



MAINE'S 10-YEAR OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY ROADMAP

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR YEARS 1-3

PRIORITY ACTIONS

This booklet highlights the priority action items for the first three years of implementing *Maine's 10-Year Outdoor Recreation Economy Roadmap*. Developed by the roadmap's steering committee and core team, these priorities align with its goals and strategies to strengthen Maine's outdoor recreation sector, foster collaboration, and drive economic growth. This focused guide provides a shared starting point for advancing Maine's outdoor economy together.





GOAL

1

Elevate Maine's outdoor recreation industry into a critical and thriving pillar of the state's economy



Strategy 1A: Strengthen collaboration and unify Maine's outdoor recreation industry

1A PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Establish a roadmap implementation team and structure to ensure continued engagement from key stakeholders and drive the execution of recommendations.
- Host the Maine Outdoor Economy Summit annually, rotating the location and timing each year to encourage participation from all regions and sectors of the industry.
- Convene outdoor recreation industry trade associations at least once annually to identify shared priorities

Strategy 1B: Define and communicate the value of Maine's outdoor recreation economy

1B PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Define, collect, analyze, and share annual economic benchmarking data to reinforce the sector's contributions to the statewide economy.
- Develop an inclusive, coordinated communications and storytelling campaign that highlights the sector's strengths, depth, and breadth.
- Create a communications toolkit for stakeholders to share the sector's economic impact and opportunities with funders, policymakers, economic developers, and others critical to implementation of the roadmap.
- Conduct a competitive analysis of other states' outdoor recreation economies to identify best practices, potential challenges, and opportunities for Maine, informing our strategies for growth and positioning in the market.



GOAL

2

Increase and sustainably manage outdoor recreation



Strategy 2A: Enhance Maine's outdoor recreation infrastructure to meet evolving recreation demands

2A PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Conduct a comprehensive inventory and needs assessment of existing outdoor recreation infrastructure, identifying infrastructure needs in coordination with and support of recurring State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORP) and prioritizing funding needs for human resources, informational resources (e.g., websites), and physical infrastructure such as trails, bridges, signage/kiosks, parking, restrooms, and boat launches.
- Support the Maine Trails Bond program, ensuring effective fund allocation by engaging stakeholders and outlining parameters for priority projects.
- Identify and advocate for permanent funding sources to support resilient recreation infrastructure, Maine's land conservation goals, and stewardship of outdoor spaces to meet the evolving needs of outdoor enthusiasts.

Strategy 2B: Ensure that Maine’s outdoor recreation opportunities are inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to all communities

2B PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Develop standardized visitor communication guidelines that clearly outline experience types — difficulty, facilities, duration, and preparation — based on diverse audience feedback, collaborating with stakeholders for consistent messaging across platforms.
- Invest in individuals from underrepresented groups to grow in leadership positions in outdoor recreation by fostering peer connections and amplifying efforts like the Outdoor Equity Fund.
- Equip trip leaders to meet the unique needs of all participants through integrated training in leadership and licensing programs.
- Promote events and gear libraries that help beginners access and enjoy outdoor activities with ease.
- Improve the quality and quantity of outdoor recreation resources (infrastructure) available to persons with disabilities.

Strategy 2C: Expand programming to teach outdoor recreation skills and promote everyday access

2C PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Support growth of nature-based education and sustain broader outdoor recreation programming initiatives which have provided Maine youth with outdoor skills and experiences, supporting their engagement in outdoor activities across the state.
- Expand affordable access to outdoor recreation by increasing scholarships and free access programs for individuals and communities facing financial barriers.

Strategy 2D: Support private landowners to maintain and improve recreational access

2D PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Increase funding for state natural resource agencies to expand staffing, providing landowners with enhanced education and support for enforcing responsible access.
- Enhance educational outreach for both existing and new landowners and recreationists, promoting responsible practices, informing about liability protections, and emphasizing public access benefits.
- Enhance volunteerism and civic engagement capacity for land access stewardship, enhancing capacity to maintain trails and promote positive landowner-recreationist relationships.

Strategy 2E: Grow Maine's outdoor recreation management and resource stewardship capacity

2E PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Update the Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation and Maine Office of Tourism's Look Out for ME campaign and expand messaging, partnerships, and outreach to promote responsible recreation and Leave No Trace Principles across diverse audiences.
- Assess the short and long-term staffing needs for public and non-profit sector stewardship roles, including on the reliance on volunteers for recreation management and maintenance
- Survey and map volunteer efforts to identify gaps, strengthen recruitment, and explore professionalizing key roles.



GOAL

3

Establish outdoor recreation as a tool for building vibrant, economically diverse, and resilient communities



Strategy 3A: Connect outdoor recreation initiatives to community development and economic growth

3A PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Work with economic development organizations to embed and prioritize outdoor recreation and the outdoor industry into Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) and other economic and community development plans.
- Engage economic development organizations and chambers of commerce to develop communications and marketing strategies highlighting the outdoor recreation economy to not only attract new businesses and talent, but also to retain talent and grow existing businesses.

Strategy 3B: Strengthen municipalities' and local planning entities' research and implementation capacity

3B PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Conduct discussions with local planners and other municipal leaders to assess capacity and needs. Include organizations focused on community planning/placemaking in these discussions.
- Research and identify best practices from other states and/or other agencies for providing planning and implementation support.
- Encourage collaboration and network building among smaller, rural, and remote towns.
- Develop strategies to attract public and private funding for planning and implementation assistance, training, and technical support.

