



GAE MAGNAFICI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 28th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Honorable Chairman Mursau and respected members of the Committee on Forestry, Parks, and Outdoor Recreation,

I am deeply grateful for this platform to discuss the merits of Assembly Bill 328. This bill proposes that campgrounds on private farms, possessing no more than one such site with a maximum of three campsites, be exempted from the licensure mandate through the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

Such campgrounds are predominantly managed by our dedicated local farmers. This not only supplements their income but also serves as a gateway for visitors to engage in educational farm stays. While the regulation continues to provide essential oversight for more expansive recreational domains, it assures adherence to safety protocols and standards.

The essence of this bill promotes economic growth in our rural sectors, especially those heavily reliant on agriculture. By mitigating bureaucratic challenges, small farms can explore an alternative revenue avenue. Concurrently, this bolsters tourism, immersing visitors in the authentic experiences of rural life and agricultural techniques.

The proposed bill strikes a harmonious chord between upholding public safety via regulations and championing local agriculture and economies. This provision would permit our farms to host up to three campsites, free from governmental intricacies, thus advancing rural economic upliftment without compromising public safety, and amplifying educational opportunities.

I respectfully urge each esteemed member here to endorse Assembly Bill 328. Let's empower our local farmers to diversify their income and champion tourism, without entangling them in undue governmental processes. I sincerely thank you for your attention and deliberation.



Bull Brook Keep – 100% Grass-fed Beef

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Clear Lake, WI 54005

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Oct. 3, 2023

To: Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation
RE: Assembly Bill 328

This letter is in strong support for the passage of Assembly Bill 328 because it meets the growing public demand for unique on-farm experiences, education, and products; and in so doing expands needed economic opportunities for farmers, local rural communities, and the entire State of Wisconsin.

My name is Sylvia Burgos Toftness. My husband Dave Toftness and I raise and direct-market grass-fed-grass-finished beef to customers within 100 miles of our farm. We're graze our small herd on 72 hilly acres located between the cities of Clear Lake and Amery, Wisconsin.

We are zoned agricultural, we operate in compliance with state regulations, and our beef is processed at a USDA-inspected processor in Siren, WI.

Every year, Dave and I welcome about 200 visitors for pasture walks, guided herb tours, and classes. Even many of our beef customers insist on coming out the farm to pick up their orders. They ask questions. They tell us about their food and health journeys, and they let us know how glad they are to walk the land and learn about our operation.

Less than 2 percent of the US population farms. Most Americans are three to five generations removed from farming. Interestingly, there is now a growing interest in knowing where food comes from and in meeting the farmers.

Dave and I see this on our farm every month of the year.

Many travel one to three hours to visit. Others have told us they'd like to stay overnight and enjoy two or three days of relaxation and classes on the farm, as well as have a base from which to shop in Amery which is just four miles away.

