



American Recreation Coalition

*Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right
to health and happiness through recreation.*

NEWS

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POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION IN 2015

Washington, D.C. (October 24, 2014) – Outdoor recreation leaders report good sales and activities for 2014 and expectations of still stronger activity in 2015, according to a new report from the American Recreation Coalition, *Outdoor Recreation Outlook 2015*. Americans spend more than \$650 billion annually on equipment ranging from skis and tents to RVs and boats and on services ranging from fishing licenses to whitewater outings, supporting millions of jobs in manufacturing, sales and service. Though the 2008 recession hurt, especially in sales of new equipment, 2014 brought strong recovery. And technology in the outdoors is blossoming, bringing lighter and stronger skis and bikes and new electronic devices, like hand-held GPS units and digital cameras, adding to outdoor fun.

A core strength of outdoor recreation in America is the lure of America's public lands and waters covering nearly one in three acres of the nation's surface. Best known is America's National Park System with 401 units, ranging from world-renowned destinations to small historic sites. Many park sites suffered from recent events including hurricanes and fires and from the turmoil of government budgets in 2013, together causing a significant drop in visitation. Visitation is now up by more than 2% from 2013 levels, up some five million visits for the year to date, and the National Park Service is preparing to launch a major promotion effort – **Find Your Park** – in 2015 in conjunction with its 100th anniversary.

Collectively, America's State Parks have a \$20 billion impact on state and local economies. A number of state park systems also report increased visitation, perhaps as American families look for value in their leisure spending. At the same time, state parks in some areas of the country continue to be squeezed by budget concerns. Innovative solutions are being pursued.

Winter sports are showing strong signs of growth. The International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA) is very optimistic about the 2014-15 season. Snowmobile sales in the U.S. and Canada for 2014 increased 11% compared to 2013, and initial 2015 model snowmobile sales are up more than 10%. The number of miles ridden increased 20% over last year.

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The ski industry is growing as well. The ski retail market finished the 2013-14 season with \$3.6 billion in sales, up 4% in units sold and 7% in dollars compared to 2012-13.

Season pass sales are up in all regions except California which, given the snowfall patterns of the last three years, is understandable. Destination lodging reservations are very strong in the Rocky Mountain region particularly Colorado and Utah.

Just as important as the sales data, the 2015 forecast of a cold and snowy winter paints a positive picture for winter activity.

Camping at both public and private sites is also rising. Peak season business for 2014 was up substantially from 2013 levels according to Kampgrounds of America (KOA), the largest network of private campgrounds in America. Camper nights across the country were up 3.7%, contributing to strong overall revenue growth of 8.6%.

State campgrounds experienced heavy demand in 2014 as well. Camping was also aided by media attention to five Capital Campouts – governors hosting youth and urban families for widely reported overnight stays at sites in state capitals which highlighted nearby fun opportunities. For 2015, Capital Campouts and other promotional efforts by governors will reach an estimated 30 states.

Overnight stays in national park campgrounds, though, continue to decline. In some cases campgrounds are full during peak seasons – but sites are occupied by smaller numbers of people. In other cases, a lack of promotion and needed upgrading is deterring campers.

According to the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), the RV market strengthened during the first half of 2014, with wholesale shipments during the first six months of the year increasing 9.8% over the same time period last year. Towable RV shipments, representing 87.8% of all RVs manufactured, led the way with an increase of 8.6% during the first six months of 2014 compared to the same time period in 2013.

Recreational use of on- and off-highway motorcycles, ATVs, and ROVs is also growing. The industry contributes nearly \$109 billion in direct spending to the U.S. economy annually and over 1.5 million jobs. Nearly 30 million Americans ride motorcycles on and off-roads, and ATV ridership is some 35 million annually.

2015 will be an exciting year for recreational boating, according to the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA). The industry continues to see healthy growth with retail expenditures increasing 3.2% in 2013 to \$36.9 billion. Spending is expected to grow 8% in 2014. If it does, 2014 will represent a new all-time high.

NMMA notes that Americans are taking to the water in record numbers and predicts continued steady growth of 5-7% in new powerboat sales through 2014.

Recreational boating participation in 2013 was 88 million people, or 37% of the population.

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This is also nearly an all-time high.

Marinas continue to trend towards becoming destination and resort locations, instead of just places to keep a boat. This trend is causing the marina industry to begin to view itself as a player in the tourism industry, and there are early signs of interest for the industry to work with tourism agencies to further promote that concept.

The lure of recreational fishing remains strong. According to the 2014 Special Report on Fishing released by the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and the Outdoor Foundation, the sport continues to grow with 8.6 million newcomers to fishing in the last two years alone. Women, children and Hispanics all show increases in participation. Almost 42% of first-time fishing participants are female.

The industry and its governmental partners are also looking to do a better job of retaining anglers, an area that continues to be challenging. Efforts to increase voluntary fishing license compliance, as well as reaching a diverse new audience, are underway.

Recreational activities continue to be a mainstay of the American lifestyle, and there is widespread optimism regarding 2015. ARC's report is available for download as a PDF at <http://www.funoutdoors.com/files/Outdoor%20Recreation%20Trends%202015%20final.pdf>

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About the American Recreation Coalition:

AMERICAN RECREATION COALITION — is a nonprofit, Washington-based federation founded in 1979. The association provides a unified voice for recreation interests to ensure their full and active participation in government policy-making on issues such as public land management. ARC membership consists of more than 100 organizations, including national and regional associations and corporations that represent a major share of the \$650 billion a year recreation/leisure industry and enthusiast groups representing millions of recreationists. Since its inception, ARC has sought to catalyze public-private partnerships to enhance and protect outdoor recreation opportunities and resources. ARC conducts research, organizes national conferences, and disseminates information through a variety of means, including its Web site www.funoutdoors.com. ARC plays a leading role in several key coalitions and organizations, including the Coalition for Recreational Trails, Scenic Byways Coalition and Coalition for Recreation in the National Forests. ARC also supports and promotes the WOW - Wonderful Outdoor World outreach to urban children and was instrumental in the re-launch of Take Pride in America. ARC was also instrumental in launching National Get Outdoors Day, a national effort dedicated to helping children enjoy healthy, active outdoor lives.