



## NEWS RELEASE

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Photos – see attachments & sample captions at end of release  
More photos available upon request

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### **Wisconsin Women in Conservation: New Initiative Champions Collaborative Learning**

Blanchardville, WI - Building on Wisconsin's deep-rooted history of land stewardship, a new program connects women committed to or exploring conservation practices, from building soil health to increasing habitat diversity. Wisconsin Women in Conservation (WiWiC) brings together women landowners throughout the state to network with each other and with state and local agencies and experts.

A broad coalition of organizations dedicated to sustainable agriculture and conservation education, with support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is designing the project. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute as the lead is partnering with the Wisconsin Farmers Union, Renewing the Countryside, E Resources Group, and the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES).

This unique three-year initiative will collaboratively engage women landowners across the state through workshops, field days, farm tours, mentorships, a newsletter and learning opportunities. Workshops begin March and April on Zoom and registration is now open at [WiWiC.org](http://WiWiC.org).

Women landowners are a growing demographic. The 2017 Census recorded 38,509 female producers in Wisconsin, showing that women make up 35 percent of all producers in the state. "That's a 16 percent increase in the number of female producers from the 2012 census," shares Project Director Esther Shekinah of the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute. "Though many of these women would like to support sustainable agricultural practices that would help them leave their land for future generations in a state of oneness with nature and better soil health, their

lack of exposure to or knowledge about such agricultural practices impedes their acting on these impulses. This new Wisconsin Women in Conservation initiative aims to address that.”

A team of “boots in the field” Regional Coordinators will focus on eighteen counties across the state to bring women landowners together to network and share resources as well as connect with NRCS agency staff and programs. Women can also sign up to be mentored by “Conservation Coaches” - experienced women landowners. Women outside of the focus counties are also welcome to participate.

Wisconsin Women in Conservation will convene a first-ever task force to bring together Wisconsin organizations working with women landowners to share best practices and support each other’s work. Another goal will be showcasing the stories of women landowners in the media.

“Through this new partnership venture, we are very excited to extend our resources and further connect and support women landowners throughout Wisconsin,” explains Angela Biggs, NRCS Wisconsin State Conservationist. “Our peer-based learning circle models are successfully bringing women together in a space that promotes collaborative learning, relationship building and support. Through this effort, we aim to help women in their unique conservation goals, while strengthening the long-term environmental health of Wisconsin.”

“I’m looking forward to bringing together women in my region on an on-going basis for the next three years and be able to grow relationships based on a shared commitment to stewarding the land,” adds Kirsten Slaughter with the Wisconsin Farmers Union and a regional coordinator for the project. “Having a collaborative network to turn to with questions and for support celebrates that ability women have to learn through connecting.”

For more information on upcoming March events and to register for the statewide newsletter: [www.wiwic.org](http://www.wiwic.org). Wisconsin Women in Conservation is also on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest.

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Sample Captions:



Organic flower farmer Jennifer Nelson, of Humble Pie Farm in Plum City, WI, is one of five Regional Coordinators that will facilitate workshops, field days, and farm tours with Wisconsin

Women in Conservation. “I want to spread the word to women landowners in Wisconsin that they have conservation and organic production options!” says Nelson. “Our water supply, local food system, and community health depend on it.” Nelson will lead the North East WiWiC group focusing on Polk, Barron and Dunn Counties. Interested women can reach out to her directly at [jennifer@mosesorganic.org](mailto:jennifer@mosesorganic.org).



Grazing farmer Cherrie Nolden leads women on a tour of her farm in Dodgeville, where she raises sheep, goats, and Fjord horses.

