

**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM  
BIENNIAL REPORT**

JULY 1, 2011- JUNE 30, 2013

# INTRODUCTION

Tourism is vital to the health of Wisconsin as an industry that provides economic value to the state. The Wisconsin tourism industry substantiates its significance by contributing to the economy, providing jobs and enhancing the overall quality of life. Therefore, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism aggressively promotes Wisconsin as a year-round travel and tourism destination.

## OVERVIEW

The mission of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism is to market the state as the Midwest's premier travel destination for fun. It is the welcome mat to the state and positively brands Wisconsin, not only for tourism, but for the retention and attraction of new business. This work is directed by the department's Secretary and Deputy Secretary with advice and counsel from the Governor's Council on Tourism and its committees. A team of 21 employees and five vendors<sup>1</sup> execute the strategic business and marketing plan.

In fiscal year (FY) 2012, the marketing budget increased \$2.35 million. The FY 2013 budget was increased by \$2.34 million. This was on top of the existing \$9.9 million promotional budget. These dollars were used exclusively to promote the state under the tourism brand of fun. Research shows that the Department's advertising campaign generates a 6:1 return on investment for Wisconsin. In other words, for every dollar spent on advertising, Wisconsin received \$6 in state and local taxes from additional traveler spending.<sup>2</sup>

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism raised the bar and brought new energy to its marketing efforts. The Department made a strategic decision to move away from the use of slogans and refocused its advertising campaigns on the number one travel motivator "fun." The creative work was reenergized with the presence of celebrities such as actors Robert Hays, Henry Winkler and Tony Shalhoub; sports figures Jordy Nelson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar; and Hollywood directors and Wisconsin natives David and Jerry Zucker and Jim Abrahams.

Notable accomplishments over the past two fiscal years include:

- The two-year growth of tourism activity was \$2 billion according to research from Tourism Economics and Longwood's International. Wisconsin has seen a 13% growth in the tourism economy since 2010.
- The Huffington Post called the Department's summer 2013 TV ad, which reunited Hollywood director David Zucker with his Airplane! actor Robert Hays, "the world's best tourism ad."
- The Department has earned an unprecedented total of 28 state, national and international awards and recognitions for its marketing efforts since 2011.
- Public relations efforts generated \$60 million in earned media and 1.4 billion impressions in 2012. Coverage included over 4,600 print, broadcast and online mentions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Laughlin Constable, Ascedia, Cadmus, Red, Brown Kle' and Longwood's International/Tourism Economic

<sup>2</sup> 2012 Wisconsin Visitor Report, Longwood's International

- Eight Travel Wisconsin Welcome Centers now operate under a new public-private partnership model.
- Introduction of new industry programs such as customer service training and tourism assessments provide tools local communities need to grow their tourism economy.

## OVERALL IMPACT OF VISITOR SPENDING ON WISCONSIN'S ECONOMY

Tourism had a \$16.0 billion impact on the state's economy in 2011. In 2012, the impact was \$16.8 billion. The 2013 report will be available in May.<sup>3</sup>

The majority of tourism jobs are directly tied to small businesses not large corporations. Travel and hospitality jobs can't be outsourced or exported.

- According to data from the Department of Workforce Development, 15,000 businesses with less than 50 employees are currently providing over 60% of the jobs in the tourism industry.
- As an example, more than 1,200 tourism establishments in Door County have less than 19 employees.
- Tourism small business owners are typically entrepreneurs who own and operate restaurants, lodging establishments, attractions, arts and cultural venues and retail stores.

Benchmark	2011	2012
<b>Total Economic Impact</b>	\$16.0 Billion	\$16.8 Billion
<b>State and Local Taxes</b>	\$1.3 Billion	\$1.3 Billion
<b>Federal Taxes</b>	\$950 Million	\$975 Million
<b>Jobs</b>	181,000	184,000

<sup>3</sup> Tourism Economics, 2011/2012 Economic Impact study. All economic impact information is reported as a calendar year.

# DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM ORGANIZATION

## SECRETARY STEPHANIE KLETT

Appointed by Governor Walker in January 2011, Stephanie Klett has the privilege of leading the state's \$16.8 billion tourism industry as the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. Klett has brought new energy to the Department, which has seen a resurgence thanks in large measure to award-winning creative marketing efforts, including the recruitment of Hollywood directors and celebrities (with Wisconsin ties) for advertising campaigns.

