

Dr. Kevin Fermanich, Professor Emeritus, Natural and Applied Sciences

Prior to his retirement in Fall 2022, Kevin was a Professor of Water Science, Geoscience, and Environmental Science at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and a soil and water resources specialist with Wisconsin Extension. In this capacity, he recently helped initiate the designation of National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in the bay of Green Bay and chaired the natural areas site selection committee for the NERR nomination.

Throughout his career, Kevin's research and grant funding was community focused and often involved partners from county, state, federal and tribal agencies and NGOs. For more than 20+ years, he co-led and collaborated with numerous students, scientists and stakeholders to study and address water quality, watershed management, soil health, phosphorus runoff treatment, Green Bay restoration, and agricultural management issues. Watershed monitoring data and modeling work by Kevin's lab team were key components to development of the nutrient and sediment reduction plan (TMDL) for the Lower Fox River. From 2010-2022, he was a Co-PI on several projects led by Professor Val Klump from the School of Freshwater Sciences at UW-Milwaukee, that developed models and management tools to link watershed inputs, hydrodynamics, and climate drivers to eutrophication and hypoxia responses in the bay of Green Bay. Kevin was also a lead Co-PI from 2015-2022, on a unique study, across five Great Lakes states, aimed at linking measures of soil health to edge-of-field runoff water quality.

In his role as a teacher for twenty-five years, Kevin particularly enjoyed providing students with field, lab and project-based learning experiences across an array of courses in geoscience, environmental science, water quality, GIS, tropical conservation in Costa Rica, and environmental science and policy. One graduate course project resulted in the first comprehensive carbon footprint estimate for UW-Green Bay and other student work, made the case for the establishment of the campus Sustainability Committee in 2006. In 2008, along with Prof. John Stoll, Kevin co-led the development of the Environmental Management and Business Institute (EMBI) and served as co-director during EMBI's inaugural year. Establishment of EMBI led to the development of the undergraduate Environmental Sustainability and Business Certificate, and helped position the university to lead sustainability efforts with businesses and other community enterprises. Kevin also co-led the development of the collaborative, online MS degree in Sustainable Management which provides opportunities for students near and far to become sustainability professionals.

Place-based, experiential learning is also at the core of the ongoing, school-based Lower Fox River Watershed Monitoring Program network which Kevin helped establish in 2003 and supported for many years. The program has engaged hundreds of students and dozens of teachers in real-world field work and science. Kevin is honored to have worked with the many outstanding program coordinators, teachers and supporting professionals in the program and is delighted to have contributed to securing funding through the Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin in 2021 to expand K-12 water science outreach at UW-Green Bay.

Kevin grew up on a small farm that straddles the watershed divide between the Embarrass River and the lower Wolf River, just north of New London, WI. It is here where his curiosity about the natural world and ideas of environmental stewardship began, and to some extent, are nurtured today. After receiving his undergraduate degree from UW-Stevens Point (1985) in Soil Science and Resource Management, Kevin's graduate studies (MS 1988, PhD 1995) and research appointments at the UW-Madison Soil Science Department focused on quantifying agrochemical fate and leaching through irrigated sandy soils to groundwater. His teaching career began as a lecturer in Earth and Environmental Sciences at UW-River Falls and his passion for community science, outreach and the Great Lakes was borne out of his time as a water quality specialist with Wisconsin Sea Grant from 1995-1998.

Kevin is married to Jill (also a UW Soils graduate and UWGB retiree). They have two children, Lydia, who helps landowners create conservation easements in MN, and Wesley, who helps develop solar electric infrastructure. Besides managing their farmland, a garden, and restoring a 120+ year old barn at his family-homeplace, Kevin enjoys active outdoor adventures and travel with Jill, family and friends. Campervan travel, cross country skiing and related activities are favorite pastimes.