



# MICHIGAN

EXPERIENCING CONSERVATION IN SUPPLY CHAINS

2023 CONSERVATION IN ACTION TOUR • MICHIGAN, JULY 10 - 11



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HAVE MADE THIS TOUR—AND ALL OUR  
PROGRAMMING—POSSIBLE.

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PLEASE SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE  
THROUGHOUT THE TOUR AND TAG US!

Find us on 

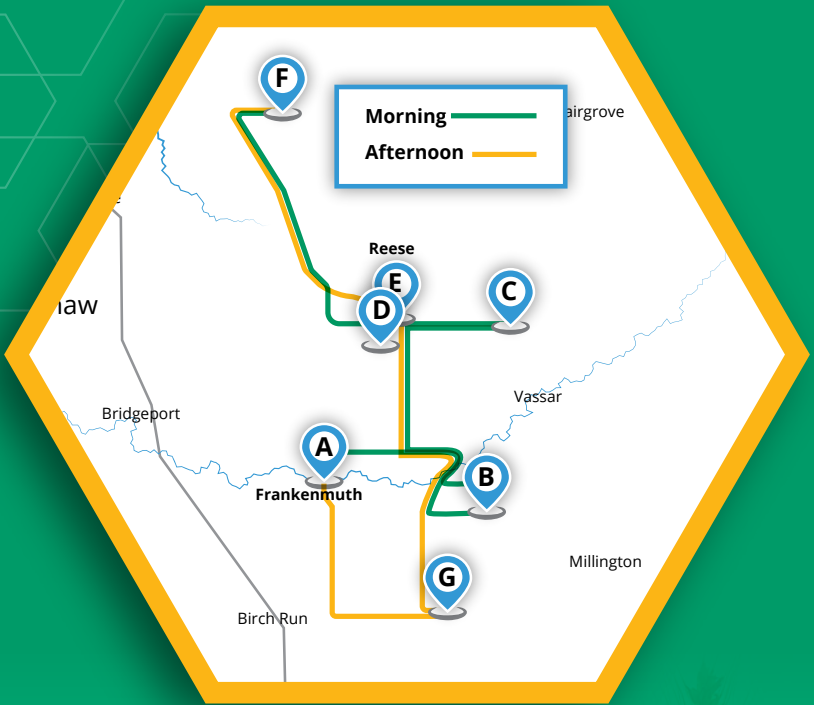
Conservation.Technology.Information.Center



@ctic\_tweet

#CTICTour #BestTourEver

# ROUTE MAP



## BAVARIAN INN LODGE

1 Covered Bridge La., Frankenmuth MI



## THISTLE DEW DAIRY

7916 Swaffer Rd., Vassar, MI



## ZWERK AND SONS FARMS

7647 Sanilac Rd, Vassar, MI



## SAGINAW VALLEY RESEARCH & EXTENSION CENTER

3775 S Reese Rd, Frankenmuth, MI



## STAR OF THE WEST RICHVILLE

3269 S Van Buren Rd, Reese, MI



## EVERBEST ORGANICS

136 E Munger Rd, Munger, MI



## ODIN'S OWL

8679 Birch Run Rd, Millington, MI



# AGENDA



## MONDAY, JULY 10

5:00 PM First-Timer Conservation in Action Tour  
Attendee/Early Career Professional Social  
Frankenmuth Brewery

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6:00 PM CTIC 16th Annual Conservation in Action  
Tour Social  
Frankenmuth Brewery

- Mary Fales, Midwest Division Soil Health and Nutrients Program Director, The Nature Conservancy: *Master of Ceremonies*
  - Adam Herges, Sustainability Agronomist Advisor, The Mosaic Company: *Welcome*
  - Hon. Mary Anne Ackerman, Mayor, Frankenmuth, MI: *Welcome*
  - Honorable U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow: *Video Greetings*
  - Trent Wimmer, Key Account Sustainability Lead, Syngenta: *Keynote*
- 

