



JULY 2025

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INSIGHTS



Lori Severson, WACO Executive Director

Dear Members,

Boy, this is the time that makes us step back and realize how short time is. We have lost three powerful members – Bud Styer, Scott Grennon, and now Rhonda Oines from River Bay Resort & Campground in the Dells. Our world is definitely feeling the impact of this industry loss. It's essential to pause and recognize how lucky we are to have truly remarkable contributors to our campground association. These individuals were more than just members—they were mentors, innovators, and friends who gave generously of their time, energy, and spirit to strengthen our community. Their passion for outdoor hospitality, commitment to excellence, and unwavering dedication helped shape the fabric of our association. While we mourn their loss, we also celebrate their legacy, which will continue to inspire us for years to come. Our thoughts are with their families and all who were touched by their presence. We talk about being a family at WACO, and for so many of us, we grew up, raised our children, and helped our neighbors all through WACO. No other association overlooks competition and rushes to help, as our members do.

As we hit the mid-summer mark, the camping and outdoor hospitality industry remains robust, albeit growth has leveled off from the pandemic-era boom. This is the resounding message we are hearing throughout our

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INSIGHTS, CONT'D

industry contacts. After record camping participation years, the number of U.S. households camping has stabilized at slightly lower (but still very high) levels - about 92 million households camped in 2024, just a hair below 2021's peak. This indicates that while the unprecedented surge of new campers has eased, interest in camping remains well above pre-2020 norms. Industry leaders note that camping is holding firm despite economic headwinds. Around 38% of campers say they'll continue camping even if the economy worsens, opting for camping as a cost-effective way to travel during a downturn. Over half of RV owners likewise plan to use their RVs the same or more in an economic slump - highlighting the resilience of our industry.



This summer's booking trends suggest that many campgrounds are experiencing flat or slightly increased business compared to last year, with some parks reporting steady occupancy and only modest revenue growth. Notably, however, a shift in guest behavior is helping fill sites: last-minute bookings are on the rise. Travelers are increasingly

waiting until the week or even day-of to make reservations, often due to weather watching or flexible work schedules. One industry survey found that phone reservations rose 9% and walk-in bookings jumped by 30% in 2025, showing that spontaneous campers are gaining traction. In other words, even if advance reservations look soft, many parks are getting a boost from last-minute campers swooping in to take available spots. KOA's research likewise notes that about 16% of campers are shortening their booking windows in 2025, making more spur-of-the-moment trips instead of planning far ahead. We are hearing this from our WACO members and the Pennsylvania market, which often mimics Wisconsin's tendencies. This trend means campgrounds must stay nimble - keeping sites open for late bookers, leveraging online availability, and marketing to spontaneous travelers (e.g., through social media "open site" posts) can help capture those last-minute guests.

As the industry evolves and camper behavior shifts, savvy campground operators are adopting new marketing approaches to stay ahead of the curve.

Here are some of the most effective tactics we're seeing from successful parks across the country in 2025:

1. Real-Time Social Media Updates & Last-Minute Pushes

With spontaneous, last-minute camping trips on the rise, many campgrounds are finding success by using Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to post real-time availability updates, weather highlights, or "flash deals" on open sites. Posts like "We just had three lakefront sites open



up for this weekend - call now!" help fill unexpected cancellations. Video content, especially quick Reels and Stories, is outperforming static images in engagement.

2. Email Automation for Personalized Offers

Many parks are leveraging email marketing platforms like Mailchimp or Constant Contact to send targeted, automated emails. **For example:**

- Visitors who camped last July might get a personalized "Come Back and Save 10%" offer.
- Abandoned booking emails remind guests to complete their reservation.
- Loyalty programs are integrated into email flows to encourage return visits.

These automated systems are proven to increase repeat bookings and reduce no-shows.

3. Search-Optimized Booking Websites

Campgrounds with mobile-friendly websites that load quickly, display real-time availability, and allow easy online booking are outperforming their peers. SEO strategies - like targeting "campgrounds near

[attraction]" - help drive organic traffic. Many campgrounds are also embedding Google Reviews and camper testimonials on their sites to boost trust and conversion rates.

4. Text Messaging for Engagement & Retention

A growing number of operators now use text messaging (SMS) to send:

- Day-of-stay updates or weather alerts
- Quick satisfaction surveys
- Special offers for return trips

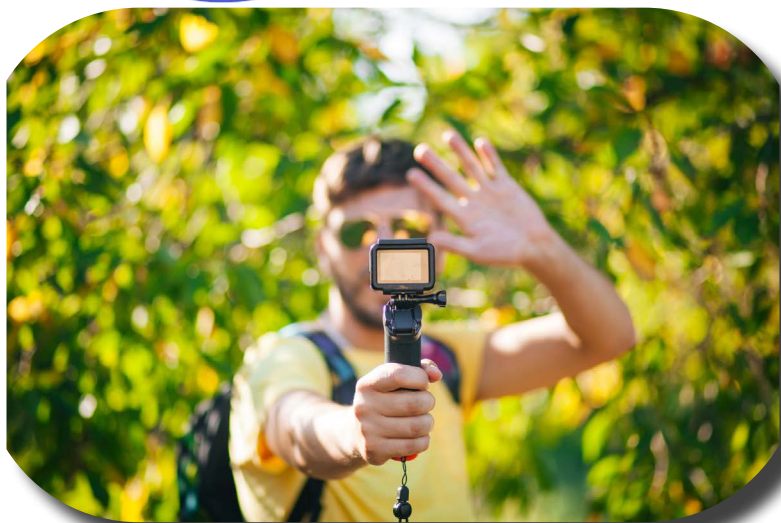
This approach is achieving significantly higher open rates than email and maintains a strong guest relationship post-visit.

5. Partnerships with Local Businesses

Collaborations with local attractions, breweries, paddle rentals, or restaurants (e.g., "Show your campsite receipt for 15% off at Joe's BBQ") create a local experience package and increase word-of-mouth. It also provides cross-promotional opportunities on each business's social media.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INSIGHTS, CONT'D



6. User-Generated Content & Influencer Outreach

Some campgrounds are running photo contests or giving discounts to campers who share their experiences online and tag the park. A few are partnering with regional travel influencers or RV YouTubers, who showcase the campground in action. This type of authentic third-party exposure is driving bookings from new audiences.

7. Google Business Optimization

Simple actions like updating your Google Business profile, uploading recent photos, and responding to reviews can significantly boost your park's visibility in local searches. Many campgrounds forget this - but it's one of the highest-return actions you can take for free.

On the whole, economic indicators for camping are encouraging. Major operators across the Nation are reporting continued revenue growth, as reported by the CAMP group. This implies higher-value camping experiences (deluxe cabins, glamping, etc.) and rate increases are driving gains, even if pure volume isn't

skyrocketing. Indeed, campers today seek unique and upgraded experiences:

Reports show campers are diversifying their trips, trying new forms of camping, and seeking exceptional experiences (from glamping to seasonal events) more than ever. The bottom line is that demand for camping remains strong and adaptable. After the past few frenetic years, 2025 is shaping up to be a year of steady performance for our industry - not the explosive growth of the pandemic, but solid and sustainable interest. And with millions of Americans (nearly 7 million RVers alone) hitting the road for summer adventures, we can be confident that camping will continue to be a beloved way to travel and recreate, so long as we stay responsive to our guests' needs.