Klett believes Wisconsin Tourism has a big role in creating jobs and improving the quality of life for Wisconsin residents. She understands the power of partnerships, shining the light on Wisconsin's hidden and lesser-known treasures, and working with the dynamic tourism-related organizations around the state.

Klett has been promoting Wisconsin for over two decades, logging more than one million miles criss-crossing the state during her 20-year career hosting the award winning Discover Wisconsin Television & Radio series. During that time Klett wrote, produced and hosted over 4,000 radio shows on the wild, adventurous, historical, romantic, fun and family-friendly places in Wisconsin. She also hosted over 300 television episodes, received 8 Emmy nominations & the coveted Emmy statute as outstanding host.

Stephanie was raised with 9 brothers, is a former Miss Wisconsin, and was the 2013 AIDS Walk Wisconsin Honorary Chair for the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin.



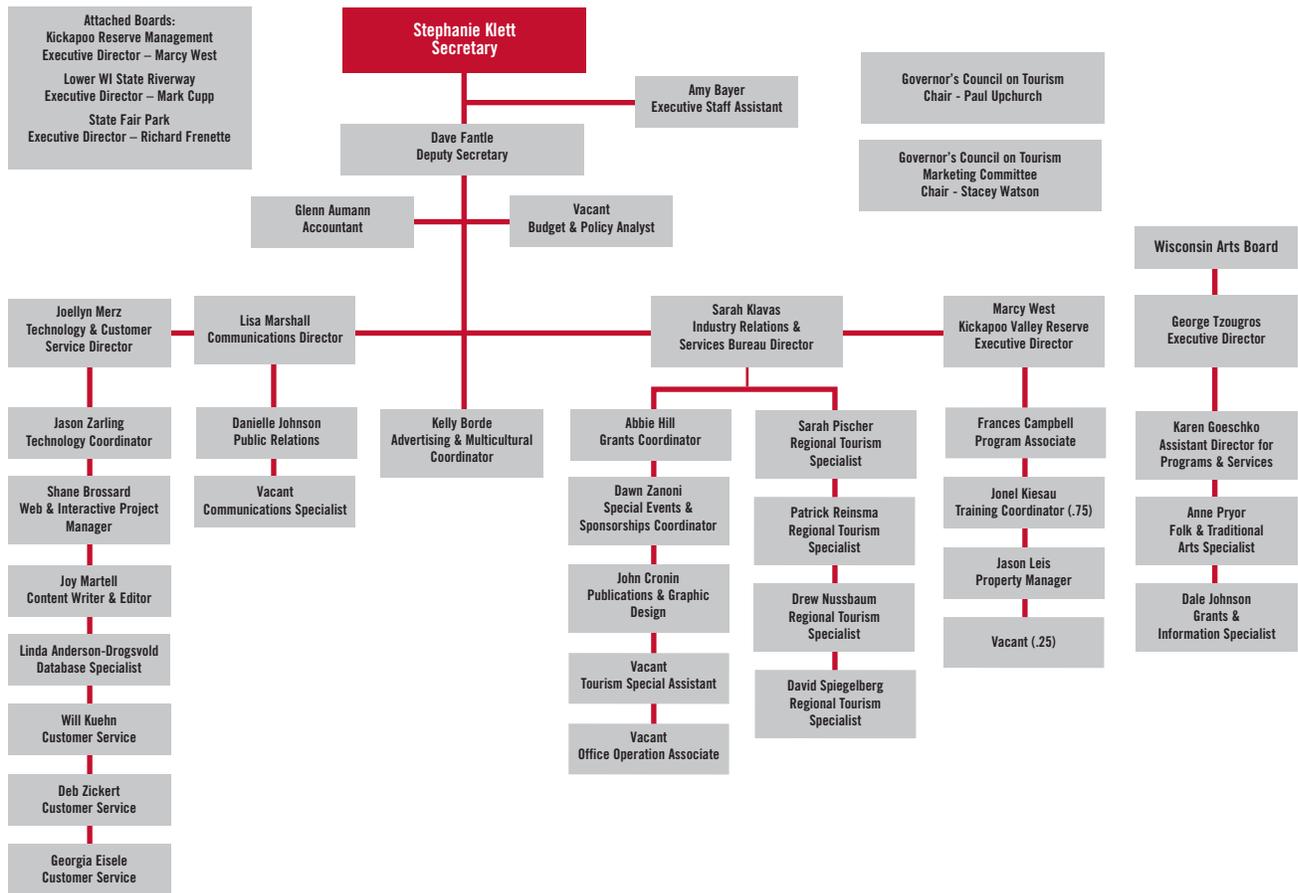
## DEPUTY SECRETARY DAVE FANTLE

Dave joined the Department of Tourism in January 2011 after working seven years as vice president of public relations for VISIT Milwaukee. At VISIT, Dave was the creator of the bronze Fonz statue, which graces the Milwaukee RiverWalk. The project was the recipient of the highest public relations award from such industry organizations as the Society of American Travel Writers, U.S. Travel Association and the Wisconsin Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus. Dave is also a founding member of Film Wisconsin, the non-profit organization charged with promoting the state for film, television and video gaming projects.

He is the 2012 recipient of the Dorothy Thomas Black Award from the Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter of Public Relations Society of America, an award recognizing sustained, superior performance in public relations and the lifetime achievement of public relations professional. Dave moved to the Badger State in 1988 from his native Minnesota thanks to his Wisconsin bride. He and his wife, Cathy, have three "almost" adult children. He holds a BA in Journalism from the University of Minnesota.



# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



