



SAMPLE INTRODUCTION FOR WOMEN'S LEARNING CIRCLE FACILITATORS

This introduction should be tailored for each circle. At a minimum, background information about the sponsor group, Women4theLand and WFAN should be included.

Note: Items in << XX >> are notes, and should not be read.

<<Thank everyone for attending and joining. Invite everyone to sit down, make sure name plates are visible. This is a good time to spread out resource professionals if they have not already. Co-facilitator should be across the room, to help gauge volume and clarity.>>

Before we get started, I want to tell you a little bit about the origins of this meeting, and an evolving movement in conservation here in Indiana.

This, as you know, is a Women's Conservation Learning Circle. This is the 4th year we have hosted these in Indiana and number # for this county. These currently are being sponsored and hosted by the SWCD with support from a group called Women4theLand. Women4theLand is a partnership of conservation and natural resource agencies and organizations working together to provide education and resources to Indiana women landowners, farmers and natural resource professionals. We promote the use of Women's Conservation Learning Circles as an effective way to help women learn about and implement conservation practices on the land. Our objective is to empower women to positively impact Indiana's land, food and quality of life through sustainable agriculture, wise conservation actions, and strong farm enterprises.

Where did this all start? These efforts were pioneered by Woman Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN) – a national organization based in Iowa. During their work with an increasing number of female landowners, they noticed that women were very interested in the idea of land stewardship, land health, the ability of the land to produce for multiple generations. A word that comes up frequently is "Legacy." They also noticed that there were very few women coming into NRCS/SWCD offices to take advantage of the people, or technical assistance, and programs, financial assistance that can help them with their land stewardship goals. Why the disparity? Well, as professionals, we've always been focused on reaching out to the farmer! And here in Indiana, that is frequently the grain farmer, or the livestock farmer. So we know we're not reaching farmland owners who do not farm their land. And, digging deeper, our outreach really has been focused venues where we are most likely to encounter men. In the last century, agriculture has been traditionally dominated by men.

But today more and more women are finding themselves in a leadership position on their land – a spouse, sibling, or business partner has passed; or they're helping aging parents; and we just see more women wanting to become farmers. Many operate specialty crop farms that have not been our traditional customers. Some own or co-own land they lease, others are the grain farmer, leasing land from others. We know women have ALWAYS had opinions about agriculture, and often have a lot of say in how the farm is run too. And in some cases, they

have completely stayed out of the family farm business, but life events have put them back square in the middle. Some are comfortable reading the financial books, ordering the seed, scheduling the sprayer. But for others, this is a whole new realm, and they are not even sure where to start. And when they find themselves in that position, they need resources. And the best resource is often others in the same situation. Plus, we have many resource professionals here to assist with technical guidance. So the point of these meetings is to get all of us together to TALK ABOUT FARMING – think of it like our coffee shop. We want you to know who the local staff are that can help you, but we also want to connect you to each other.

In order for you to get to know each other, we want to know about you and your connection to the farm or farming. Let us know a little about you, your land and or operation, where you are in the agriculture journey, and what brought you here today. I am going to start off with one of our resource professionals here today, and then we will go around the room.

<<< Facilitator and co-facilitator should take notes as need during intros to tie back to the later discussions. When the introductions come back to lead say something along the lines of “Well I introduced you to the program, but I didn’t introduce you to me!” And then I do my own personal introduction.>>

<< Setting the code of conduct for the day:>> As our discussion opens up today, we ask that everyone respect the varying types of agriculture and opinions in the room. We operate under the principle that all agriculture has its place, and all agriculture can improve. There is something each of us can do better on our land or operation. “Everyone has something to learn and everyone has something to teach.”

<<After introductions, time for housekeeping – where are the bathrooms, introduce them to the agenda (with contact info on the back), alphabet soup, etc. Then a break. >>