8:00 PM Social ends

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## TUESDAY, JULY 11

7:00 AM Registration  
Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth

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8:00 AM Buses depart

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8:15 AM Thistle Dew Dairy, Vassar, MI

- Nathan Rupprecht, Thistle Dew Dairy: *Cover Crops*
  - Drew Rupprecht, Thistle Dew Dairy: *Robotic Milkers*
  - Joel Leland, The Nature Conservancy & Trent Wimmer, Syngenta: *Dairy Feed in Focus Program*
- 

10:00 AM Zwerk & Sons Farms, Vassar, MI

- Ben Wickerham, The Nature Conservancy, Lisa Woodke, Star of the West & Dennis Pennington, Michigan State University: *Sustainable Wheat Production*
- Jeff Schluckbier, Zwerk & Sons Farms: Sugar Beets: *Equipment and Conservation Challenges*
- Terry Stiles, CISCO: *Cover Crops*

# AGENDA CONT'D

## TUESDAY, JULY 11

11:40 AM

### LUNCH AND PROGRAM

Saginaw Valley Research Center, Frankenmuth, MI

- Nathan Fields, VP of Production and Sustainability, National Corn Growers Association, *Master of Ceremonies*
- Mary Kelpinski, CEO, Michigan Pork Producers Association: *Welcome*
- Tom Wall, Director of Wetland Restoration, Assessment, and Protection Division, US EPA Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds

### Farmers for Soil Health Panel Discussion

*Moderator:* Ben West, Executive Director, Farmers for Soil Health

- Greg Pilchak, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Laurie Isley, United Soybean Board
- Nathan Fields, National Corn Growers Association

1:00 PM

Star of the West Richville, Reese, MI

- Jacob Hecht, Star of the West: *Plant tour*
- Nick Thompson and Adam Herges, The Mosaic Company: *Intersection of fertilizer technology and conservation*

2:45 PM

Everbest Organics, Munger, MI

- Jim and Matt Sattleberg, Sattleberg Farms & Julia Peebles, Ducks Unlimited: *Land Stewardship*
- Brandon Dirker, Everbest Organics: *Plant Tour*
- *Ice Cream Social*

5:00 PM

### DINNER AND PROGRAM

Odin's Owl, Millington, MI

CTIC Welcome & Cocktail Hour:  
Ryan Heiniger, CTIC, Executive Director

- Heidi Peterson, VP—Agricultural Research and Conservation, Sand County Foundation, *Master of Ceremonies*
- Angela Biggs, Deputy Chief, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: *A Conservation Moment*
- Robert Loggins, Bush Brothers & Co.: *3 Keys to Authentic Corporate Conservation*

### CTIC RECOGNITION PROGRAM

- *Friend of CTIC* • *CTIC Hall of Fame*

8:00 PM

Buses depart for Bavarian Inn Lodge

# WELCOME

## WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR OF THE CTIC BOARD

As Chair of the CTIC Board, it is very exciting to participate in the 16th annual CTIC Conservation in Action Tour and thank you for joining the program. At last year's tour, we celebrated CTIC's 40th Anniversary, looking back at decades of growth and innovation. From its start explaining no-till practices to dubious farmers, CTIC has expanded to become a go-to source for information on a wide range of conservation farming topics aimed at improving soil health, water quality, air quality and—always—the economic sustainability of farmers.

CTIC's audiences have also grown. Today, we connect not just with farmers, but up and down the supply chain as well as up and down the road that leads from farm fields to the halls of government. This year's Conservation in Action Tour program is a perfect illustration of CTIC's broader scope. We are bringing together more than 100 people linked by a shared interest in agricultural conservation to explore how sustainability is managed throughout the supply chain.

Here in southeastern Michigan, we are close to our most exciting projects, from diversified-rotation farms in the Saginaw Bay watershed—a key focus of our next field-level water quality protection program—to the watersheds profiled from space by the Operational Tillage Information System (OpTIS).

