

Wisconsin Women in Conservation: Launches spring “Climate smart” events during Earth Month

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Wisconsin Women in Conservation (WiWiC) is celebrating Earth Month by kicking off their 2022 event schedule with six women-only in-person Spring Learning Circles. The series starts in the North Central region, with a morning gathering in Stevens Point on April 26 and another in New London on April 27, both from 9am til noon. The events are FREE and open to all women farmers, landowners, and conservationists. Lunch is included. Registration is required, at WiWiC.org under Events.

Kathy Turner, Area Resource Soil Scientist with the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service, will present at both meetings. The topic is “Climate Smart Soil Solutions.” Building healthy soil amidst an increasingly challenging environment remains a high priority for women landowners in Wisconsin. Turner will discuss climate-smart practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and mitigate the impacts of climate change, while building resilience to strengthen farm bottom-lines.

“We launched WiWiC in 2021 as a primarily on-line forum of events out of necessity because of COVID. But our intention was always to build in-person regional networks of women landowners and farmers interested in conservation. I am so excited to be fully implementing that in 2022 – with in person events starting in April and on-farm field days starting in August,” said Kirsten Slaughter, WiWiC Regional Coordinator for the North West and North Central cohorts. “Our gatherings

are such a wonderful way to connect and learn together. We will also be holding our popular virtual Conservation Summer Camp again this year which allows women across the state to access the content and connect.”

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.

“Everything we do in WiWiC is planned around the Learning Circle model, which is an outcomes-based design that takes into account research on how women learn and lead,” said Elena Byrne, WiWiC Regional Coordinator for the South West. “We’re certainly not the only ones doing it – you can see similar approaches with Lean In Circles for corporate training and the Brene Brown movement – but it’s powerfully effective for women in agriculture. Basically, there is more sharing with each other and less listening to an up-front speaker, though we’re still making lots of technical information available.”

The North Central event on April 26 in Stevens Point will be at Schmeckle Reserve, a 280-acre conservancy area on the campus of UW-Stevens Point, set aside to protect native communities of central Wisconsin. It is open to the public and serves as a unique gathering place for the community and university with 5 miles of trails and boardwalks, a 24-acre lake, and a large diversity of habitats that support numerous wildlife species. This event is intended to provide networking opportunities for women farmers, landowners and conservation professionals from Marathon, Portage, Shawano and surrounding counties.

The North East Event on April 27 in New London will be at Mosquito Hill Nature

Center, an environmental education and recreation facility operated by the Outagamie County Parks Department. The center is open year-round on 441 acres adjacent to the Wolf River with an 11,000 square-foot interpretive building that features natural history exhibits and hands-on displays along with multiple trails. This event is intended to provide networking opportunities for women landowners, farmers and conservation professionals from Waupaca, Outagamie, Brown and surrounding counties.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to do a free instant-result nitrate level test on well water or water from other sources. See Event registration for proper sample collection instructions.

[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.

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

Spring Conservation Gatherings: Climate Smart Soil Solutions

Tuesday, April 26, 9am-12pm, North Central Spring Gathering, Schmeckle Nature Reserve, Stevens Point

Wednesday, April 27, 9am to 12pm, North East Spring Gathering, Mosquito Hill Nature Center, New London

Tuesday, May 3, 10am -1pm, South East Spring Gathering, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, East Troy

Friday, May 6, 4-7pm, North West Spring Gathering, Farm Table Foundation, Amery

Friday, May 20, 1-5pm, West Central Spring Gathering, Kinestone, Fountain City

Friday, June 3, 1-5pm, South West Spring Gathering, Kickapoo Valley Reserve, La Farge

Virtual Conservation Summer Camp Lunch Series

Thursday, May 26, 12-1pm on Zoom, Creating Prairie Habitat: Native Grasses and Flowers

Thursday, June 23, 12-1pm on Zoom, Enhancing Pollinators: Bees, Butterflies and More!

Thursday, July 28, 12-1pm on Zoom, Managing Weeds and Pests



Thursday, August 25, 12-1pm on Zoom, Tools to Manage Your Land Legacy