PRESS RELEASE

PORTAGE COUNTY VISITOR SPENDING TOPS $137.5 MILLION IN 2019, STATE FIGURES SHOW
Travelers spending highlights the importance of tourism to the Stevens Point Area economy

STEVENS POINT, Wis. (May 4, 2020) – Visitors spent $137.5 million in Portage County in 2019, according to figures released today by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. These dollars, brought to the region by travelers, highlight the importance of the tourism economy and its role in supporting local business.

"This year, more than ever, the importance of tourism to the local economy is on display," said Sara Brish, executive director of the Stevens Point Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. "We know the importance that visitors traveling to the region have – and even more so, the impact they have to directly support the numerous businesses across the area."

Since 2012, traveler spending in Portage County has grown by 35 percent. The $137.5 million in visitor spending marks the eighth year in a row that traveler expenditures topped $100 million in Portage County, an increase of 1.56 percent from 2018. Ranked 23 out of all 72 counties for the state, Portage County has sustained steady, incremental growth in visitor spending.

Brish said the increase in visitor spending locally can be attributed to several factors, including successful marketing campaigns, hosting numerous sports events and a strong meeting and convention market. The region also tracks other benchmark indicators, that extend beyond the report by Tourism Economics, which also indicated growth. In 2019, Average Daily Rates (ADR) saw a 4.5 percent growth over 2018 and average occupancy at local hotels grew by 5.3 percent, based on Smith Travel Research data. Room tax revenue grew by nearly 6.6 percent during the same time frame. The Stevens Point Area Convention & Visitors Bureau booked and/or serviced 272 meetings and sports events in 2019, up 3 percent over the previous year.

2019 was a memorable year in the Stevens Point Area tourism industry, with it marking the first time that the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship golf tournament was held in Wisconsin in its 71-year history. It also included; the addition of the Behnke Olson Outdoor Recreation Center at Standing Rocks, the opening of new trail segment along the Green Circle Trail and the Schrader connection, the construction of the Pankowski Friends Amphitheater, the official opening of the Village of Plover Band Shell at Lake Pacawa, and completion of Phase 1 for the Cultural Commons interactive garden.

Additionally, 2020 will see new developments including the new Green Circle Trail Trailhead Facility at Schmeeckle Reserve, beginning of construction of the boutique hotel at SentryWorld (slated to open in 2021) and the Stevens Point Curling Club in Plover.

To celebrate National Travel & Tourism Week, the SPACVB will be heading online to honor the spirit of travel in recognition of the industry's strength, selflessness, and resiliency. Follow along with our virtual celebrations on Instagram and Facebook, to help select the stops for a perfect #StePoWknd, enter to win gift-card giveaways to local businesses, and thank the local tourism industry.

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On Wednesday, May 6 at 1:30 p.m., Wisconsin Department of Tourism Secretary Designee Sara Meaney and SPACVB Executive Director Sara Brish will be guest presenters for the Portage County Economic Recovery briefing, open to the public. Zoom details will be available at PortageEconRecovery.org prior to the event.

Find more information about the 2020 celebration in the Stevens Point Area here: https://bit.ly/nttw20

In 2019, tourism's impact on the state's economy reached $22.2 billion. Tourism supported 202,217 jobs and visitor trips topped 113 million visits. The numbers have been released as Wisconsin's tourism industry celebrates National Travel & Tourism Week (May 3-9) and plans for an economic bounce back when public health authorities determine it is safe to do so.

Statewide in 2019, traveler spending generated $1.6 billion in state and local tax revenue and $1.3 billion in federal taxes. Tax revenue generated by tourism offset $687 in taxes per household. Last year, tourism achieved a Return on Investment of 8 to 1: $8 in tax revenue per $1 promotional spend.

"Travel plays a critical role in Wisconsin's economic prosperity. Every year our state's tourism industry celebrates National Travel and Tourism Week, and the Department of Tourism uses this time to release the previous year's economic impact numbers," said Secretary-designee, Sara Meaney. "We know that 2020 will not look like 2019. But the good news is that on the heels of a banner year for Wisconsin travel and tourism, the state has shown itself to be an increasingly sought-after destination, which gives the department confidence that it remains on the radar as a preferred destination for visitors. I encourage you to take pause and celebrate the positive news of 2019 as we look forward to supporting this important industry when it is safe to travel again."

The Department of Tourism works with international research firms Tourism Economics and Longwoods International. Additional economic impact findings, including individual county figures are also available at Industry.TravelWisconsin.com.

The Stevens Point Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is an economic and community development organization whose purpose is to expand Portage County's economy by attracting conventions, sporting events and leisure tourists to Portage County. Millions of dollars from visitor spending and increased tax revenues are generated to increase commerce, sustain jobs and to create a desirable destination.

For more information about the Stevens Point Area, visit StevensPointArea.com. The SPACVB can also be found on Facebook (facebook.com/StevensPointArea), Instagram (instagram.com/stevenspointarea), Twitter (twitter.com/StevensPtArea), and Pinterest (pinterest.com/StevensPtArea).

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