The Department of Tourism is a cabinet level agency with three positions serving at the pleasure of the Governor; Secretary, Deputy Secretary and the Communications Director. The Governor’s Council on Tourism provides advice and counsel to the Secretary in formulation of the state-wide marketing strategy. The Council members serve three-year terms, also at the pleasure of the Governor. All other positions within the Department of Tourism are civil service and fall under one of three bureaus-Marketing and Communications, Industry Relations and Technology and Customer Services.

The Wisconsin Arts Board was moved into the Department of Tourism during the biennium. There are four full-time employees whose work is directed by a board of directors. The Department of Tourism provides administrative support including accounting and purchasing. The Department also provides office space at no cost to the Wisconsin Arts Board. Extensive marketing support, including paid, owned and earned media, rounds out the arts portfolio.<sup>4</sup>

There are three boards attached to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism for administrative purposes:

- Kickapoo Valley Reserve
- Lower Wisconsin Riverway
- State Fair Park

<sup>4</sup> FY 12 JEM awarded 19 Arts grants of \$382,000. FY 13 JEM awarded 26 Arts grants of \$543,000

# ALTERNATIVE WORK PATTERNS AND FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE

Department of Tourism staff has the flexibility to choose an alternative arrival and departure time from work along with a preferred lunch and break schedule. The decision must take into account the operational needs of the Department and is subject to approval by the immediate supervisor.

Tourism in Wisconsin is a 24/7 industry open 365 days a year. Some staff members are required to operate within alternative work pattern assignments to accommodate events and commercial television or photography shoots that take place in the field, or involve participation at travel industry trade shows that run over a weekend. Staff works directly with their supervisors to develop alternative schedules that meet the needs of the Department, tourism industry and their personal needs to create an appropriate work-life balance.

## PERMANENT PART-TIME POSITIONS

The Department does not currently have staff working in permanent part-time employment status.

# MARKET SEGMENT DEVELOPMENT

## INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

According to the Department of Commerce, visitation to the United States in July 2012 (37.6 million people) was 6% higher than the same time a year earlier. Forecasts predict that over the next five years there will be about 4% annual growth in visitation. This growth is expected to be from all world regions.

