

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS  
Final Progress Report

Grantee Name: Center for Rural Affairs	
Project Title: Women Caring for the Land	
Agreement Number: 69-3A75-10-131	
Project Director: Kathie Starkweather	
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Period Covered by Report: January 2014 (extension approved)	
Project End Date: January 31, 2014	

**A) Summarize the work performed:**

Project partners Center for Rural Affairs and Women in Food and Ag Network held regularly scheduled team conference calls with partnering organizations (Kansas Rural Center, Land Stewardship Project and Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services) throughout the project. These calls were key to ensuring that each partner was moving forward with the project and also helped to problem solve any issues that arose.

Participation by women landowners was very good and NRCS played a key role in these convenings averaging approximately 12 women at each convening for a total of 300 women participating in learning circles and farm tours throughout the program.

The curriculum was finalized and made available in each state and can be found here: <http://wfan.org/curriculum-manual/>

**B) Describe significant results, accomplishments, and lessons learned. Compare actual accomplishments to the project goals in your proposal:**

Participation by women landowners was very good across all of our states. It should be noted that state NRCS staff played a key role in our learning circles, providing information about conservation and NRCS conservation programs. NRCS also played a key role in each state participating in the program in that they were the first to test out the curriculum and make recommendations on any changes needed. The final curriculum is available on Women Food and Ag Network's web pages, web address shown above.

Our learning circles averaged right around 12 women at each for a total of 300 women participating in learning circles and farm tours.

We administered pre and post tests to circle participants to measure learning that occurred and any changes in attitude that resulted.

Pre and post tests offered using the following questions:

As a result of this meeting, how likely are you to (a scale was provided from 1-5):

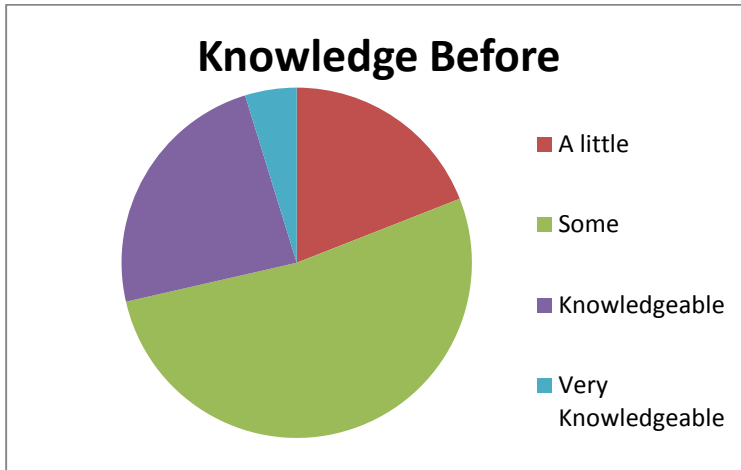
- Look more carefully at the soil on my land
- Get information on how to do a conservation practice
- Visit with your farmer about a topic from the meeting
- Ask your farmer to take or try a new action
- Ask your farmer to help you improve conservation
- Visit with other women about improving conservation
- Contact one of the offices or staff I met today
- Search for more information on the Internet

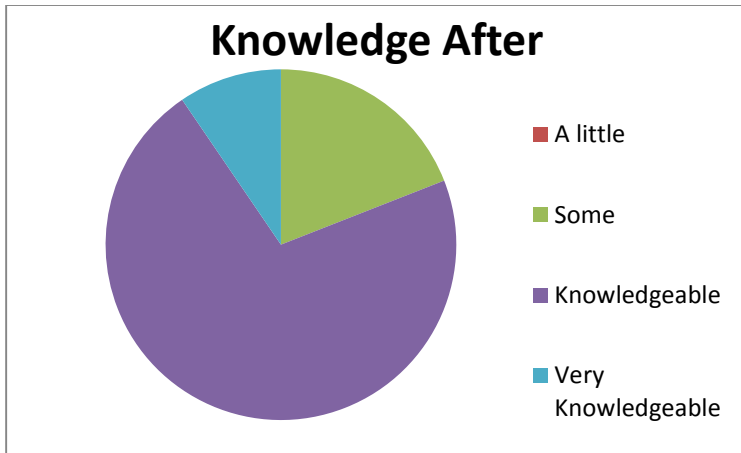
Please put an X on the line below to show your confidence level for overseeing conservation on your land before this meeting.

