

Women, Land & Legacy



Partnerships Important to WLL

From our very creation in 2004, Women Land and Legacy (WLL) has valued the tremendous partnerships at the local and state level that create this opportunity for Iowa's agricultural women. The very first statewide committee that began work on the WLL vision included federal and state agencies, faith-based organizations, and non-profits. This model continues today and has expanded.

Each partner brings talents, skills, abilities, and unique assistance to WLL. Each WLL local team has a variety of partners based on local resources and needs. In addition to the groups listed above, most local teams include farm women from the WLL county or counties. By 2006, the state team learned that those teams which invited local farm women to join them were the most successful, so we began to encourage this practice. Additionally, WLL local teams have learned that it can be very effective to invite local government and representatives from local agricultural businesses such as banks, co-ops, local wineries and more.

From the WLL state team perspective, our current partners are USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA); Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) Division of Soil Conservation & Water Quality; People's Company and Heartland Co-op.

The diverse partnership provides unique vision, statewide assistance, financial opportunities, and skilled and talented presenters - to name a few. Because of the pandemic and WLL needs that were identified due to it, several partners across the state have recently provided valuable assistance. Finding a virtual platform that allows a diversity of participants is important but



challenging to find. ISU Extension and Outreach provided their Zoom account in several counties, which was the resource needed to host local WLL events. Additionally, Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) provided multiple Zoom accounts statewide and even Zoom training to WLL local teams.

In all things, partnerships are the key to achieving our goals and vision. It takes all of us working together, providing our unique offerings and ideas to deliver effective information and resources to Iowa's agricultural women. Thank you to all WLL partners at both the local and state level!!

The WLL state team has a useful resource for local teams that are considering adding partner members to their team. In 2014, the state team developed the **Toolbox One: Focus on the Local Team**. It helps guide the local team members through a process to determine skills needed on their team and an opportunity to brainstorm potential new members. Contact Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen for more details!

The value of Women Land and Legacy to some of Iowa's farm women is shared below:

- **“Women Land and Legacy is a model for success. It is empowering and confidence-building.”**
- **“Women, Land and Legacy is a great way to learn and listen.”**
- **“We, as women, have a big opportunity to affect change in a positive way. Women, Land and Legacy helps us prepare for these opportunities.”**



Interesting Statistics Regarding Women Farm Producers

As preparation takes place for the upcoming 2022 Census of Ag, conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), it is important to reflect on the results of the most recent census in 2017, as it relates to Women Land and Legacy (WLL).

The 2017 census showed a significant increase in women producers, compared to 2012. The number of women principal operators in Iowa increased from 7,108 in 2012 (which was a decrease from 2007) to 17,280 which makes up 20% of all principal operators in the state! Overall, women operators equaled 49,065 in 2017, up from 32,167 in 2012. This indicates that 34% of all farm operators in Iowa are women.

Why the increase? Speculation is that, as women see more successful women farmers and perceive more equality, they have the desire and motivation to follow their dreams and become farmers themselves. Life expectancy of women compared to men may also be a factor, as widows become farm decision-makers.

There were some changes made to the 2017 census to have a more accurate reflection of who actually serves as the principal operator, but the increase in women farm operators goes well beyond a mere calculation change. USDA expects this number to grow in the 2022 census and beyond.

USDA-NASS defines a principal operator as the person who runs the farm and makes day-to-day management decisions. However, many women don't label themselves as principal operators, although they are indeed involved in the day-to-day decision-making.

Nationwide, 78% of women said they were involved in daily decisions, but don't consider themselves the principal operator.

What about women landowners? While the USDA Census of Ag gathers statistics for farm operators, it does not document ownership. An Iowa State University Farm Survey in 2018 indicated that at least 47% of Iowa farms are owned by women, however. This follows long-term trends showing roughly half of the farmland in the state is owned by women. This fact is one that originally developed the idea that resulted in the creation of WLL!

As the number of women farm operators increases, the number of male farm operators is decreasing, according to the 2017 census. However, there are still many more male farmers than women. Nationwide, about 29% of all principal farm operators are women. In Iowa, that statistic is slightly lower as indicated (20%).

Women farm operators (and owners) are diverse and include women that ARE the farmer of the family, widows, adult children that have inherited the farm, women farming with family members or others, and young women beginning farmers. Women farm commodity crops as well as vegetable and fruit crops and raise livestock. They farm small and large-sized farms. As we consider the Census of Ag statistics as well as the diversity demonstrated by women farming in Iowa, the need for outreach efforts such as WLL becomes more apparent!

Learning Session Developed Based on Local Input

Earlier this year, WLL local teams began receiving inquiries about the carbon market and carbon credits. Women landowners and operators were interested in learning more as they consider diversifying their operations through carbon market opportunities.

As local teams reported this, it was determined that a statewide WLL Learning Session should be developed to meet this identified need. The carbon market is a bit of an unknown for many and has been referred to as “the wild west”. Work began to determine what such a session should include and to identify presenters in Iowa.