The United States Travel Association (USTA), of which Wisconsin is a member, concur with these estimates and anticipates inbound travel and international spending to increase 4% and 7% respectively. Wisconsin is poised to take advantage of this trend and has a strategic plan to that end that began in FY 2011 and continued during FY 2012 with these objectives:

- Increase the number of international visitors to Wisconsin and ultimately their financial impact on the economy
- Educate the industry on how to host the visitor and how to work with receptive and tour operators
- Engage the Wisconsin tourism industry as cooperative partners
- Enter the Canadian market
- Expand the Wisconsin product in tour operator catalogs and increase awareness of the destination for individual visitors
- Increase earned media

## INTERNATIONAL VISITOR SPENDING WISCONSIN

Success benchmarks:

1. \$550 million expenditures from international visitors
2. Seated an 8-member international marketing committee to advise the department
3. Rejoined Mississippi River Country to promote Wisconsin to the Japanese market
4. Attended major international shows with strong presence including International Pow-wow (IPW) and International Travel Baroque (ITB in Berlin Germany)
5. Participate with Brand USA in their international marketing co-op programs

## MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS

Meetings and Conventions is a tourism market with excellent growth potential. To help Wisconsin destinations be competitive to attract regional and national meetings or conventions, the Department offers a grant program designed to provide financial assistance for facility costs or host destination expenses. The goal of this program is to generate visitor spending from meetings and conventions tourism in Wisconsin.

During FY 2012, the Department of Tourism conducted research to obtain a clear understanding of Wisconsin's position as a destination for this market in the minds of Meetings and Conventions planners in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois and Washington D.C. The data now helps to inform the marketing planning process as we grow this segment of the hospitality industry. We found:

- Geography matters to planners and the Midwest states of Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin have the greatest awareness
- Wisconsin is seen as a value and performs better in this metric than our closest competitor
- A powerful and relevant website is second only to referrals as the top communication channel
- Perception is that Wisconsin does not have a variety of venues
- Airport access necessary

As destinations across the state are investing heavily in market infrastructure, the Department is investing heavily in marketing.

In addition to research, our investment includes \$110,000 annually for the Meetings Means Business grant program, a new website (MeetinWisconsin.com) and extensive staff support to maintain relevant web content, event and show sponsorships and participation and a paid media campaign.

## SPORTS MARKET

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism recognizes the growth potential of sports marketing as an economic driver in the state. To assist destinations in securing competitive sport events that require an upfront cash or financial commitment, we offer a unique sports partnership grant program. The goal of the grant is to generate visitor spending from sports tourism in Wisconsin. There is \$110,000 total available for matching grants, not to exceed \$20,000 per request. The dollars are used for bid fees or up-front financial commitments paid directly to events rights holders.

Research was conducted during FY 2013 specifically to gain an understanding of the considerations Sports Planners take when choosing a destination for a sporting event. We also examined the process planners use to research potential destinations, the qualifications required of destinations and venues, and the overall perceptions of Wisconsin as a host destination.

We found that when deciding on a destination for a sporting event there are three critical factors at play:

- The venue
- Support from the host destination or state
- Costs

For Wisconsin to compete and attract the best events, we must perform well on all factors. The marketing plans for sports mirror the Meetings and Convention strategies including the Ready, Set, Go! grant program, a new website (SportsWisconsin.com), event and show sponsorships and participation and a paid media campaign.



## SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

Visitors arriving in Wisconsin are once again greeted with a warm welcome and personal travel information at a Travel Wisconsin Welcome Center (TWWC).

### TRAVEL WISCONSIN WELCOME CENTERS

During FY 2012 and continuing into FY 2013, the department established and nurtured a public-private partnership business model. This model includes the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and local tourism organizations for the purpose of staffing and operating eight branded TWWC's. These centers are located at Interstate and state highway gateways where hundreds of thousands of motorists enter Wisconsin.

# INDUSTRY RELATIONS DEVELOPMENTS

The Department of tourism initiated three new developments over the biennium that impact daily work with the tourism industry, our valued partners.

1. Designed and initiated a customer service training program
3. Developed an asset assessment initiative to serve small to medium destinations
3. Restructured the field territories, dividing the state into four quadrants

## CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

Regional Tourism Specialists (RTS's) conduct Customer Service Training seminars that range from small group meetings to day-long, company-wide sessions. Whether the audience is a small business owner or the entire staff of a casino (and everything in between) the entire tourism and hospitality industry needs to know how to properly address, communicate and interact with their customers. Industry partners are now well-prepared to provide exceptional customer service with 4,000 people trained over the biennium.