Please put an O on the line below to show your confidence level for overseeing conservation on your land after this meeting.

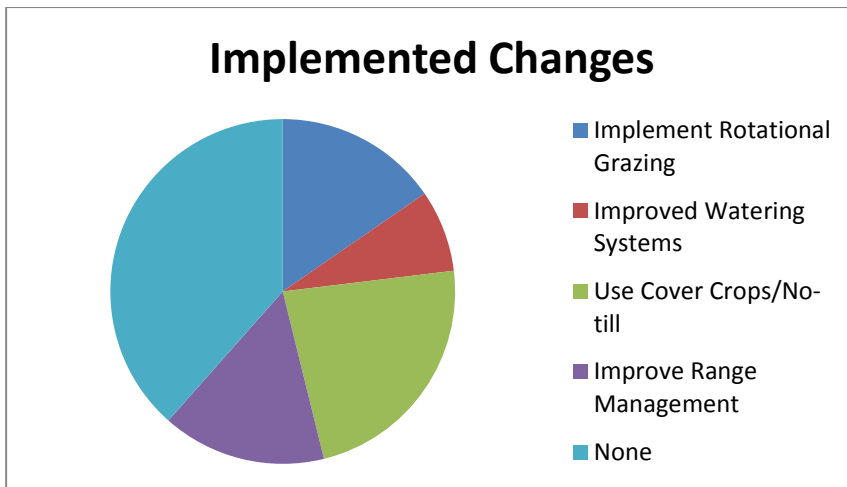
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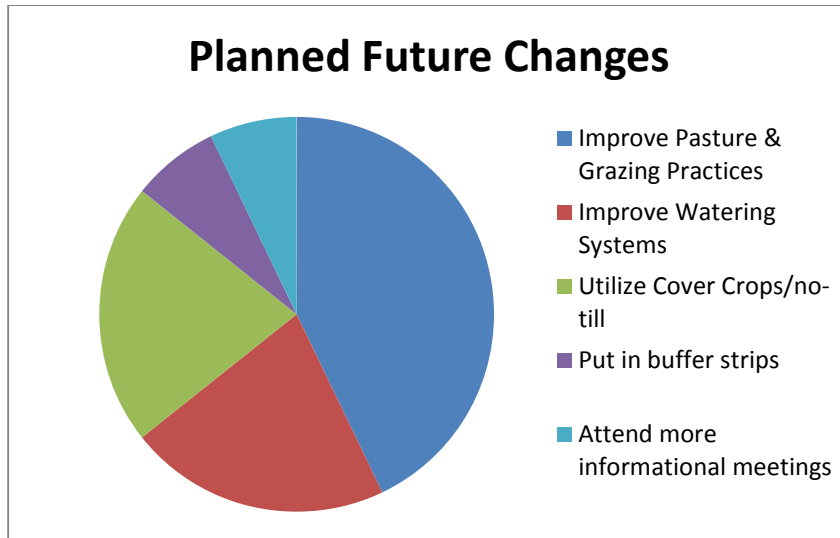
As can be seen by the pre and post test charts below, the learning circles were effective vehicles for learning:





What was even more impressive than the knowledge/confidence level changes measured by the pre and post tests were the changes implemented or planned (measured by follow-up phone calls with learning circle participants):





#### Lessons Learned.

- 1) **Farm tour of conservation practices is critically important.** Get them out on the farm and in the field to see it and talk about it. Women liked the women only format and the small learning circles format, but seeing actual conservation practices on the ground was the most effective through farm tours or demonstrations (i.e., rainfall simulator).
- 2) **Women only format is very helpful.** Women listed “other women” as one of the top resources available at the learning circles and tours.
- 3) **Male presenters or attendees tend to start dominating discussions.** Observations of male attendees and presenters on either a farm tour or in-house circle meetings indicated that this happened consistently. Strong facilitation skills were required. The lesson learned is to try to secure women presenters wherever possible or manage the domination of discussion.
- 4) **Provide transportation.** Our best attended meetings were those where we provided the vans or a bus from a central easy to access location for the tour part of the meeting. Older women especially will not attend if directions appear complicated.