Soil health has been a hot topic for USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and partners for several years and many training sessions for staff and customers have taken place across the state, contributing to interest in the carbon market. Soil health and carbon sequestration will be the foundation of the statewide WLL Learning Session that is entitled “The Carbon Market: Soil Health, Carbon Sequestration and Economics.”

Schedule Presenters

Ruth McCabe, Conservation Agronomist with Heartland Co-op has researched the carbon market and provided numerous presentations on the subject in Iowa. McCabe, who is also a member of the WLL State Team, will present on carbon credits during the Carbon Market session, scheduled for June 15, 2021 (see Opportunities section in this newsletter).

Hillary Olson, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist will share information about soil health, carbon sequestration, conservation planning and conservation programs.

And, Kate Bussanmas, Assistant Director with IDALS-DSCWQ and WLL State Team member, will share state conservation programs related to soil health and carbon sequestration.

WLL local teams are beginning to promote the statewide virtual event. RSVPs are required and will be completed through your WLL local team. Please contact your local team if interested. See the map of WLL counties in this newsletter and find your local contact at www.womenlandandlegacy.org.

Nominate A Deserving Farmer for Conservation Woman of the Year

NRCS is seeking nominations for the 2021 Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year. Nomination forms will be accepted until June 11.

The award seeks to recognize a woman who has made significant contributions to conservation and the improvement of Iowa’s natural resources conservation through achievements on her own land, in her career, or voluntary efforts.

Last year’s recipient was Maggie McQuown, a farmer and landowner in Red Oak. She was nominated by the Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District.

All of the Iowa conservation of the year awards are available on the Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI) website at: <https://cdiowa.org/recognition/awards/>, including directions on where to send the form.



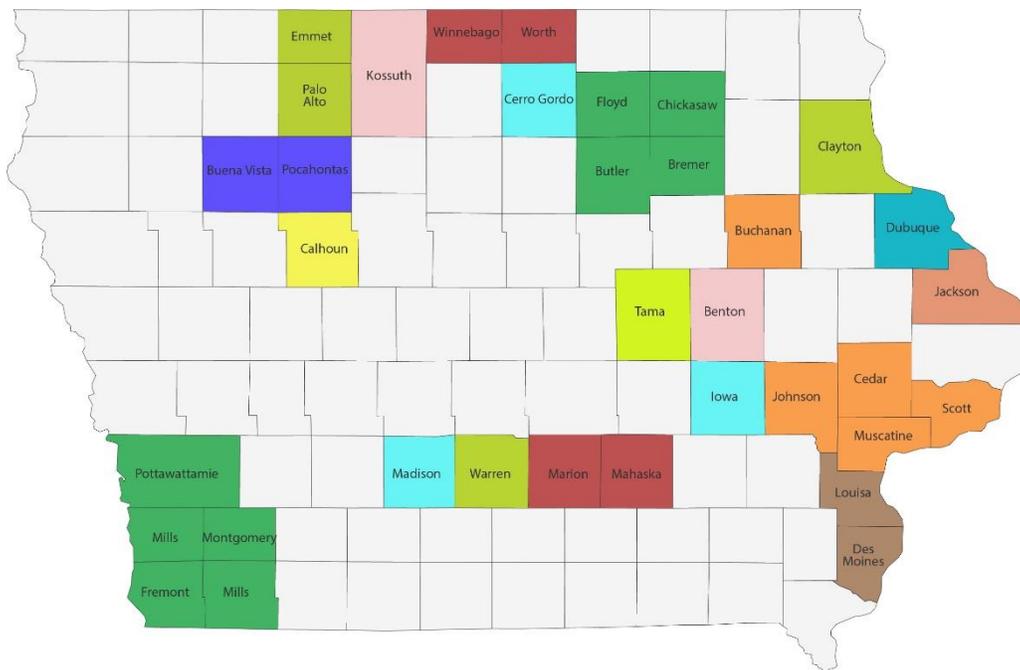
Figure 1. Maggie McQuown of rural Red Oak received the 2021 Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year award in 2020.

OPPORTUNITIES

A statewide virtual WLL Learning Session -**The Carbon Market: Soil Health, Carbon Sequestration and Economics** on June 15, 2021 from 2 – 4pm.

RSVPs required, contact your WLL local team.

Iowa Counties with WLL Teams



About Women, Land and Legacy

Women, Land & Legacy (WLL) is a USDA-sponsored education and outreach program impacting thousands of Iowa women connected to agriculture. Working at the county level and utilizing dialogue, learning sessions and networking opportunities, WLL empowers women and provides resources for decision-making that impacts women’s land, families and community.



Connect With Us

www.womenlandandlegacy.org
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facebook.com/womenlandandlegacy

Want to Start WLL in Your County?

Contact your local NRCS, FSA, SWCD or Extension Office. Or Contact Tanya Meyer Dideriksen, NRCS Outreach Coordinator, at tanya.meyer@usda.gov.