

# **UW-Green Bay: To host Earth Day premiere of “The Natural World of the Bay,” a new feature documentary by Dan Larson**

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## **Film explores the bay of Green Bay through ecology, nutrients and human stories; premiere supports UW-Green Bay Scholarships and the Lower Fox River Watershed Monitoring Program**

Green Bay, Wis.— The University of Wisconsin–Green Bay will host the local premiere of “[The Natural World of the Bay](#),” a new feature-length documentary by filmmaker Dan Larson, on Earth Day, Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at 6 p.m. in the University Theatre on the UW–Green Bay campus.

Pre-event exhibits open at 5 p.m. so guests can explore community tables and talk with scientists, conservation groups and students advancing freshwater solutions across Northeast Wisconsin. The screening will be followed by a live conversation with the filmmaker and local experts featured in the film, after which guests are invited to explore student art focused on the estuary and meet representatives from local watershed organizations.

[Here are additional details about this event and others celebrating Earth Month.](#)

Proceeds from the evening will support [UW-Green Bay Scholarships](#) and the [Lower Fox River Watershed Monitoring Program \(LFRWMP\)](#), the University’s

two-decade-long, student-powered watershed science initiative. [Attendees are asked to register in advance.](#) College students and those under age 18 are free.

## **A journey across a living freshwater estuary**

The “Natural World of the Bay” takes audiences inside the world’s largest freshwater estuary to reveal the bay’s dynamic blend of birds, fish and plants, the nutrient cycles and invasive species that shape its health, and the people who influence its future. From interviews with biologists to community stewards, viewers will see stories of northern pike migration, the seasonal spectacle of migratory birds, and the complex role of nutrients that fuel productivity while also driving algal blooms and hypoxia (“dead zones”) in some seasons – challenges that state and regional partners are actively working to address in the Lower Fox River–Green Bay system.

“I’ve always been drawn to the bay—ships, fish, wild shoreline—but I knew there had to be more stories underneath,” said Dan Larson, director and producer of the documentary. “This film is about discovery. I set out to meet the people working on the bay, to travel its shores—from Green Bay to Oconto marshes, the Door Peninsula, and up to Escanaba— to invite viewers to go see these places for themselves. Some chapters follow nutrients and restoration, others track fish migrations and birds, and others listen to the scientists and researchers who know this water best. Right now is the time to ask, ‘what more can we do?’”

Larson will briefly introduce the film; composer Dan Weaver will offer a short note on the musical score; and, after the credits roll, the stage will open to the people who appeared in the film for a question-and-answer session.

## **Why UW–Green Bay, and why now?**

UW–Green Bay is a regional hub for water science, freshwater strategy and estuary research on the bay of Green Bay and the Great Lakes. The University offers a bachelor’s of science in [Water Science](#) with hands-on fieldwork in groundwater, surface water, runoff and erosion management, water treatment and aquatic ecology. The campus also leads the state’s effort to designate the [Green Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve \(NERR\)](#), a NOAA-supported research, education and stewardship platform focused the nation’s largest freshwater estuaries. In January 2024, NOAA accepted Wisconsin’s site nomination, with UW–Green Bay serving as the state lead and intended manager post-designation.

Through the Lower Fox River Watershed Monitoring Program, UW-Green Bay scientists and high school teams have gathered long-term data on nutrients and stream health to inform restoration in the Fox-Green Bay system, key context for the film's themes and the region's ongoing work to reduce phosphorus and sediment. The University's freshwater strategy is deeply collaborative, engaging partners such as NEW Water (Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District) on buoy-based real-time monitoring of water quality and hypoxia in the bay and leveraging Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin funding for student-engaged research on nutrient runoff, peatlands and more.

"UW-Green Bay had the strongest connection to this film," Larson noted. "From UW-Green Bay emeritus scientists like Bud Harris who helped frame the ecology of the bay, to collaborators at UW-Milwaukee's School of Freshwater Sciences like Val Klump who've advanced our understanding of dead zones, to Sea Grant partners and on-the-water monitoring with NEW Water, this is the right place to premiere a film about freshwater science, community and solutions."

## **Why action matters in 2026**

The bay of Green Bay is a remarkable, recovering freshwater system, and a resource on the fence. Decades of progress (from PCB cleanup to habitat restoration) meet ongoing nutrient and runoff pressures tied to both urban and agricultural sources. The state's Lower Fox River Basin TMDL targets 59% phosphorus and 55% sediment reductions to restore water clarity, curb nuisance algae and improve habitat – goals that require public understanding and participation. *The Natural World of the Bay* gives residents a way to see the science, meet the people doing the work and learn practical steps to help.

Following the local premiere, the film will be offered to PBS Wisconsin and will part of the Mulva Cultural Center's film series. On April 15, Larson and Emily Tyner, UW-Green Bay's Director of Freshwater Strategy, are slated to appear on Wisconsin Public Radio's "The Larry Meiller Show" to preview the project and invite statewide audiences to the Earth Day screening.

## **Event details**

- What: "The Natural World of the Bay" — Local Premiere + Community Conversation

- When: Earth Day, Wednesday, April 22, 2026
  - 5 p.m. open house with community tables
  - 6 p.m. screening (59 minutes) + conversation with filmmaker and experts
  - 7:30 p.m. explore estuary-focused student art and community tables with representatives from Green Bay watershed organizations
- Where: UW-Green Bay campus, University Theatre
- Admission: Attendees are asked to pay what they can to attend, with a suggested \$8 entry fee. [Register to attend.](#)
- Trailer: [The Natural World of the Bay trailer](#)
- Beneficiaries: UW-Green Bay Scholarships and the Lower Fox River Watershed Monitoring Program

#### About UW-Green Bay

The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay is a school of resilient problem solvers who dare to reach higher with the power of education that ignites growth and answers the biggest challenges. Serving 11,500 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students as well as 101,600 continuing education learners annually, UW-Green Bay offers 200 academic degrees, programs, and certificates. With campuses in Green Bay, Manitowoc, Sheboygan and a theatre in Marinette, the University's access mission welcomes all students who want to learn, from every corner of the world. Championing bold thinking since opening its doors in 1965, it is a university on the rise - Wisconsin's fastest-growing UW. For more information, visit [www.uwgb.edu](http://www.uwgb.edu).