Lori

Lori Severson
Executive Director of WACO,
Owner at Champions Riverside Resort

SOURCES:

- Woodall's Campground Magazine Daily News (Jul. 7, 2025) - Texas Flooding Updates, TACO Relief Fund
- Gray News/KTIV Report - Kerrville, TX Flood Disaster Coverage
- Kampgrounds of America (KOA) Industry Reports - Camping Participation & Economic Outlook
- RoverPass 2025 Trend Insights - Rise in Last-Minute Campground Bookings
- WACO Membership Benefits Packet - WACO & ARVC Member Benefits Overview

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Scott Kollock, WACO Board President



Dear WACO Members,

It's halftime, moving toward the end zone! In these dynamic times, being part of the Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners (WACO) is one of the best investments a campground owner can make. WACO is not just a trade group – it's a family of park owners working together to improve our businesses and the industry as a whole.

Here are some of the key benefits of WACO membership that you should be taking advantage of:

- **Unparalleled Education & Training:** WACO runs the largest number of educational classes of any state association, ensuring owners and staff stay up-to-date on laws, certifications, and best practices. From how-to workshops and regulatory seminars to discounted certification courses (e.g., Certified Pool Operator training, where members save around \$200), WACO provides continuous learning opportunities. We now offer proctoring services for Serve Safe as part of our new benefit program, enabling you to certify employees at your convenience and a significantly lower cost.
 - » Please make use of the fall workshops with guided campground tours, offering hands-on learning and idea-sharing in real-world settings. These are often talked about as the best education available – there is nothing better than being able to “look under the hood of other campgrounds!”
 - **Amazing Trade Show:** Our annual WACO Convention each spring features nearly 200 vendors and exhibitors – one of the largest campground trade shows in the country. Members can explore the latest products, services, and park upgrades all under one roof. Even better, if you're a new member, your first convention attendance is
- FREE! The convention also includes top-notch speakers, educational seminars, and plenty of networking with fellow park owners. (Mark your calendars: the 2026 WACO Convention is scheduled for March 11-15, 2026, in Stevens Point.)
- **Networking & Peer Support:** By joining WACO, you become part of a statewide network of experienced park owners. Being in the “WACO family” means you have colleagues to call on when facing challenges or seeking advice. Often, the problem you're dealing with – whether it's a difficult seasonal guest contract or a new tax rule – is one that another owner has already navigated. WACO serves as a clearinghouse for those solutions and shared experiences. The camaraderie and willingness to help each other in this association are genuinely remarkable. Between our conventions, workshops, and member forums, you'll always have someone to bounce ideas off or learn from.
 - **Access to Key Decision-Makers & Experts:** WACO maintains close relationships with important state officials and industry experts who impact our campgrounds. For example, leaders from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (recreational licensing division), the DNR, and the state tourism department regularly collaborate with WACO. Our members have had direct input into discussions on regulations – a benefit most small businesses never get on their own. We also have a legal hotline provided by attorney Mark Hazelbaker for members. Mark is available to answer members' legal questions, review seasonal site agreements, and help navigate issues ranging from ADA compliance to employment law. This service alone can save you hundreds

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT, CONT'D

in legal fees, and it ensures you're never alone in deciphering the rules that affect your park.

- **Marketing Power & Exposure:** When you join WACO, your campground gains significant marketing boosts. WACO produces the official Wisconsin Campground Directory each year, printing and distributing over 225,000 copies to campers. Member parks are listed with photos and information, reaching travelers at RV shows, tourism centers, sporting goods stores, and more statewide. We partner with the state tourism department and local visitor bureaus to promote your business. Additionally, WACO's website (wisconsincampgrounds.com) is the leading online portal for camping in Wisconsin – as a member, your park is featured in our online searchable listings for campers planning trips. We also offer cooperative marketing programs, from RV show booth sharing to group advertising buys, that help stretch your marketing dollars. In short, WACO puts your park in front of hundreds of thousands of potential campers that you likely couldn't reach alone.
- **Buying Discounts & Cost Savings:** One of the tangible perks of WACO membership is group purchasing power. By banding together, WACO (often through our affiliation with Hospitality Connections and OHI) negotiates significant discounts on many products and services essential to campground operations. This includes everything from paper goods and cleaning supplies to propane, maintenance equipment, insurance, music licensing, and even bulk rates on items such as glitter tattoos & craft kits.
- **Advocacy & Unified Voice:** Perhaps the most vital benefit of WACO is the united voice we give campground owners. There is truth in the saying: "Numbers make a difference!" WACO has a Government Affairs committee and even a political

action fund dedicated to monitoring legislation and shaping policies in Madison that affect our industry. Whether it's fighting unreasonable tax proposals or working for fair campground regulations, WACO ensures our interests are represented. When crises strike or complex issues arise that could devastate our businesses (for example, changes to well water regulations or property zoning disputes), WACO mobilizes experts and resources to tackle the problem head-on. No single campground could mount such defenses alone. By participating in WACO, you're effectively "buying insurance" that the collective strength and knowledge of hundreds of park owners will be there when you need it most. Many of the protections we enjoy today (like sensible building codes or being deemed "essential businesses" during emergencies) came because WACO fought for all campgrounds. Supporting WACO through membership means investing in the long-term survival and prosperity of your campground.

As you can see, WACO membership is far more than a plaque on the wall. It's active participation in a thriving community of professionals dedicated to helping each other succeed. If you're already a member, be sure to utilize these benefits – join our workshops, call that legal hotline, use the discounts, come to the convention, and encourage your staff to take classes. If you're not yet a member or know someone on the fence, now is a perfect time to join and strengthen not only your park, but our collective voice. Together, we truly are stronger. WACO is a fantastic example of how people can grow their businesses by working together, and we welcome everyone in the Wisconsin camping industry to be part of this forward momentum.

I want to thank each of you for being a part of this wonderful community of campground owners. We've

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT, CONT'D

covered a lot in this newsletter – from the steady state of our industry and the importance of WACO membership, to the heartbreaking events in Texas. Through the ups and downs, one thing remains clear: when we stick together and support one another, we can weather any storm. Enjoy the rest of the summer camping season – may your parks be full and your campers happy. And as you do, take a moment to appreciate the bigger network you're part of. Whether it's sharing a tip with a fellow owner or lending a hand to those in need, you are what makes this industry special.

Stay safe, stay strong, and see you at Fall workshops!

Scott

Scott Kollock,
Board President of WACO, Owner at Vista Royale Campground

BOARD MEETING SEPT 15 | 1 PM

**September Board
Meeting precedes the
Fall Workshop!**

**COMFORT INN:
1490 Lincoln St,
Rhineland, WI 54501**

SAVE THE
DATE

IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND, PLEASE EMAIL

OFFICE@WISCONSINCAMPGROUNDS.COM SO WE CAN CREATE A PACKET!



STANDING WITH TEXAS

SUPPORTING OUR FRIENDS IN KERRVILLE AFTER THE FLOOD TRAGEDY

Lastly, I want to address the heartbreaking tragedy that struck our friends in Texas earlier this month. As many of you have heard, in the first week of July, a catastrophic flash flood swept through the Texas Hill Country, centered around Kerr County (Kerrville, TX). The disaster unfolded in the early hours of the July 4th weekend, when an unprecedented wall of water surged down the Guadalupe River. Within 45 minutes, the river rose over 26 feet, catching many sleeping campers completely off guard. The results were devastating. Authorities report that more than 80 people lost their lives in the floods, with dozens more still missing. It is one of the worst flooding disasters in U.S. history in decades.

Among the most brutal hits were several campgrounds and camping communities along the river. Camp Mystic, a historic girls' summer camp in Kerr County, was inundated when a torrent of water hit its riverside cabins. Tragically, Camp Mystic has confirmed 27 campers and counselors were swept away and killed in the flood. Our hearts break thinking of the families and the camp staff dealing with such an unimaginable loss. Just downriver in Kerrville, the Blue Oak RV Park – a popular campground and RV resort – was destroyed by the flash flood. Witnesses say every structure and RV on the property was washed away in moments. The owners, Lorena and Jose Guillen, who had built Blue Oak as their retirement dream, barely escaped with their lives as their park was torn apart. Blue Oak was one of three campgrounds utterly devastated by the floodwaters in that region.

