



Travel Green Wisconsin

A Pilot Program

Introduction

Travel Green Wisconsin has been developed based upon goals set forth by the Sustainable Tourism Ad Hoc Committee (a work group composed of representatives from the tourism industry, government, and nonprofits); existing certification programs; and the Mohonk Agreement. Details about these other certification programs and the Mohonk Agreement can be found at www.travelgreenwisconsin.com.

What is Travel Green Wisconsin?

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism and Wisconsin Environmental Initiative recognize, through travel research, that Wisconsin's most popular attraction is its natural resources, cultural diversity, and the wildlife that make their home in the state. Efforts to preserve these attractions for generations to come are in the best interest of Wisconsin's Tourism Industry and the economic health of Wisconsin. Travel Green Wisconsin is a voluntary program that reviews and certifies tourism businesses that have made a commitment to continuously improve their operations in order to reduce their environmental impact. This voluntary program lets tourism businesses evaluate their operations, set goals, and state specific actions they are taking to achieve environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

Why participate?

Benefits to Business

- Cost Savings and Improved Profitability
 - Reducing waste, improving energy efficiency, and conserving natural resources not only helps the environment and local community, but also reduces costs and increases efficiencies that improves profitability.
- Marketing
 - Display the Travel Green Wisconsin logo in promotional materials and websites to create market distinction and attract new customers.
 - Receive website listings on the Department of Tourism's website and Travel Green Wisconsin website.
 - Receive media attention.
- Educational
 - Attend workshops and training sessions to learn more about sustainable business practices.
 - Receive technical assistance and resources to help with certification and program implementation.
- Networking
 - Learn best practices and share ideas with other Travel Green Wisconsin certified tourism businesses.

Benefits to Customers

- Travelers will be able to easily identify Travel Green Wisconsin businesses that are committed to achieving environmental, social, and economic sustainability.
- Travelers will feel good about supporting a business that has a reduced impact on the environment and will spread the word about their experiences.

Benefits to Environment

- Reduce waste
- Conserve energy, water, and other natural resources
- Improve air quality
- Protect wildlife and land
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Benefits to Local Communities

- Travel Green Wisconsin businesses provide employment opportunities and support for local products and services.

What are the goals of Travel Green Wisconsin?

Travel Green Wisconsin is designed to support the Wisconsin brand, give the state and hospitality business participants a marketing edge, promote smart business practices, educate travelers, and protect the beauty and vitality of Wisconsin's landscape. The Travel Green Wisconsin certification program strives to add bottom-line value and top-line recognition to program participants.

The certification program has the following goals:

- Be entirely voluntary.
- Be simple and affordable so that travel/hospitality businesses are motivated to participate.
- Be adaptable and available to the full variety of business types that serve travelers.
- Make good business sense by offering identifiable cost savings to participants.
- Increase participant awareness of environmentally sustainable business practices.
- Provide a marketing advantage for the state and for program participants.
- Lead to measurable environmental improvements.

How does a business become certified?

To be certified as a Travel Green Wisconsin business, the following forms must be completed:

1. Registration Form

The Registration Form asks for contact information, baseline environmental performance data, and a certification fee.

2. Checklist

The checklist contains Basic Requirements and nine different sections entitled:

- A. Waste Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling
- B. Energy Efficiency, Conservation, and Management
- C. Water Conservation and Wastewater Management
- D. Air Quality
- E. Wildlife and Landscape Management
- F. Transportation
- G. Environmentally and Socially Sensitive Purchasing
- H. Local Community Benefits
- I. Communication and Education (Customers, Employees, Public) (**5 Points Required**)

To qualify for certification, each business must earn a minimum amount of points from the Checklist. First, each business must fulfill the Basic Requirements and must meet the minimum point requirements in Section I, Communication (5 points). The remaining points can be earned from any combination of additional Checklist Sections. To receive points, the business may check the examples listed in each category and/or describe an innovative best practice that is not listed. By checking the box, the business is either stating that they have already implemented the practice or are making a commitment to implement it. If they are committing to implement the practice, the business must write an *Expected Date of Completion*. This date must be within 6 months of submitting the Checklist. Businesses are encouraged to go above and beyond the minimum point total to achieve further recognition.

After the Registration and Checklist are completed make a copy for the business and mail or FAX the originals along with the certification fee to the:

Wisconsin Environmental Initiative
Attn: Travel Green Wisconsin
16 N. Carroll Street, Suite 840,
Madison, WI 53703

FAX: (608) 280-0361

The forms will be reviewed and the business will be notified about their certification status. Certified businesses will receive a Travel Green Wisconsin logo to use in promotional materials and website listings. Certification is valid for a one-year period from the date of issuance.

How does a business renew certification?

To renew certification, update the Registration form and Checklist with any changes from the previous year. In addition, an Annual Report must be completed. The Wisconsin Environmental Initiative will notify the business when they should send in these forms and will provide the format for the Annual Report. The Annual Report should include what accomplishments the business has achieved over the year. The Annual Report must also state their goals for the following year in order for the business to continuously improve.