As CTIC strides into its fifth decade, we are delighted to share this journey with you. The Board and I thank the CTIC staff and the members of the tour planning committee for all their hard work in creating the program we are here to enjoy.



*Mark White*  
Syngenta | CTIC Board Chair

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## WELCOME FROM THE CTIC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the CTIC staff, it is a pleasure to welcome you to our 16th annual CTIC Conservation in Action Tour. It is a special treat to hold this year's tour in Michigan, a state that is home to dedicated farmers, diverse crops, and creative food processors.

Michigan's soils and landscapes are almost as varied as its crops. Because it is surrounded on three sides by Great Lakes and dotted across the map by smaller lakes, Michigan's farmers and food companies are on the front lines of the effort to improve input management and protect water quality. On this tour, we'll see how producers and processors team up to improve the environment and create opportunities to sustain agriculture in the state.

We have a special opportunity this year to explore the supply chain because so many of Michigan's crops are purchased, processed, packaged, and sold on their way to our plates as beans, berries, spuds, sugar, and more. We are grateful to our hosts that will share their insights during the tour, as well as to the sponsors whose generosity makes the tour possible.

We are glad you're part of our tour. Enjoy the scenery (and the food). Ask plenty of questions on the tour. And be sure to talk to some of the people you meet on the bus, at the meals, and along the walks around the farms and facilities we will visit. The magic of CTIC is in the people and the wealth of perspective and ideas we bring together at events like these.

*Thank you for being here, and for making this  
the Best Tour Ever.*



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*Ryan Heiniger*  
Executive Director, CTIC



# MONDAY NIGHT SOCIAL

Join us at Frankenmuth Brewery for our Monday night social. Founded in 1862, Frankenmuth Brewery is Michigan's oldest microbrewery, with rotating taps that feature 21 draft beers and a creative, craft-centric menu.

Don't miss the chance to catch up with old friends and contacts, and to meet new ones, at a mixer that is sure to once again be a highlight of farm tour season.

## SPEAKERS:



*Hon. Mary Anne Ackerman*  
MAYOR OF FRANKENMUTH, MI

Born on a family farm in Reese, Michigan, Mary Anne Ackerman grew up weeding beans and sugar beets and helping with the family business. Drawn to education through a teenage job teaching the children of migrant workers, she earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and Teaching from Michigan State University and a master's in Educational Leadership and Administration from Saginaw Valley State University, where she now serves as Director of the Gerstacker Fellowship School Leadership Program. Mayor Ackerman was a teacher, principal, and Frankenmuth Superintendent of Schools, as well as a member of Frankenmuth's City Council. She was elected Mayor in 2018.



*Hon. Sen. Debbie Stabenow*  
UNITED STATES SENATE

Deborah Ann Stabenow was the first woman elected to represent Michigan in the U.S. Senate when she won her seat in 2000. Born and raised in small-town Michigan, Sen. Stabenow serves as chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. An advocate for farmers and small business, she wrote the Bring Jobs Home Act and Make It In America Act. She is also deeply committed to protecting the Great Lakes. Before her election to the Senate, Sen. Stabenow was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Michigan's 8th congressional district from 1997 to 2001. Previously she served on the Ingham County Board of Commissioners and in the Michigan State Legislature.

# MONDAY NIGHT SOCIAL CONT'D

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER: .....



*Trent Wimmer*  
**SYNGENTA**

Trent Wimmer is a Key Account Sustainability Lead for Syngenta supporting their Sustainable and Responsible Business team. He helps farmers, ag retailers, and value chain partners across North America tell their story through farm and field-level data. His responsibilities include industry engagement, project management, and business development; as well as supporting customers through implementation of Syngenta's digital Cropwise platform and tools.

Trent has worked at Syngenta for more than 20 years. He has held roles in R&D, sales, and marketing across North America before joining the Sustainability team in 2017. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Biology and Chemistry from Nebraska Wesleyan University and a Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Denver.

Trent and his wife Lindsey live in Eden Prairie, MN with their children, Grant (18), Bennett (15), and Austyn (12). The Wimmers spend their free time attending their kids' activities, travelling, being outdoors, and volunteering with their foundation.