This tragedy hits especially close to home for those of us in the campground industry because it underscores our vulnerability to natural disasters – and it reminds us that we are one community, nationwide. Many of you know Kerrville, TX, as the site of the Texas Association of Campground Owners (TACO) annual Spring conventions

in past years. TACO often held its conference at a campground resort along the Guadalupe River in Kerrville. To think that floods have now ravaged the same area is truly sobering. We reached out to our colleagues at TACO to express our support. They report that, while the physical destruction is immense, the campground owner community in Texas is rallying together to help those affected. Park owners from across the state have been sending supplies, funds, and even workforce to assist in cleanup and recovery. It's very much like how we in Wisconsin help each other – and it's a reminder of the strong bonds in our industry.

Many of you have asked, "How can we help?" WACO has been in communication with TACO's leadership to identify needs. TACO has set up a Relief Fund to support campground owners impacted by the flooding. Donations to this fund will go directly toward helping park operators in the flood zone rebuild their businesses and lives. I encourage any WACO members who can contribute. Even a modest donation can help buy building materials, replacement equipment, or temporary lodging for displaced staff. (WACO will be sending out a separate email with details on where to donate, along with verified GoFundMe links for some of the hardest-hit campgrounds and families.

Beyond financial help, please keep the Texas camping community in your thoughts and prayers. Recovering from a disaster of this magnitude will take a long time – both physically and emotionally. The children who survived the camp flood, the campers who lost friends, the owners who lost their life's work – they all have a tough road ahead.

I want to thank each of you for being a part of this wonderful community of campground owners. You all matter and make a difference – I can't tell you how many WACO members say – "I'm so sorry I can't be on the board or volunteer for everything, but just know if you need me, I am there." We have SOOO many quiet contributors that genuinely make a difference in our association. I want to take a moment to thank you all for doing what you can when you can, and for knowing it makes a difference. We truly appreciate it!

***Respectfully Submitted by Lori Severson
Executive Director of WACO
VP of CAMP***



Since their retention, the Knight Group has met with the WACO office, connected with DSPS, and worked to push one of our bills forward!

[2025 Assembly Bill 259](#) / [2025 Senate Bill 235](#) relating to trespassing parties on a campground and assistance with removing guests. This bill passed through the Senate and Assembly and is currently sitting on the Governor's desk, which we were just informed would be signed Friday, April 8, 2025. This bill will go a long way in enforcing our position that Seasonal guests are just that – guests – NOT residents and NOT tenants! WACO is optimistic that this bill will facilitate the passage of other legislation and/or code revisions.

LRB-0444/P2, which is still in the drafting stages as we work to refine the language to ensure we're not putting our partners at DATCP in a position to conduct inspections they don't feel qualified to perform. This bill language is specific to Amusement Rides and the requirement for campgrounds to register and have those rides inspected. Our goal is that any "Amusement Rides" that are initially installed according to the manufacturer's guidelines and as outlined in our insurance policies would NOT be subject to DSPS registration/inspection. This bill, once refined, will provide a clear framework for the safe operation of amusement rides in campgrounds, enhancing the guest experience and reducing regulatory burden. We are specifically looking at those amusements that are less mechanical – jumping pillows, jumping pads, and inflatables – items that guests move on, rather than being moved along. This distinction is crucial as it relates to the current code definition of an amusement ride.

The WACO office and Knight Group met with Sec. Hereth and Deputy Garrett to discuss the potential of reviewing code vs. the need for legislation as well. A similar strategy has proved successful when connecting with DATCP, and WACO felt it was worthy of another conversation. DSPS agreed to review the current infractions and complaints to identify which amusements seemed to be the most troublesome and would provide us with that data. Meanwhile, we'll be working on providing examples of insurance verbiage and operation manuals that show installation guidelines.



LRB-2428 6: Property Tax/ACT 12

Suggested Amendment: OHI recently sent out a [press release](#) regarding the Property Tax, which included a request to Campground Owners and Campers in the state of WI to reach out to their respective legislators. While we are all excited to see movement on the Property Tax issue and look forward to partnering with our National Association of OHI, WACO is concerned about the current language in the drafted legislation and the omission of

crucial points specific to the decks, sheds, etc., being assessed to our membership. This issue could significantly impact the financial burden on our members and the overall affordability of seasonal sites to our member owners in Wisconsin.

The sixth draft of the bill language was provided to WACO leadership for their first review on 7/23/25, with the press release being sent from OHI on 7/24/25. WACO reviewed the language, along with Weld Riley legal counsel, and our lobbying group, Knight Public Affairs. At that time, we requested that language be included that addressed the rising concerns specific to membership of these additions to seasonal sites – additions that our members are being charged on their property assessments, therefore being taxed. We were given a deadline of 7/28/25 to send in our suggestions, and WACO met that deadline. Although we have not received additional feedback from OHI, we are confident that the National Association will consider the concerns of WI members before the bill is presented to legislators in September.

While you may be inclined to reach out to your local legislator [as listed in the press release from OHI](#), please note that legislators do not have access to the bill language; therefore, they potentially could be confused by your request. And again, the current language appears to overlook the key points of membership concerns. This situation has been building for over a year, and as promised, WACO will continue to work to address your concerns!

We want to express our gratitude to our OHI representative, Jim Button of Evergreen Campsites & Resort, for his tireless efforts, dedication, and commitment to advancing this initiative with OHI. We appreciate you, Jim!

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Severson
WACO Office

September Tour **DRAFT** Outline - what your emails for updates and more information!

Tuesday, Sept 16th	
8:30-10:30 am	Lake George Campsites Check In/ Morning Refreshments, Registration, potential speakers/Tour
10:30-11:15	<i>Travel to Hi Pines Campground ~40 minutes</i>
11:15-1:45 pm	Tour Hi Pines Campground, Lunch, potential speakers
1:45-2:30	<i>Travel to Punch Lake Campground ~35 minutes</i>
2:30-3:15 pm	Punch Lake Campground Tour
3:15-3:30	<i>Travel to Arbor Vitae Campground ~11 Minutes</i>
3:30-4:30 pm	Tour Arbor Vitae Campground
Travel to Evening Meal/Social	
Wednesday, Sept 17th	
8:00-9:00 am	Pelican Lake Campground Tour/Morning Refreshments
9:00-9:15	<i>Travel to Weavers Campground ~ 4 Minute Drive</i>
9:15-10:00 am	Tour Weavers Campground
10:00-10:15	<i>Travel to Christians Campground ~14 Minutes</i>
10:15-10:45 am	Self Guided Tour Christians Campground
10:45-11:15	<i>Travel to Holly Wood Hills ~ 24 Minutes</i>
11:15-1:30 pm	Tour, Lunch & Potential Speakers at Holly Wood Hills

BACKGROUND *checks*

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DO I NEED BACKGROUND CHECKS AT MY PARK?

Camping can be a fun and enriching way to enjoy time in the great outdoors and operating a successful campground is dependent on keeping things safe. You want every camper to have a great experience at your campground, which is why it's crucial to consider the safety and security of your guests and staff above all else. You're doing your best to protect your campers and your business. You have a well-trained staff. You have emergency procedures in place. But there may be a gap in your business plan! [READ FULL ARTICLE HERE.](#)

FOR GUEST SCREENING: [visit TenantAlert.com/hospitality](https://tenantalert.com/hospitality)

FOR EMPLOYEE SCREENING: [visit aGoodEmployee.com/Hospitality](https://agoodemployee.com/Hospitality)

- [Background Check Info Flyer](#)
- [Employee Background Checks Are Essential](#)
- [Should Campgrounds Require a Background Check?](#)
- [Why Should I Run a Background Check on a camper?](#)
- [About Background Checks \(info article\)](#)

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Members of the **Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners**, your association is working for **YOU!**

Saving on products and services from a variety of companies are available for you through **WACO's** affiliation with **Hospitality Connections**. See the participating providers below and click the links for more information or enrollment.