Can a business be removed from the program?

Travel Green Wisconsin is a voluntary program. It is the responsibility of the business to assure all program requirements are met. However, feedback regarding compliance may be received by customers and random spot checks. In addition, certification documents will be posted on the Travel Green Wisconsin website. If deficiencies are found, the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative will offer follow-up assistance to correct them. Consistent failure to correct deficiencies will result in removal from the program. If a business is unable or willing to meet the responsibilities and program requirements, all Travel Green Wisconsin promotional materials must be returned to the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative and the business will refrain from further identification with Travel Green Wisconsin through name or use of the Travel Green Wisconsin logo.



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Pilot Participants – FAQ

What is Travel Green Wisconsin?

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism and Wisconsin Environmental Initiative recognize, through travel research, that some of Wisconsin's most popular attraction are its natural resources, cultural diversity, and the wildlife that make their home in the state. Efforts to preserve these attractions for generations to come are in the best interest of Wisconsin's Tourism Industry and the economic health of Wisconsin.

Travel Green Wisconsin is a voluntary program that reviews and certifies tourism businesses that have made a commitment to continuously improve their operations in order to reduce their environmental impact. This voluntary program lets tourism businesses evaluate their operations, set goals, and state specific actions they are taking to achieve environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

What is the Pilot Program?

Before launching the program statewide, Travel Green Wisconsin will be piloted in certain areas and communities in the state. A variety of tourism businesses in these areas will go through the certification process. Feedback about this process will be received from these businesses. It is important that the tourism industry have the opportunity to give suggestions in order to make adjustments to the program if necessary. After feedback is received, Travel Green Wisconsin will be implemented statewide in 2007.

Why should a business participate in the Pilot Program?

Pilot program participants will have the opportunity to receive all of the benefits listed below, plus the opportunity to receive additional media attention since the start of a new program is exciting and newsworthy. Also, the pilot businesses will be able to give suggestions and feedback to improve the program for the tourism industry.

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Benefits to Customers

- Travelers will be able to easily identify Travel Green Wisconsin businesses that are committed to achieving environmental, social, and economic sustainability,
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Benefits to Environment

- Reduce waste,
- Conserve energy, water, and other natural resources,
- Improve air quality,
- Protect wildlife and land,
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Benefits to Local Communities

- Travel Green Wisconsin businesses provide employment opportunities and support for local products and services.

What do Pilot businesses have to do?

Pilot businesses simply have to complete the certification process and provide feedback.

- To become certified the business needs to complete the:
 1. Registration Form:
The Registration Form asks for contact information, baseline environmental performance data, and a certification fee.
 2. Checklist:
This contains some basic requirements and 9 different categories in which each business must earn a minimum number of points.
- After the process is complete, the businesses will be given a short survey and interviewed in order to find out their experiences regarding the certification process.
- This pilot program is expected to be completed in 3 to 6 months depending on the businesses.

Travel Green Wisconsin

Wisconsin's Tourism Industry's success is heavily dependant upon the state's scenic lakes, streams, rivers, forests, prairies, and wildlife that inhabit them. Understanding this, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism is working with the tourism industry to preserve Wisconsin's pristine natural attractions. The department is creating **Travel Green Wisconsin** (www.travelgreenwisconsin.com), an initiative that will encourage tourism operators to reduce their environmental and social impact and deliver a marketing advantage for their business and the state as a whole.



In the spring of 2004, Department of Tourism Secretary, Jim Holperin, formed a work group of leaders representing tourism industries, non-profit organizations, and government agencies with the mission of helping tourism operators adopt more sustainable business practices. The initiative is designed to support the Wisconsin brand, give the state and hospitality business participants a marketing edge, promote smart business practices, educate travelers, and protect the beauty and vitality of Wisconsin's landscape.

The Wisconsin Environmental Initiative (WEI) has been contracted to take the lead on this initiative to develop Travel Green Wisconsin. Travel Green Wisconsin will be a certification program that will encourage operators of all types and sizes to participate. Travel Green Wisconsin will help business "do well by doing good," through bottom-line value and top-line recognition.

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- Increase participant awareness of environmentally sustainable business practices.
- Provide a marketing advantage for the state and for program participants.
- Lead to measurable environmental improvements.

WEI has been working with the Travel Green Wisconsin Committee and industry stakeholders to develop the certification program. Travel Green Wisconsin will feature a point system that highlights specific categories, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and water conservation. Certification will be based on this

point system and each facility will have the opportunity to characterize their own program by choosing additional conservation practices to implement.

Travel Green Wisconsin is designed to encourage participation from every sector of the industry to allow businesses, small or large, to show they are making a commitment in sustaining Wisconsin's natural resources and culture. The Travel Green Wisconsin certification will acknowledge and promote these facilities that have become certified, bringing participants marketing and cost saving benefits for their environmental improvements.

Travel Green Wisconsin pilot projects are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2006, and a program opened up to the whole state by 2007.

For more information about Travel Green Wisconsin and to learn how you can participate please visit www.travelgreenwisconsin.com or www.wi-ei.org.