Size of the Wisconsin Overnight Travel Market

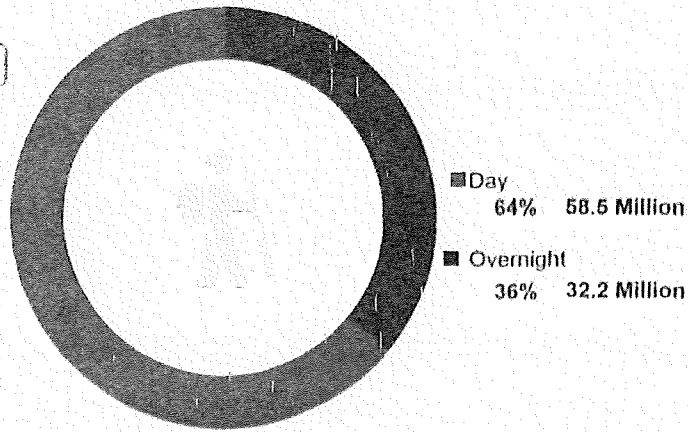
Base: 2020 Overnight Person-Trips

Total Size of Wisconsin 2020 Domestic Travel Market

Total Person-Trips

90.6 Million

-19.6% vs. last year

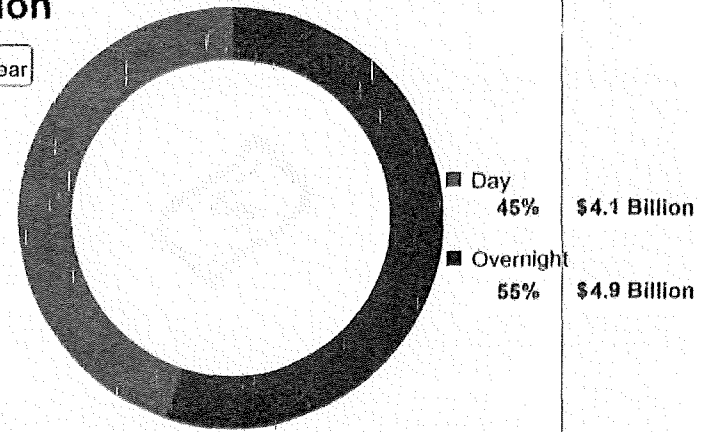


Total Expenditures for Wisconsin 2020 Domestic Travel Market

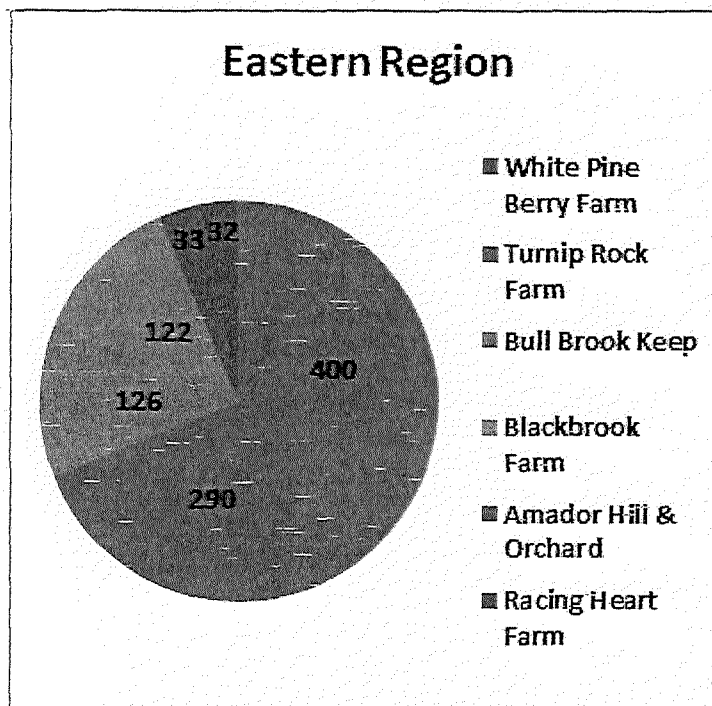
Total Spending

\$8.9 Billion

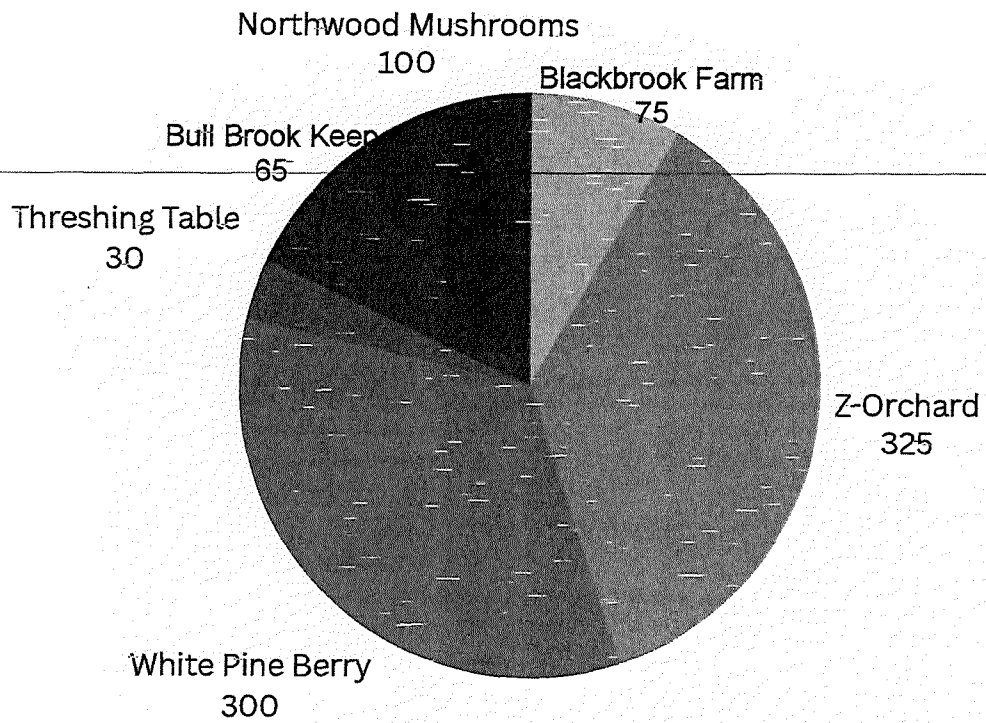
-24.5% vs. last year



**2021 Eat Local Farm Tour*
Visitors to Amery-Area Farms**



* Organized by an organization of a dozen Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN natural food coops



**2023 Amery-area Farm Tour -
July 15, 2023
(Partial totals)**



Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association

Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association

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www.wiagtourism.com

October 3, 2023

To the Attention of the Forestry, Parks, and Outdoor Recreation Committee Members:

The Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association supports AB 328 / SB 319 as written. An Act **to amend** 97.67 (1); and **to create** 97.67 (1k) of the statutes; **relating to:** exempting certain farm owners from campground licensing.

