

# Wisconsin Women in Conservation: Kick offs summer at Kickapoo Valley Reserve with conservation gathering June 3

Posted on Friday, May 27, 2022

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La Farge, WI - Wisconsin Women in Conservation (WiWiC) is hosting a Climate Smart Soil Solutions gathering at Kickapoo Valley Reserve on June 3 from 1-5pm. Presented in partnership with the Savanna Institute, the event is FREE and open to all women farmers, landowners, and conservationists in Grant, Crawford, Vernon and surrounding counties. A snack is included. Registration is required, at [WiWiC.org](http://WiWiC.org) under Events.

Building healthy soil in an increasingly challenging environment is a high priority for women landowners in Wisconsin. This event will connect women landowners, farmers and conservationists with local conservation professionals, organizations and agencies. Experts in the fields of soil health, forestry and agriculture will explore climate-smart practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and mitigate the impacts of climate change, while building resilience to strengthen farm operations and rural properties. They will discuss best practices that help build soil, increase water storage, and improve aggregate stability and infiltration, and demonstrate what to look for to determine if soil is healthy, with hands-on soil testing exercises.

There will also be an opportunity to test water samples, so attendees are invited to bring small bottles of water from any source (tap water, livestock waterer, pond) and learn how to test for nitrates.

Presenting at the event will be Karyl Fritsche, conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Crawford County, who will explain cost-share and technical support programs available to landowners who want to implement conservation practices. Harriet Behar of Sweet Springs Farm in Gays

Mills is a WiWiC Conservation Coach who will talk about practices she has implemented on her 160-acre herb and honey operation, which includes 25 acres of flowering prairie. Britta Petersen, a farm bill biologist with Pheasants Forever, will discuss the value of providing habitat for wildlife and pollinators. Barbara Decre of the Savanna Institute will discuss the value of trees in farming and conservation systems.

“Bringing trees back to farming systems can offer a lot of benefits, including increased soil health, water quality, biodiversity habitat, and diversified sources of income. But agroforestry practices which are based on the intentional integration of trees in agricultural systems are also very effective tools of climate change mitigation and adaptation,” said Decre, Savanna Institute Wisconsin Community Agroforester. She is the first point of contact for farmers and landowners who want to work with Savanna Institute to bring practices like silvopasture, alley cropping and riparian forest buffers onto their land.

“In addition to being great at sequestering carbon and keeping it stored, trees also make farms more resilient to extreme weather events like floods and droughts. Deep rooted perennials can help water soak in while protecting the soil from erosion,” said Decre. The Savanna Institute works with farmers and scientists to lay the groundwork for widespread agroforestry adoption in the Midwest US. Inspired by the native savanna ecosystems that once covered much of this region, the Savanna Institute conducts research, education, and outreach to support the growth of diverse, perennial agroecosystems.

“All of us share the landscape with a great diversity of plants and critters so every conservation effort we can make to conserve, restore, and enhance what we have, no matter the size, is very important!” said Petersen, who works with private landowners of various sizes – both farmers and non-operators – to increase the amount of habitat on their properties.

“My farmstead is at the end of a dead end road, with numerous springs and natural reproduction of brook trout in our creek. Over the years, we have continually improved our landscape, which included planting thousands of trees and native shrubs for wildlife and erosion management, along with 25 acres of flowering prairie,” said Behar. We have worked on our stream to improve trout habitat and lessen erosion during flood events. Invasive species in our woods and meadows have been hand removed. It is very satisfying to know that you are taking care of your environment, since a healthy landscape is a beautiful and enriching place to call home. I look forward to helping other women identify their goals and implement practical conservation strategies.”

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve is an 8,600-acre tract of public land located between

the villages of La Farge and Ontario in southwestern Wisconsin with incredible biodiversity. Attendees are encouraged to take some time before or after the gathering to explore the Visitor Center and hiking trails.

[WiWiC](#) is a state-wide collaborative effort led by the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in partnership with Wisconsin Farmers Union, Renewing the Countryside and the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). A three-year multi-faceted project funded by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), WiWiC brings together Wisconsin women landowners to connect and learn about conservation practices, resources, and funding opportunities. In 2021, the program engaged 1,337 participants with 17 Zoom Events and 5 Field Days, as well as 2,300 on social media through Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest. For 2022, the group plans 12 Learning Circles, 6 on-farm field days, 4 Conservation Summer Camp Lunch Zooms, and various happy hours and virtual events.

Seven Regional Networks have been convened across the state through WiWiC, with the goal of providing women's peer-to-peer "Learning Circle" opportunities throughout the year in a variety of settings. These events are structured to provide ample networking time, as well as access to local conservation professionals and resources. Experienced women Conservation Coaches provide regional mentorship. WiWiC prioritizes and funds landowner site visits and custom Conservation Plans by local women conservation professionals.

Sign up for "The Buzz" monthly newsletter at [WiWiC.org](https://www.wiwic.org) to stay informed about 2022 events.