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## TUESDAY TOUR STOPS

# THISTLE DEW DAIRY VASSAR, MI

Thistle Dew Jerseys began in 1977, when Nathan Rupprecht bought his first Jersey. In its short history, Thistle Dew was home to several Homebred Excellents, two Hall of Fame Production Records, numerous All-Michigans, and even a Homebred All-American. In 2000, Nathan was honored with the Michigan Jersey Cattle Club Master Breeder Award.

In April 2004, the family sold its milking herd and focused on showing purebred cattle from deep pedigreed cow families. In 2016, Drew and Beth returned to the farm, bringing a milking herd back to the barn and operating as Thistle Dew Dairy. Today's herd is 2/3 Jersey with cow families purchased from Bridon Farms, Rich Valley Jerseys, Willow Creek Farms, Hometown Jerseys, JVB RedHot Jerseys, and more. The rest of the herd is made up of Holsteins descended from families including the F Family at Tri-Kobel and the Roxys.





TUESDAY TOUR STOPS

## ZWERK & SONS FARMS VASSAR, MI



Zwerk and Sons Farms was established in the 1940s by Benjamin and Geraldine Zwerk, cash crop farmers specializing in corn, wheat, beans, and sugar beets, and—until the 1970s—hogs. Their traditions have been carried on for four generations. Today, Zwerk & Sons Farms managed approximately 7,500 acres in Tuscola and Sanilac counties in central Michigan, and is known for its sugar beets, three varieties of dry beans, corn, soybeans, wheat, and commercial hemp.

The family farm also services the local agricultural and industrial hemp market by providing commercial hemp drying and processing services, producing CBD crude oil, CBD distillate, and THC-free distillate. Zwerk and Sons also operates a small trucking company with tankers, flatbeds, stepdecks, and grain and dump trailers.

# SAGINAW VALLEY RESEARCH & EXTENSION CENTER (SVREC) FRANKENMUTH, MI



The Saginaw Valley Research & Extension Center (SVREC) opened in 2009, replacing the Saginaw Valley Bean and Beet Research Farm that was located south of Saginaw. Center staff grow and study dry beans, sugar beets, and rotational crops including wheat, corn, and soybeans on 250 acres of farmland.



Faculty and staff share the results of their research on crop management, new variety trials, and pest and weed management with minimal environmental impact.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



*Tom Wall*  
**DIRECTOR OF WETLAND  
RESTORATION**  
*ASSESSMENT, AND PROTECTION DIVISION,  
US EPA Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds*

Tom Wall oversees EPA's programs for monitoring surface water quality, including national surveys; supporting states as they decide which waters don't meet their water quality standards and develop restoration strategies (Total Maximum Daily Loads, or TMDLs) or other restoration plans; the Clean Water Act section 319 grant program, which provides \$187 million per year to states and tribes as they work with partners to protect and restore waters affected by nonpoint sources of pollution; and efforts to make water quality information available to the public, including an app, "How's My Waterway," that is one of EPA's most visited web sites. His division also supports EPA's role as co-chair of the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force, which works to improve water quality in the Mississippi River Basin and the Gulf.



# STAR OF THE WEST RICHVILLE REESE, MI



The Star of the West Milling Company was founded more than 150 years ago by Mattias Hubinger in Frankenmuth, Michigan, a family with a 200-year history of milling in Germany before emigrating to the United States.



Star of the West Milling Company aspires to remain an independent company constantly striving to add value for customers to enhance its status as a premier agribusiness in the Great Lakes region, expanding its market share through acquisitions or growth in existing or related business areas, which include grain milling, farm supply, grain and bean processing, and marketing.



## TUESDAY TOUR STOPS

# EVERBEST ORGANICS MUNGER, MI

In 2003, Michigan farmers Jim and Donna Sattelberg saw the future of farming in organics and established Everbest Organics. Everbest contracts with more than 100 farmers from Michigan to California to grow certified organic and non-GMO grain and bean crops that are cleaned, processed, and packaged for shipment to domestic and international markets. In 2018, Star of the West added organic grains and beans to its portfolio by acquiring Everbest Organics.

