and others.

Elkmont has benefited greatly from the Richard Martin and there is so much more room for growth.





THANK YOU

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Q&A



Thank you!

