



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 14, 2019

CONTACT: Chuck Wiesen
friends@thunderbayfriends.org
989-916-9990

The Show Will Go On! Thunder Bay International Film Festival Tickets on Sale Now

For the seventh year, Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary is bringing the world of cinema to northeast Michigan! From **January 23 through 27**, residents and travelers to northeast Michigan will be treated to some of the most impressive ocean and Great Lakes films from around the world. With support from local community partners led by the Friends of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary (FTBNMS), efforts have been underway to ensure that the Thunder Bay International Film Festival will open as scheduled. **Alpena Community College's Granum Theatre and adjacent facilities will serve as a contingency location if the federal government shutdown is not resolved by January 24.** If the federal government reopens prior to that date, the Film Festival will be held at the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center in Downtown Alpena.

"We are so fortunate to live in a community that has the wherewithal to ensure signature events like the Thunder Bay International Film Festival move forward under the current circumstances," said Chuck Wiesen, FTBNMS Board President. "Everyone the Friends has reached out to in our community, especially Alpena Community College, has enthusiastically stepped up to help relocate the film festival if the shutdown continues. Hopefully that will not be necessary, but the Friends board and all the volunteers, sponsors, students, and film fans are thankful that we have this option available," Wiesen added.

Film Festival tickets are now available online at thunderbayfriends.org. Tickets can also be purchased by calling **989-884-6200**, or at the door on a first-come, first-served basis during the festival. Please note that several film sessions have sold out in past years so you are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance. If driving a distance and to stay abreast of any scheduling or location changes, follow the Thunder Bay International Film Festival at thunderbayfriends.org.

More than 50 films from around the world, ranging in length from one minute to feature-length, will be shown throughout the five-day festival. Most of the films and events are scheduled at the **Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center in downtown Alpena**, with satellite events in **Harrisville** and **Rogers City**. Film screenings are complemented by social events, educational activities, and opportunities to meet filmmakers. A complete schedule is posted at thunderbayfriends.org.

"If you're looking for something educational, inspiring, and warm to do in January in northeast Michigan, this is it," said Film Festival Coordinator Stephanie Gandulla. "The volunteer committee that helps screen the films has done a fantastic job. We are amazed by the talented filmmakers and breadth of ocean and Great Lakes filmmaking that will be represented during the 2019 film festival," Gandulla added.

Features of the event include films from the International Ocean Film Festival, a long-running, global festival of ocean-themed films, largely unavailable to the general public.

Since 2017, Thunder Bay International Film Festival continues to be enthusiastically received by two other sanctuary cities, Harrisville and Rogers City. On Wednesday, January 23, the Alcona County Library in Harrisville will once again host a selection of films. That Thursday, January 24, Presque Isle County Library will join the fun and screen films at its historic Rogers City Theater. Each satellite event is only \$6 per person and includes a reception with opportunities to discuss films. "We are excited to work with community partners to make this a regional event and expand the festival to include other sanctuary cities," Rogers City community leader and FTBNMS board member Beach Hall said.

Topics of the film festival include Great Lakes issues, shark conservation, deep sea exploration, lighthouse history, surfing, and much more. "Whether you are looking to spend just a few hours with us, or the entire five days of the film festival, there really is something for everyone," Hall said. "The Friends of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary are thrilled to partner with communities, businesses, and schools throughout the region to make this film festival one-of-a-kind."

"Please join us in recognizing the Thunder Bay International Film Festival's generous sponsors and let them know how much you appreciate their support," Wiesen urged. Sponsors include: Chemical Bank; Michigan Film & Digital Media Office; Alpena Agency, Inc./Auto Owners Insurance; Alpena Community College; Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan; First Federal/mBank Community Foundation; Wenzel Bennett & Harris PC; Home Depot-Alpena; Alpena Area Convention & Visitors Bureau; Alpena Beverage Company; Alpena Community Credit Union; Besser Company; Terra Caloric, LLC/Well Connect; McDonald's of Alpena; The Nature Conservancy-Michigan; Thunder Bay Electric; and Thunder Bay Eye Care/Steve & Cathy Garant.

###