The Sattelbergs also operate 2,500-acre Bay Shore Farms with their sons Ben and Matt, the fifth generation on the family farm.





## SPECIAL RECOGNITION

On Tuesday evening, July 11, we'll thank a few very special people. First, we are very grateful to the farmers and site staffs of all the places we visited on the tour, as well as the presenters who shared their insights.

A very special thank-you goes out to our 2023 Conservation in Action Tour Planning Committee, led by Adam Herges of The Mosaic Company and Mary Fales of The Nature Conservancy.

We're also especially appreciative of Lisa Woodke of Star of the West. Over the past year or more, Lisa has been a guide, advisor, fixer, and friend, making it possible for us to host this informative and relevant tour here in Michigan.

The 2023 Conservation in Action Tour marks the second year of our CTIC Hall of Fame. Last year, we launched the program by honoring founding member Dick Foell, long-time advisor Dan Towery, and former executive director Karen Scanlon for their dedication and achievement as champions of conservation agriculture and CTIC. On Tuesday evening, you'll meet this year's newest inductee to the CTIC Hall of Fame.



## TUESDAY DINNER

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER



*Angela Biggs*

DEPUTY CHIEF

*USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service*

In 20 years with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Angela Biggs has served in Iowa, Illinois, Vermont, and Wisconsin in roles ranging from Soil Conservationist to State Conservationist and Program Manager. Prior to being named Deputy Chief, she served as NRCS State Conservationist for Wisconsin and Acting Deputy Chief for Management and Strategy, and also leads the service's Hiring Strategy Task Force.

Angela is a founding member and former President of the Professional Organization of Women in Natural Resources Conservation Service, served as Membership Chair of the Soil and Water Conservation Society's Iowa Chapter, and is a lifetime member and former President of the Asian Pacific Islander Organization. Angela earned a BA in Biology from the University of Guam.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER



*Robert Loggins*

DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*Bush Brothers & Co.*

Robert Loggins has worked across Bush in several assignments over his 11-year career. Prior to assuming his current role as Director of External Affairs and Community Engagement, he most recently worked in Human Resources, leading Bush's recruiting efforts. Prior to his 6 years in HR, Robert served as a Brand Marketer and Innovation Manager for 5 years. Educationally, he has a Marketing degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and an MBA from the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Personally, Robert and his wife, Maria, have 3 kids and 2 dogs. They are also caretakers for Maria's 91-year-old grandfather. Outside of work and family, Robert is a career mentor, gardener, workout warrior, and community volunteer.





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# CTIC PROJECTS

CTIC is engaged in a wide range of projects, carrying out its mission to bring people together around the subject of conservation agriculture, provide information on sustainable agriculture systems and climate-smart approaches to farming, and champion conservation to a wide range of stakeholders.

*Here are some of the latest highlights.*

CTIC is a partner in [Farmers for Soil Health](#) in South Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin along with the South Dakota Soybean Association, Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, and Wisconsin Soybean Association. CTIC will be helping the American Soybean Association, United Soybean Board, National Corn Growers Association, National Pork Board, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and other stakeholders scale up cover crop adoption by 2030. We are engaged in technology transfer and communications in those three key states, and are hiring Soil Health Specialists to help cover crops take root in the region. Learn more about the project at this year's tour luncheon.



Once again, CTIC has teamed up with USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program and the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) to gather perspectives on cover crops from farmers across the country. More than 700 growers filled out the team's seventh survey, and the **2022-2023 Cover Crop Survey Report** is currently in production. Previous SARE/CTIC/ASTA Cover Crop Survey Reports have been cited in research around the world and presented in Congressional testimony. [Click here](#) to see previous reports, and join us August 8 at 1:00 pm Eastern for a data-packed webinar launching the new report.