Here are direct links to learn and directly enroll in a few of the more popular companies and programs including the HC Member Savings Program.

[Click here for ALL participating companies!](#)

AT A GLANCE:



[Ferrellgas](#)

[Batteries Plus](#)

[Exxon](#)

[Discount Tire](#)

[Ace Hardware](#)

[UPS](#)

[Waste Focus](#)

[Staples](#)

[Alliant Business Insurance](#)

[Credit Card Processing](#)

We all need to send our guests emails, social ads, & use SMS marketing. Why not collect the data in one location that gives you reporting information, open stats and gives your campers the option to opt-out, keeping you in line with the CAN-SPAM act?

Constant Contact is available to our WACO members at a 25% discount!

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [Constant Contact Info Flyer](#)
- [Constant Contact Services at a Glance](#)
- [Info for learning about Constant Contact \(with link to webinar\)](#)
- [Info on Plan Offerings](#)
- [Return on Investment \(ROI\) with links to product tours, how to create an email, and how to grow your email list](#)



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Sign up today **FALL WORKSHOPS**

September 16-17, 2025: Northwoods Region
October 7-8, 2025: Central Wisconsin Region

Click here and register now!



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SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The WACO Board of Directors, with the assistance of the Young Professionals, is proud to announce the launch of our 2025 Scholarship Program!

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- ✓ **WORK EXPERIENCE**
- ✓ **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

PREPARING YOUR CAMPGROUND TO CARRY ON



TIPS FOR SUCCESSION PLANNING

Respectfully submitted by Phil Whitehead, Senior Vice President-Business Banking Sales Manager at Lake Ridge Bank, a WACO Sponsor

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Bank™

Owning a campground or RV park can be as much of a lifestyle as it is a way to make a living, so thinking about what happens down the road can sometimes go by the wayside. However, it's important to make decisions about what will happen to your campground when you're no longer involved...or the state will make those decisions for you.

Succession planning is the process by which you dictate how your assets will be handled upon your retirement or passing. A good succession plan addresses the 5 D's:

1. **Disaster:** contingency planning for emergencies
2. **Disability:** preparing with legal and financial measures for a scenario where the primary person is no longer able to manage operations
3. **Disagreement:** creating conflict resolution strategies for how decisions will be made
4. **Divorce:** protecting assets and business interests for both owners and heirs that may incorporate payment over time to avoid the need to sell
5. **Death:** ensuring your campground continues to succeed in your absence

CAMPGROUNDS HAVE UNIQUE NEEDS

Campgrounds and RV parks are not always treated as typical businesses by their owners. In cases where you live on the grounds or have passed ownership down through generations, there can be emotional ties and familial connections that may create unique circumstances around how succession planning is handled.

This blurring of the lines between what is deemed personal property and where the business begins adds complexity to the process. For instance, it might make sense to set up specific designations for your assets, creating a will or trust to specify transfer of personal assets while establishing an LLC or other legal business entity to protect the business side of your legacy.

In addition, much of the value of a campground or RV park is likely held as land ownership rather than ready cash. It may not feel like substantial wealth in operation, but when you consider the value of the entire campground versus simply what is in a checking account, the value can be significant.

CONSIDERATIONS

The first step in succession planning is to think about your goal. Many campgrounds function as a family business and may need to think about how to divide assets among multiple heirs. Early conversations with an experienced team of advisors can help avoid conflict and maintain family harmony.


P. 16 READ MORE



Not sure how to start assembling this team? A business lender who works with campgrounds from purchase through retirement/succession can often provide referrals to trusted partners with the experience to guide you through the succession planning process.

NEXT STEPS

In summary, we recommend the following steps:

- Will you retire? If so, what does that mean to you and what will it look like? Where will you live?
 - Would you prefer to sell the land or gift it to a chosen successor?
 - Who would you like to take over running the campground? Would you like to keep it in the family or isn't that important?
 - Are there multiple children and a surviving spouse that might be interested in carrying on operations? Does it make sense to divide duties or assets?
- In the end, this is a very personal process, and decisions should be made to match your vision of the future.
- ### GETTING THE PIECES IN PLACE
- The good news is you don't need to figure it all out yourself. An experienced succession planning professional can help you clarify your vision for the future, provide additional options for how things could look that you may not have considered, and offer a range of suggestions for how to reach your goals and make all the puzzle pieces fit together. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.
- 
- Assemble a team of professional advisors. Consider your business lender a resource for referrals.
 - Look into the benefits of separating personal and professional assets.
 - Establish a will or trust to avoid probate.
 - Create documents that designate a Power of Attorney for finances and healthcare decisions if needed.
 - Don't delay. The cost of not doing anything or waiting until a tragedy forces your hand could be catastrophic. If there is no plan in place, probate will take 3-7% of your estate's value and will delay any distribution 3-6 months or more. Your business could dissolve in the meantime and your heirs could be left with little value and strained relationships.
 - Write it down. Telling a loved one or trusted confidant your intentions doesn't count. There has to be legal documents in place to be binding.
 - Review every 5 years. No plan is set-it-and-forget-it. Circumstances change, and your succession plans should reflect those changes over time.

It's a good idea to create a team of advisors who can guide you through the process. We suggest gathering the following people and professionals:

- Family, if that makes sense in your situation
- Estate Planning Attorney who has experience with campgrounds
- Accountant/Bookkeeper and Tax Preparer
- Financial Advisor
- Insurance Agent

You've built something worth continuing. It's too important not to handle with care. You can remove some of the stress of succession by creating a clear plan that lets you control your campground's future.



OHI® Celebrates Big Wins in DC for Outdoor Hospitality Industry

OHI is celebrating three major advocacy wins achieved through its efforts in Washington, DC. With the passage of the “One Big Beautiful Bill” (HR 1), *several monumental victories were secured for the Outdoor Hospitality Industry*:

1. **Permanent Qualified Business Income (QBI) Deduction** – The 20% QBI deduction is now permanent, reducing taxable income and lowering tax rates for many small business owners. This change also allows for the immediate deduction of qualifying equipment and property purchases, promoting reinvestment and expansion.
2. **Permanent Estate Tax Exemption of \$15M (Individual) / \$30M (Couple)** – This higher exemption allows business owners to pass their businesses on to heirs without the heavy burden of estate taxes, provided the estate value remains below the new limits.
3. **Public Land Protection** – We successfully defeated a provision that would have sold off 2-3 million acres of public lands across 11 Western U.S. states. This provision’s defeat is a huge win, but we must remain vigilant, as it could be reintroduced in the next 12 months. Public lands are critical to our industry, as over 75% of privately-owned outdoor hospitality businesses are located in gateway communities that depend on tourism tied to these lands.

OHI’s advocacy efforts in DC and in states across the country are ongoing, and looking ahead, the national organization will continue pushing for the passage of the Credit Card Competition Act, the Online Accessibility Act, and other key federal priorities that will benefit our industry. In addition, OHI is tackling various tax and fee issues, along with Guest Ejection and Inherent Risk legislation in multiple states nationwide.

With your continued support and engagement, the OHI community and the Outdoor Hospitality Industry are stronger than ever, and we’re ready to secure our future success together!



Unlock a VIP Experience at OHCE® 2025 Without Spending a Dime

Imagine attending the Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo (OHCE®) in Louisville, KY (November 10-12, 2025) with full access to everything the industry’s leading event has to offer without spending a dime on registration. That’s the opportunity behind OHI’s Hosted Buyer Program, a unique experience designed exclusively for outdoor hospitality decision-makers. If you own, operate, or influence purchases for your campground, RV park, or glamping business, this program is one you won’t want to miss.