Experiencing Agricultural Tourism is about recognizing and celebrating the contributions of agriculture in our everyday lives.

In a study by National Geographic Traveler and the Travel Industry Association of America, 55.1 million US travelers are classified as “geo-tourists,” travelers who are interested in nature, culture, and heritage tourism.¹

Farmstays are well-suited to meet the needs of travelers looking for unique and genuine experiences. They offer people a way to reconnect with their agrarian roots—or to form new roots. The success of existing farmstays, as well as natural food co-ops, farmers’ markets, and “buy-local” campaigns indicate that the opportunity is here. Many people are hungry to establish a relationship with the land on which their food is grown and with the farmers who grow it.

Some countries see farmstays as vital to their economic and cultural vitality. In Italy, the government codified the term ‘agriturismo’ into law in 1985 to enable small farmers to host visitors on their land. Other countries have programs dedicated to supporting and developing farmstays. For Wisconsin farm families, a farmstay can help diversify farm income as well as provide a means for farmers to share their love of the land and farming with others. The goal to keep family farms solvent, keep farmland in production and to support the future generations on the farm.

Sincerely,

Sheila Everhart
Executive Director

¹Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) and National Geographic (2002) (www.tia.org/pubs/GeotourismPhaseFinal.PDF)



*Helping business
Do business*

September 29, 2023

To the Attention of the Forestry, Parks, and Outdoor Recreation Committee Members:

My name is Paul Shafer and I am the Executive Director of the Amery Economic Development Corporation (AEDC). The AEDC is an independent non-profit focusing on attraction, retention, and growth of all Amery Community businesses.

The City of Amery has its roots in agriculture. Currently, there are 32 organic small farms in the Amery area. These small farms offer their produce to area Farmers' Markets. In addition, many of them have CSA programs with both local customers and customers as far away as the Twin Cities. Over the last several years, the AEDC and Amery Community have worked with these small farms to learn how downtown Amery can benefit from visitors to the small farms and in turn how the farms can benefit from downtown Amery. On the City of Amery website home page there is a link, "Farms and More" to a listing of all 32 farms. This cross marketing is valuable to both the city businesses and the small farms.

In discussions with many of the owners of these farms, we learned that there is an educational component to what they offer to their visitors. They felt having the ability for educational farm stays would be a win-win for them and the area they serve.

The Mayor of Amery at the time was Paul Isakson. Mayor Isakson arranged for a meeting with Senator Rob Stafsholt to discuss the ideas of educational farm stays. We also had discussions with Representative Gae Magnafici. From those discussions, with our local representatives, we now have 2023 Assembly Bill 328.

Passage of Assembly Bill 328 would be a win-win for our local small farms, Amery businesses, and the visitors to our area. We love our lakes and trails. The tourism dollars they bring to Amery and Polk County are extremely important. Educational Farm Stays can be an economic engine for our community. An economic engine that offers an educational component that will enable visitors to learn about the agricultural roots from which our community grew.

I want to thank Senator Stafsholt and Representative Magnafici for their work in moving Assembly Bill 328 forward.

Regards,

Paul Shafer

Executive Director, Amery Economic Development Corporation

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paul Shafer'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'P' and 'S'.

Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation Committee Members,

As mayor of Amery, Wisconsin (2018-2022), Paul Shafer (Amery EDC) and I met with Sen. Rob Stafsholt to talk about educational farm stays at local farms in our area.

The meeting was a result of listing the local farms on our Amery website where we realized that there are 32 farms near us that do organic farming. They are members of CSAs that provide produce to a wide variety of people, a lot from the twin cities area. They also sell at local farmers markets. After interviewing them for any needs that they have, educational farm stays was their biggest request.

The allowance of a few campsites on their farm would allow visitors to see, feel, hear, and smell what farming is like. This would be a wonderful opportunity for urban and suburban children to learn about farming. This would also bring in much needed incremental income for the local farmers and would bring out-of-state monies to Amery, Polk County and the State of Wisconsin. We decided to contact our local State Representatives to push forward this idea and now we have AB 328.

This is a win-win for the farmers, state and local governments, and the most important of all, the recipient of the education. AB 328 is a very simple solution for all.

Thank you to Sen Stafsholt and Rep Magnifici for seeing the importance of this bill through the process.

Paul Isakson

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