## DESTINATION ASSESSMENTS

In terms of job growth, the Travel and Tourism industry is one of the most important industries in the nation. Wisconsin communities that are committed to developing a vision to diversify their economies now have a new tool: Destination Assessments.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism offers industry partners a process designed to find the best path for maximizing strengths, appeal to visitors, and the development necessary to increase the impact of visitor spending on the local economy and grow jobs.

Assessments completed: Evansville, Muscodia, Rusk County, Mercer, Platteville, Viroqua, Manitowish Waters and Grantsburg

## NEW FIELD TERRITORIES

The Department restructured the territories for the work of our four RTS's. The field staff spends their time working one-on-one with business owners, tourism organizations and local officials to help map out plans for growing local tourism economies. They manage the assessments and the customer service training while serving as a frontline information resource for all the Department's programs and services.

[Regional Tourism Specialist Map](#)

### Northeastern Wisconsin:

Counties: Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Oneida, Portage, Price, Shawano, Vilas, Waupaca, Wood

### Southeastern Wisconsin

Counties: Brown, Calumet, Dodge, Door, Fond du Lac, Jefferson, Kenosha, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha, Winnebago

### Northwestern Wisconsin:

Counties: Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Buffalo, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Rusk, Taylor, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Sawyer, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Washburn

### Southwestern Wisconsin:

Counties: Adams, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Grant, Green, Green Lake, Iowa, Juneau, La Crosse, Lafayette, Marquette, Monroe, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Vernon, Waushara

## TRAVELWISCONSIN.COM

TravelWisconsin.com is the official website of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and the primary resource for planning a Wisconsin getaway. Each year, the site serves over 3 million visitors looking to find fun and a place they can experience the best of Wisconsin. All department marketing initiatives directs new and return visitors to TravelWisconsin.com. The award-winning Fall Color Report and Snow Conditions Report are the most popular sections on the site. Here cutting edge technology and interactive maps point visitors to the best places to experience color and snow.

In FY 2013 the Department launched the redesigned TravelWisconsin.com featuring improved navigation, new trip planning tools and the ability to pull together related content to improve the user experience. The new website incorporates responsive design for an optimal viewing experience whether the visitor accesses the site via a desktop, mobile device, or tablet. This allows visitors to explore, plan, experience, and commemorate their Wisconsin vacation.

Benchmark	FY 2012	FY 2013
Total Website Visits	2,992,290	3,513,789
Unique Visits	1,873,306	2,139,759
Average Time on Site	3:24	3:22
Click Thru to Partner Sites	478,370	656,545
Total E-News Subscriptions	7,877	13,815

# TRIBAL TOURISM: A PARTNERSHIP WITH 11 SOVEREIGN NATIONS

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism and the 11 Tribes of Wisconsin have a strategic partnership to market the state's tribal assets. Together we are telling the world about unique culture and history and unmatched hospitality in Wisconsin.

## NATIVE AMERICAN TOURISM OF WISCONSIN PARTNERSHIP (NATOW)

- \$200,000 financial commitment to marketing tribal assets annually
- Facilitation of strategic planning session and development of NATOW Strategic Marketing and Business Plan
- Dedicated staff person to NATOW
- NATOW Executive Director serves on Governor's Council on Tourism
- Reciprocal conference support

## SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Earned Media:

- Earned Media values for FY 2013 was \$6.3 million
- Earned Media values for FY 2012 was \$115,990

### Special Promotions:

FY 2013

- Tribal Tourism Discover Wisconsin Episode: Airing Summer 2014
- Hosted by Department of Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett featuring interviews with Tribal Chairs

### Special Promotions:

FY 2012

- Peter Greenberg's Hidden Gems
- Hosted by national travel journalist Peter Greenberg and aired and posted during 2013

### TravelWisconsin.com: Dedicated Tribal Section

- 4,639 unique visits in FY 2013
- 3,591 unique visits in FY 2012

### Grants

Joint Effort Marketing (JEM)

- \$39,500 Gizhay Gaming and Indian Art Show, Red Cliff in FY 2013

### Customer Service Training

Five tribes and 565 tribal members trained:

- LCO, Red Cliff, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, and Mole Lake

# DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM GRANT PROGRAMS

Grant	Available Budget	Overview
<p><b>Joint Effort Marketing</b>            Awarded 2012:            50 grants totaling \$1.13 million drove \$33 million in visitor expenditures            Awarded 2013:            56 grants totaling \$1.195 million drove over \$36 million in visitor expenditures</p>	<p>\$1.13 million per fiscal year</p>	<p>Projects must show they'll generate an increase in number of visitors and dollars brought into the local area. Categories: Destination Marketing; New Event; Sales Promotion; Existing Event; and One-Time, One-of-a-Kind.            State statute allows reimbursement up to 75% of a project's first year promotional costs. There is grant support during subsequent years - up to 50% of the promotional costs for the second year and 25% for the third year.</p>
<p><b>Ready, Set, Go! (Sports)</b>            Awarded 2012:            11 grants totaling \$121,000 added an est. \$19.8 million in visitor spending            Awarded 2013:            16 grants totaling \$145,000 added est. \$19.2 million in visitor spending</p>	<p>\$110,000 per fiscal year</p>	<p>Secure competitive sport events that require an upfront cash or financial commitment. The goal of the fund is to generate visitor spending from sports tourism in Wisconsin. Amount available per destination/per request is 50% of a Bid Fee or 50% of other allowable site/venue/municipal fees, up to a maximum \$20,000 during the fiscal year.</p>
<p><b>Meetings Mean Business (Meetings and Convention)</b>            Awarded 2012:            7 grants totaling \$53,056 added an est. \$10.2 million in visitor spending            Awarded 2013:            7 grants totaling \$81,750 added an est. \$6.4 million in visitor spending</p>	<p>\$Est. 110,000 per fiscal year</p>	<p>Attract national or Midwest regional meetings and conventions. Destinations may apply for 50% of the costs for convention facility rental, in-community convention transportation or host costs, up to a maximum of \$20,000 during the fiscal year.</p>
<p><b>TIC (Travel Information Center)</b>            Awarded 2012:            20 centers received grants and served over 900,000 visitors            Awarded 2013:            23 centers received grants and served over 805,000 visitors</p>	<p>\$160,000 per fiscal year</p>	<p>For non-profit tourism organizations, municipalities or Native American tribes who operate a regional tourist information center, providing information on cultural, recreational and other tourism businesses. Must be in a key location for travelers, have trained staff, be able to track visitors and provide information on the region and state. Reimburse up to 50% of eligible expenses 15,000 per organization per year.</p>



# DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM PREMIERE EVENTS

## **WISCONSIN GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM**

Always in March, the Department of Tourism's produces an annual three-day educational and networking event for Wisconsin innkeepers, restaurateurs, community tourism officials, tourism attraction operators, state agency officials, tourism educators and other representatives of the hospitality industry. The largest of its kind in the county, attendance over the past two years reached nearly 1,000.

[www.wigcot.org](http://www.wigcot.org)

## **GOVERNOR'S NORTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT**

Typically held in the late fall, the Governor's Northern Economic Development Summit is the combined work of several state agencies and meant to stimulate discussion of key issues specific to northern Wisconsin including growing the economy, jobs and workforce development, technology, transportation, clean and renewable energy, small business development and natural resources. The Department of Tourism takes the lead role in producing this event and attendance grew year over year.

<http://northwoodssummit.com>

## **NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK (NATIONWIDE AND STATEWIDE)**

National Travel and Tourism Week, always the first full week of May, is when communities across the country hold events as a way to put the spotlight on the contributions travel makes to the nation's economy and quality of life. During National Travel and Tourism Week, the Department of Tourism distributes its annual economic impact research that shows how the tourism economy makes a positive impact on the state of Wisconsin. Appearances by the Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Tourism Department staff take place around the state.



# ENGAGEMENT WITH ASSOCIATIONS

Wisconsin is fortunate to have a very active travel and hospitality industry. Many like-minded individuals within a market segment band together to form associations for advocacy, educational, legislative and promotional purposes. On an annual basis, these associations hold their sector meetings often times completed with Marketplaces or trade shows. Over the biennium, the Department has focused on its engagement with state-wide associations, considering them key accounts and attending/speaking at association annual meetings, presenting educational seminars and supporting advocacy and outreach.

[Tourism Associations](#)

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**Industry Website:** <http://industry.travelwisconsin.com>