Think of it as a VIP pass with purpose. Hosted Buyers get complimentary registration to OHCE® (a \$599 value!) in exchange for scheduling and attending just six short, one-on-one appointments with selected OHCE® exhibitors.

These 1:1 meetings are tailored conversations with exhibitors you choose, focused on helping you find real solutions to your everyday business needs. And yes, you still get to enjoy all the education sessions, networking events, and Expo Hall experiences that OHCE® is known for.

What You Get as a Hosted Buyer:

- Free OHCE® registration (a \$599 value)
- 1:1 meetings with exhibitors you select
- Exclusive perks and incentives on the Expo Hall floor
- Dedicated networking opportunities
- Access to VIP areas and experiences

And there’s absolutely no obligation to buy on the spot. Just come ready to explore and connect. Appointments will be scheduled primarily for Tuesday morning, November 11, so you can fully enjoy the rest of the OHCE® schedule without overlap. Space is limited, and demand is high for this exclusive program. If you’re interested, we encourage you to apply soon!

[Click here to register now and select the Hosted Buyer option to get started.](#)

HIDDEN RISKS IN THE OUTDOORS: WHY CAMPGROUND OWNERS NEED MORE THAN JUST PROPERTY INSURANCE



As a campground owner, you're in the business of creating memorable outdoor experiences. Whether it's summer bonfires, scenic RV spots, or fun activities for families, your goal is to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for your guests and staff. But behind the scenes, there are less visible risks that could seriously impact your business if not properly managed.

While many campground owners prioritize property and liability insurance, today's business landscape demands broader protection. Three critical but often overlooked coverages are Cyber Liability, Employment Practices Liability (EPLI), and Crime Coverage. Here's why these coverages are especially relevant to campground operations.

1. Cyber Liability Insurance: Protecting Your Digital

Campfire: Campgrounds today rely heavily on technology—online reservations, credit card transactions, guest communications, and even Wi-Fi access for campers. But every digital connection is also a potential vulnerability.

Why It Matters:

- **Customer Data:** If your reservation system is hacked or guest data is stolen, you could be liable for damages and face steep fines.
- **Business Interruption:** A cyberattack can take your systems offline, halting reservations and operations.
- **Reputation Risk:** News of a breach spreads fast, and it could impact guest trust and future bookings.

Here are a few examples of what is often covered:

- Data breach response (including notification costs)
- Liabilities to a 3rd party
- Computer fraud, funds transfer fraud, social engineering (misdirected payment fraud)
- Crisis management & reputational harm
- System restoration
- Ransomware and extortion payments
- Business interruption and additional expenses
- Legal fees and regulatory fines

Even smaller campgrounds are targets—cybercriminals often go after businesses with fewer defenses in place. Cyber insurance helps you recover quickly and protects your bottom line.

2. Employment Practices Liability Insurance (EPLI): Safeguarding Your Staff Relationship

Campgrounds often employ seasonal workers, part-time staff, and teenagers during the busy months. While you do your best to create a respectful, safe workplace, employment-related claims can still happen.

Why It Matters:

- **Seasonal Staffing:** Rapid hiring and short training periods can lead to miscommunication or unintentional violations of employment law.
- **Allegations Can Be Costly:** Claims of discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination, or wage disputes can result in legal fees and settlements—even if the allegations are unfounded.
- **Changing Regulations:** Labor laws vary by state and change frequently, increasing the risk of accidental non-compliance.

What It Covers:

- Legal defense costs
- Settlements or judgments
- Claims related to hiring, firing, promotion, or workplace conduct
- 3rd Party Liability

EPLI is crucial in preventing a single employee complaint from turning into a financially devastating lawsuit.

- 3. 3. Crime Coverage: Protecting Against Internal and External Theft:** From cash transactions at camp stores to payroll and vendor payments, campgrounds handle a surprising amount of money. Unfortunately, that also opens the door to financial loss through theft, fraud, or dishonest employees.

Why It Matters:

- Cash Handling: Small retail shops or concession stands are particularly vulnerable to internal theft.
- Third-Party Fraud: Fake invoices, phishing scams, and dishonest vendors can target your operation.
- Employee Dishonesty: It's an uncomfortable reality, but even trusted staff may take advantage of gaps in oversight.

What It Covers:

- Employee theft or embezzlement
- Forgery or alteration of checks and documents
- Fraudulent electronic transfers
- Money orders and counterfeit currency
- Loss of money or securities on- or off-premises
- Computer and funds transfer fraud

Crime insurance fills the gap that General Liability or Property coverage often doesn't address.

The Bottom Line for Campground Owners
You already work hard to make your campground a haven for relaxation and fun. But running a successful business means protecting yourself from more than just fire or storm damage. Cyber threats, employment-related risks, and financial crime can strike when you least expect it—and often with greater financial consequences than physical damage.

Adding Cyber Liability, EPLI, and Crime Coverage to your commercial insurance portfolio is not about being fearful—it's about being prepared and responsible. Your guests, your employees, and your future depend on it. Be sure to discuss with your insurance agent as there are many different insuring agreements & levels of coverage which can be purchased, to ensure your policy responds as you'd expect it to.

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KEEPIN' IT LEGAL

Let's be honest. No one loves legal concerns, but we sure do love having access to a 27-year veteran like Mark Hazelbaker, our WACO Attorney, when those pesky legal troubles rear their head.

We've created an email specifically for your legal questions at office@wisconsincampgrounds.com. Give the WACO office a call first to vet your question, and Lori can provide direction on the next steps.

Introducing the 2026 Model Seasonal Agreement

Respectfully Submitted By Attorney Mark Hazelbaker & Anders Helquist, WACO Legal Counsel

We are pleased to send you the updated Season Agreement Form. The Form was updated in a few small ways to address experiences we have had in the past year. We are pleased to summarize the Form changes below.

WHY A MODEL SEASONAL AGREEMENT?

When we began working with Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners ("WACO"), we discovered that there was a great deal of variation in the quality of the Seasonal Agreements amongst Campgrounds. Many of them were called "leases." That is a terrible word to use as camping is not a landlord/tenant relationship. You do not want to evict your guests. There were also issues regarding getting paid. Campers need defined rules and, to the degree that we could protect ourselves from liability, we needed to include provisions that did that. Over the past 15 years, we have steadily defined and improved this Agreement. We are not saying that you must use it, but we hope that you are guided by it.

SPECIFIC CHANGES IN THE NEW AGREEMENT

1. **At Line 42**, we are changing the reference from "Camper Identification Section" to "Camper Information Section." If you look at the end of the Contract, you will see that we are recommending that every initial and renewal request for a Seasonal Agreement be accompanied by detailed information regarding the campers. This is not excessive. It is important to know who you have as guests, how the minor guests are related to the adult guests, the way to contact guests in an emergency, the insurance that applies to a guests'

vehicles and camping units, and information regarding the camping unit itself. Guests may feel that this is intrusive. Frankly, it is the minimum necessary information that you should gather to accept someone on your property.