Strategy 3C: Enhance and connect communities' outdoor recreation infrastructure and destination assets to downtowns, schools, and local neighborhoods

3C PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Prioritize infrastructure that fosters community interaction and accessibility with a focus on climate resiliency and active transportation that is welcoming to a wide range of users.

3C PRIORITY ACTIONS

(continued)

- Budget and provide funding for maintenance to keep assets in good condition, restore them after severe weather, and strengthen their resilience against future weather events.
- Improve access points and address lack of amenity issues that include parking, restroom facilities, and signage.
- Coordination with local leaders, residents and public-private partnerships is essential to balance development needs with available resources and to leverage expertise.

Strategy 3D: Share the story of Maine’s outdoor recreation economy to illustrate its benefits — healthy lifestyles, thriving businesses, strong communities, and an exceptional quality of life

3D PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Collaborate with organizations working to revitalize rural communities holistically. Develop strong partnerships and coordinate with organizations focused on placemaking, arts, culture, conservation, and downtowns.
- Build stronger relationships with public health leaders to better integrate the benefits of outdoor recreation to positive long-term health outcomes.



GOAL

4

Establish Maine as a premier state for outdoor recreation businesses, education, training, and career opportunities



Strategy 4A: Engage and equip Maine's youth for careers in the outdoor industry

4A PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Implement a statewide campaign — using social media, career fairs, and outreach events — to raise awareness of career opportunities in the outdoor industry, targeting middle and high school students as well as their families.
- Establish dedicated pathways from high school to careers in outdoor recreation by developing specialized programs in collaboration with Career and Technical Education (CTE) leaders and Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) coordinators.

Strategy 4B: Attract talent through post-secondary education and training

4B PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Collaborate with employers and industry leaders to create new courses or certification programs tailored to emerging needs in the outdoor industry, such as outdoor product design and trail design and construction.
- Develop a summer jobs marketing campaign to place students in summer roles that provide hands-on experience in the outdoor sector.
- Expand scholarships or financial incentives for students pursuing degrees or certifications in outdoor industry fields.
- Strengthen and promote the Outdoor Industry Concentration with the Maine MBA at the UMaine Graduate School of Business.
- Launch a targeted marketing campaign to highlight Maine's outdoor industry educational programs attracting both in-state and out-of-state students.

Strategy 4C: Strengthen professional development and employer collaboration

4C PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Conduct employer needs assessment, updating the study from 2021 by Maine Outdoor Brands.
- Collaborate with employers to design and promote career progression frameworks.
- Explore partnerships with local governments and housing organizations to advocate for affordable workforce housing options.

Strategy 4D: Strengthen support for starting and scaling outdoor recreation companies

4D PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Organize and support participation in national and international trade shows, export programs, and networking events that will boost the visibility of Maine’s outdoor products and services.
- Create an accelerator for new outdoor recreation businesses and startups, both service-based and product-based, tailoring support to these businesses’ unique needs.
- Facilitate workshops and peer-learning groups for entrepreneurs on key topics like scaling operations, marketing, product development, and sustainability in the outdoor industry.
- Develop a program to provide financial assistance, such as grants or low-interest loans, to support the growth of early-stage and scaling outdoor companies.

Strategy 4E: Drive innovation and R&D for outdoor recreation companies

4E PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Organize innovation challenge to incentivize new product development in the outdoor sector.
- Partner with Maine Technology Institute (MTI) on tailored sessions for outdoor companies to increase awareness and adoption of outdoor industry companies in existing priority innovation sectors.
- Explore creation of an outdoor product testing and innovation lab at the University of Maine, especially exploring the use of forest-derived materials in outdoor recreation products.

Strategy 4F: Promote development of the outdoor recreation entrepreneurial ecosystem

4F PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Complete baseline assessments of the Maine outdoor recreation ecosystem and firm capabilities for sustainable growth.
- In response to baseline findings, design and implement pilot programs that build the capacity of Maine outdoor recreation enterprises to build sustainable growth strategies and strengthen the ecosystem for productive entrepreneurship.
- Develop collaborative marketing campaigns. Use shared market insights to craft coordinated marketing efforts that amplify the visibility of the outdoor recreation sector as a whole.
- Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the needs, opportunities, and challenges of establishing a supply chain network that connects Maine's outdoor recreation companies with local and national suppliers.
- Explore the feasibility of developing co-working and co-manufacturing spaces.
- Establish a pilot program that helps outdoor businesses share seasonal staff and maintain continuity in employment.

Strategy 4G: Bolster climate resilience for Maine's outdoor recreation industry

4G PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Showcase businesses adopting climate resilient practices, such as expanding shoulder season activities and being creative about year-round offerings, to celebrate success and enhance knowledge sharing, peer learning, and consumer awareness.
- Ensure that outdoor companies are integrated into and aware of Maine's Climate Action Plan and other statewide and national resilience initiatives, including financial incentives or regulatory programs that support climate-adaptive business practices.
- Establish a centralized resource for outdoor recreation businesses to track climate-related trends, share data on how the industry is being affected, and report on innovative adaptation measures.
- Support the establishment of a fund that provides grants or low-interest loans to outdoor businesses and public or private landowners. This fund would help cover disaster relief, recovery costs from climate-related events, and investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, weather-proofing facilities, electrification, and diversifying business models to mitigate climate impacts.



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Blazing a trail for Maine's outdoor recreation economy



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