2. **Line 162-163.** We have changed this Line to put a "blank" indicating the number of storage sheds and the size the sheds may be. Before, it simply said "one storage shed no larger than six feet." That appeared to be standard, but it has been pointed out that some people differ.
3. **Line 185.** We have added a reference to "Business Advertisements" as signs which may not be posted on campsites. We simply do not want to see campsites be a proliferation of signage seeking to sell various products.
4. **Lines 207 – 208.** We have added a reference that sets a maximum area for camping units at 400 square feet. That is, of course, a Campground option. Some camping units may be somewhat larger than that. Park Model units may not be larger than 400 square feet.
5. **Line 211, and 213-214.** Older Campers camping units. Many Campgrounds do not allow camping units to remain on the property once they are 15 years or older. This modification indicates that you can allow individual units to remain with written approval. It may be that some camping units that are only 10 years old are in worse condition than some that are 17+ years old. It is up to you to decide.
6. **Line 294 – Alcohol Issues.** Legislature substantially changed the rules about how alcohol can be consumed. Under the new rules, campers may consume alcohol on individual

campsites without limitation. However, consumption of alcohol by groups on non-campsite portions of the Campground may be subject to prohibition or regulation under the law. For that reason, we have recommended inserting this language that says, "Campers agree to and are responsible for following the alcohol beverage laws of Wisconsin."

Additional Consideration: Abandoned Units

We discussed whether to insert a provision in the Model Agreement which imposes a minimum fee of Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) on any camper who abandons a camping unit. Of course, if a camper has abandoned the unit, they are gone and they are probably not available to pay for it. The minimum fee would be collected as a lien against the camping unit when it is disposed of. We did not recommend that this year because we have not had a chance to discuss it with a broad cross-section of Campgrounds, but we think that many Campgrounds that have had experience with abandoned camping units will agree that they are expensive and need to be addressed.

We are recommending that Campgrounds consider inserting a provision under Paragraph 13, Paragraph H which would read "In the event a camping unit is abandoned by the Camper, the Campground shall have a lien against the camping unit in the amount of \$2,500.00 or such larger amount as the Campground may expend to remove the camping unit and restore the campsite."

That is a harsh provision yet the experience we have had helping Campgrounds deal with abandoned camping units has been that \$2,500.00 is low compared to what Campgrounds spend. We suggest you think seriously about inserting this provision in your Agreement. Ultimately, there was no broad consensus that it was appropriate to include it.

As always, we welcome your suggestions on how the Model Seasonal Agreement may be improved. Please send your comments and questions through the legal hotline as always - QR code is below or click here!

Thanks much!

Mark and Anders

DOWNLOAD NOW



Find changes highlighted between 2025 and 2026 Model Seasonal Agreements here!

Find the 2026 Model Seasonal Agreement here!

DOWNLOAD NOW



DOWNLOAD NOW



Download the memo in this article here!



Use our online form to send legal questions to Mark! *Our legal hotline is one of your best WACO member benefits!* By submitting your questions to the WACO office first, we are best able to track and report on Mark's answers to questions that may be an issue for many members and put that data in one central place for you to refer to anytime! ***Should you choose to NOT use the hotline and contact Mark Hazelbaker directly, you will incur costs to your campground.***



SCAN ME

WACO Web Stats & Social Media Trends



Top Posts in June 2025

Facebook/Instagram Insights - June

FB Lifetime Followers: 10,329 (+5 from May)

IG Lifetime Followers: 625 (+6 from May)

Last 90 Days (June) FB



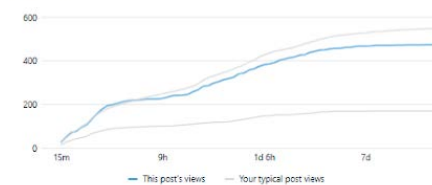
Overview

Views 474 Reach 360 Interactions 7 Link clicks --

This post received more views compared to your recent Facebook posts.

Views 474

Total Followers



This post received more interactions compared to your recent Facebook posts.

Interactions 7

Reactions 0 Comments 0 Shares 7 Saves 0

June '25 IG



Overview

Views 48 Reach 42 Interactions 6

This post received more views compared to your recent Instagram posts.

Views 48

Total Followers

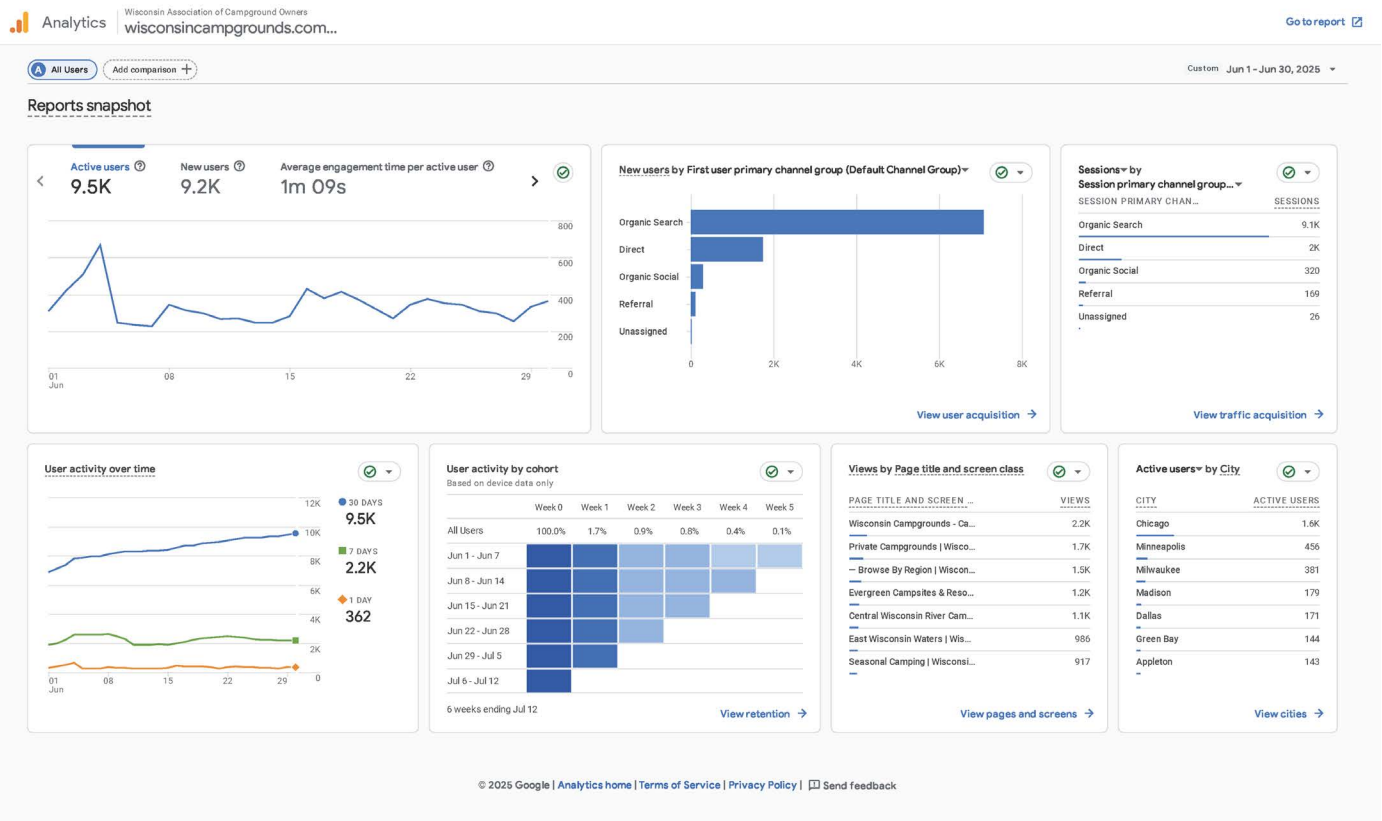


WACO Web Stats & Social Media Trends



June 2025

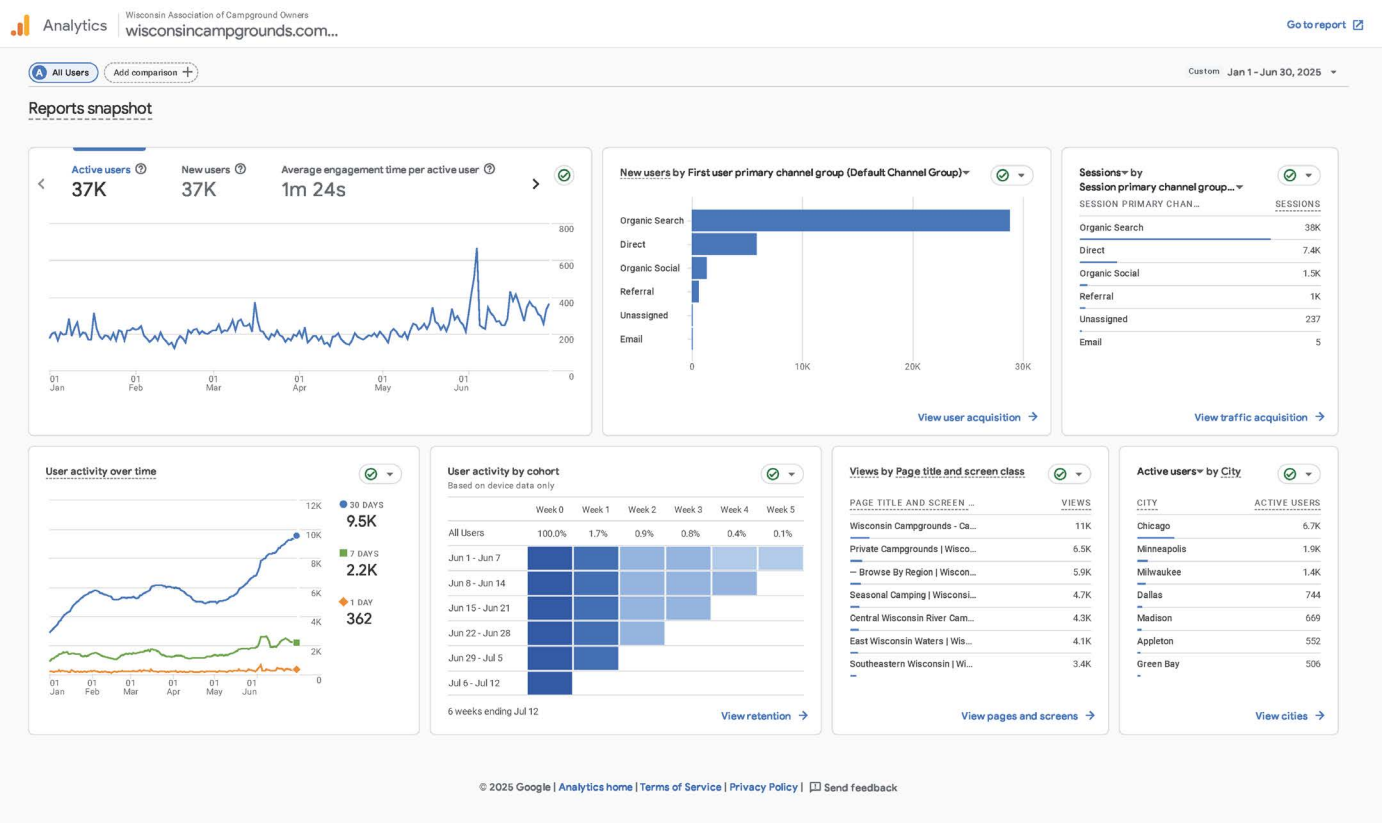
WEB MONTHLY SNAPSHOT

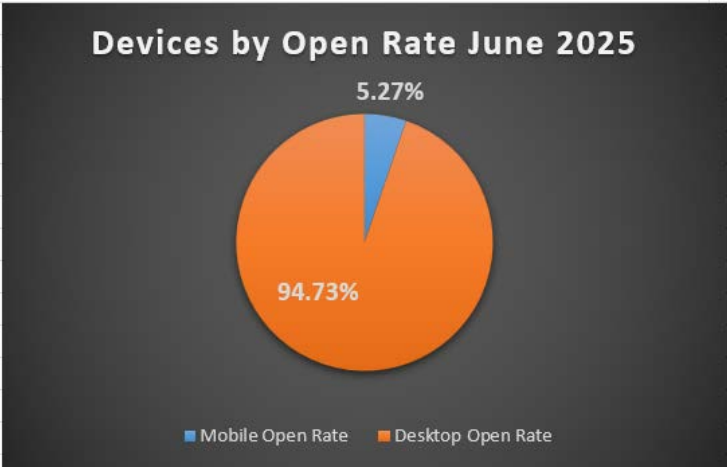
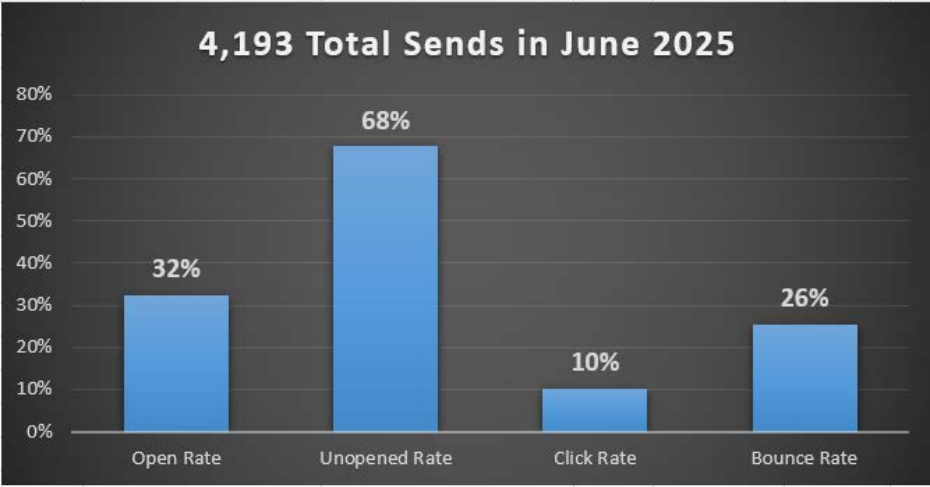


WACO Web Stats & Social Media Trends



Jan - June 2025 WEB YTD SNAPSHOT





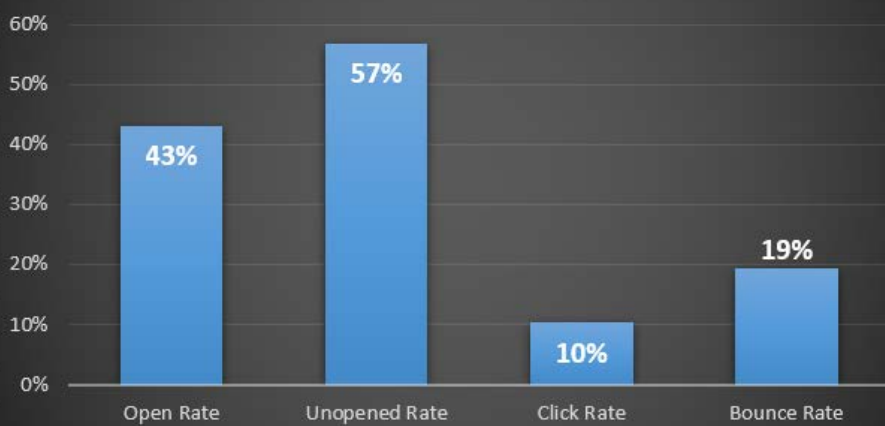
Top Emails by Open Rate for June 2025

Campaign Name	Sends	Opens	Open Rate	Mobile Open Rate	Desktop Open Rate	Clicks	Click Rate
DOR Letters - Please Read!	237	157	70.10%	6.10%	93.90%	6	2.70%
COE Campgrounds - WACO MEMBERS - Just over 5 months away	1879	625	42.30%	4.30%	95.70%	38	2.60%
2026 WACO Convention - Registration Now Open!	2077	575	40.50%	5.40%	94.60%	92	6.50%

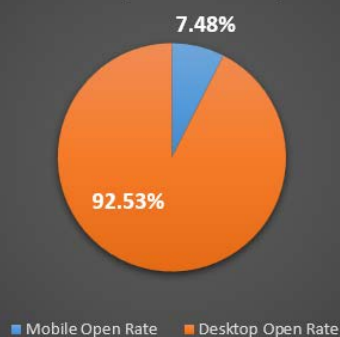
WACO WEB



5,652 Total Sends in April 2025

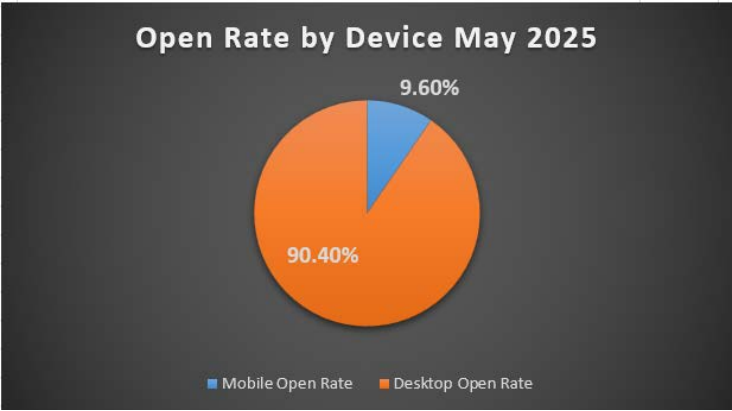
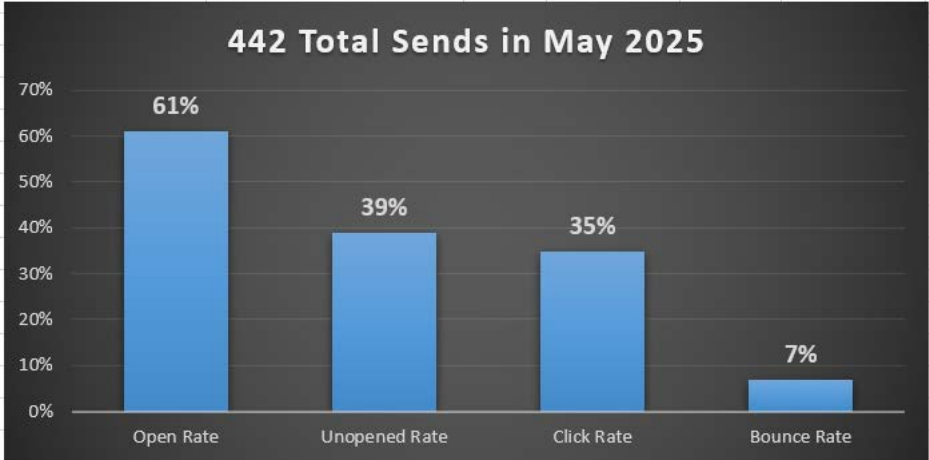


Open Rate by Device April 2025



Top Emails by Open Rate for April 2025

Campaign Name	Sends	Opens	Open Rate	Mobile Open Rate	Desktop Open Rate	Clicks	Click Rate
WACO Convention 2025 - Vendor Survey	141	103	77.40%	3.20%	96.80%	62	46.60%
WACO Convention 2025 - Campground Survey	137	100	75.80%	6.20%	93.80%	31	23.50%
WACO Members - New at convention in 2025! Part 2	258	185	75.80%	14.00%	86.00%	73	29.90%
Amusement Ride Registration & Renewal Reminder	236	156	70.00%	8.20%	91.80%	13	5.80%
March 2025 WACO Newsletter	237	150	66.70%	9.70%	90.30%	46	20.40%



Top Emails by Open Rate for May 2025

Campaign Name	Sends	Opens	Open Rate	Mobile Open Rate	Desktop Open Rate	Clicks	Click Rate
April 2025 WACO Newsletter	442	270	65.50%	9.60%	90.40%	94	22.80%

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

We mailed out physical copies of your renewal paperwork back in June and reminders in the last month – get your Membership, Fall Workshop & Convention registrations in TODAY!

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO COMPLETING YOUR RENEWALS AND REGISTRATIONS FOR 2026:

MOST IMPORTANT! - STEP ONE: Membership Renewal - Please check over the individual listing information we sent you in your physical mailing. If you don't have it, please reply here and we can email it to you. Please check this over and make any necessary changes. If you removed/added amenities or recreation, are adding new sites or rentals, etc. - or if you are doing these things in the offseason, be sure to update them now. Remember: What is listed here is what we use for your website listing AND printed in the 2026 campground directory. We can update your online listing anytime, but the printed directory listing for the upcoming year can only be changed once!

**CLICK HERE TO UPDATE YOUR LISTING
AND PAY ONLINE!**

STEP TWO: Advertising with WACO - Click below to see your exclusive advertising options as a WACO member. There are directory/online ads, brochure distribution, and more options! Remember: Your ads in the directory make your park stand out as campers flip through to plan their summer adventures, but they also help us keep this a FREE guide for campers! Our print advertising options can help you save money - there's power in group buying! The more parks that participate, the lower the price goes for everyone! With our brochure distribution program, you can save time and money by having our office distribute your materials at ten of the biggest camping and RV shows throughout WI, MN, and IL! Please download the form linked at the button here and mail/email it back to the WACO office.

**CLICK HERE TO PRINT YOUR
ADVERTISING FORM/SEND IT IN!**

STEP THREE: 2025 Fall Tours/Workshop Registration - Click below to register for the upcoming Fall Tours/Workshops. You and your employees can join us for just one or both! Remember: This is a great time to network with fellow owners while all the successes/struggles of the season are fresh in your mind!

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR FALL
WORKSHOPS**

STEP FOUR: 2026 WACO Convention & Trade Show - Click below to register for the 63rd Annual Convention & Trade Show. Be sure to complete this before the early bird deadline (1/31/26) to save money! Also - don't forget to book your hotel rooms as they always sell out, and boy, do they sell out FAST! *The event dates are March 11-15, 2026.*

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR
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MEMBER UPDATES

GBF Member Donations 2025



TOTALS AS OF

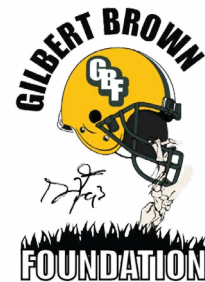
7/30/25



Campground	Total Funds Raised
Duck Creek	\$33,065
Grand Valley Campground	\$4,998
Emrick Lake Campground & Resort	\$4,940
Pineland Camping Park	\$4,650
Backyard Campground	\$2,400
River's Edge Campground (Birchwood)	\$1,860
Lakeside Fire Campground	\$1,500
Indian Trails Campground	\$850
Maple View Campground	\$767
Hixton/Alma Center KOA Holiday	\$650
Huckleberry Acres	\$650
River Bend RV Resort	\$650
Lake Arrowhead	\$500
Snug Harbor	\$500
Buffalo Lake Camping Resort	\$295
Sleepy Dragon Campground	\$200
Wilderness Campground	\$180
TOTAL FUNDS RAISED	\$58,655



SCAN HERE



DON'T FORGET!

In 2025, if you need to use the GBF raffle license, be sure to complete the JotForm below and Carla or Lori will connect with you on next steps! They will also follow up with the appropriate documentation to keep you out of jail if its determined that you are able to utilize the Raffle License!



BOARD of DIRECTORS

This dedicated group of members spend time and energy making decisions for your Association. If you have ideas, questions, or want to get more involved, reach out to one of them or the WACO office.



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