# CTIC PROJECTS

Building on the tremendous success of the **Phosphorus Load Reduction Stimulus (PLUS-UP)** program in the Western Lake Erie Basin, CTIC is working with The Mosaic Company, Star of the West, and Heidelberg University on a Michigan pilot program to explore the potential for a water quality load reduction market in Michigan wheat production systems. In the original PLUS-UP program in Ohio and Indiana, we prevented nearly 500 pounds of DRP from entering the Lake Erie watershed and developed a scalable process for funding, distributing, and validating stimulus payments that put effective conservation practices on the ground. Learn more about PLUS-UP [here](#), and stay tuned as the Michigan Wheat PLUS-UP Pilot Project builds momentum—and a body of data on nutrient and sediment load reductions associated with soil conservation practices—in the coming year. And talk to us if you're a Michigan farmer interested in participating!

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's **National Aquatic Resources Survey (NARS)** is a massive undertaking that tracks the state of water quality in America's rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and tidelands. The resulting reports provide Congress with a report card on the nation's water quality, and can help guide research, policy, and conservation decisions. CTIC, with the help of St. Mary's University of Minnesota and EPA, **developed a dynamic online story map** to explain NARS—and the role of farmers in protecting and improving water quality—to a wide range of audiences.

Algorithm upgrades, new data and an informative webinar have honed the **Operational Tillage Information System (OpTIS)**, which analyzes publicly available data to track tillage practices and cover crop adoption across millions of acres of cropland and rangeland from 2005 through 2021. The recent [Unlocking Water Quality Data with OpTIS](#) webinar features CTIC's Dave Gustafson along with Soren Rundquist of Regrow Ag, Shamitha Keerthi of The Nature Conservancy, Amita Mumrukar of The Ohio State University, and Mark Wilson of American Farmland Trust delving into OpTIS upgrades and innovative uses of the data. [View the webinar here](#), explore the versatile (and fun!) [OpTIS visualization tool](#) free on the CTIC website, and watch as the data expand to cover all 48 continuous states in the coming months.







# CTIC PROJECTS

CTIC is among more than 30 partners in the [Diverse Corn Belt \(DCB\)](#) Project, a multi-disciplinary effort funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture through an Agriculture and Food Research Initiative competitive grant. The goal is to explore the opportunities and challenges of diversifying Midwest agriculture at the farm, market, and landscape levels. Research—ranging from focus groups and farmer surveys to interviews with food processors and retailers, modeling environmental and economic outcomes, gathering extensive on-farm data, and developing educational modules—is now underway, and CTIC is helping spread the word as a key player in the communications effort.



In addition to exercising our expertise at spreading messages outward, CTIC is also looking inward as we develop our new **Strategic Plan**. Underwritten by generous funding from the Walton Family Foundation and facilitated by The Support Center for Nonprofit Management, the strategic planning process is tapping into perspectives of board members, partners, staff, friends, and colleagues to assess the conservation agriculture landscape and chart a course to CTIC's future within it.







# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR: *Mark White*  
Syngenta America, Inc.

VICE CHAIR: *Adam Herges*  
The Mosaic Company

TREASURER: *Nathan Fields*  
National Corn Growers  
Association

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Nutrien

*Heidi Peterson*  
Sand County Foundation

*Peyton Harper*  
The Fertilizer Institute

*Mary Fales*  
The Nature Conservancy

## EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

*Ryan Heiniger*  
Conservation Technology  
Information Center

*Jeremy Peters*  
National Association of  
Conservation Districts





# CTIC STAFF



*Ryan Heiniger*  
Executive Director

*Dave Gustafson*  
Project Director



*Crystal Hatfield*  
Operations Director

*Callie North*  
Communications  
and Events Director



*Sue Tull*  
Project Director

*Steve Werblow*  
Communications





# JOIN CTIC!

The Conservation Technology Information Center brings together people from across agriculture and other stakeholder communities like no other organization, creating a focal point for advancing agricultural systems that are both environmentally and economically sustainable.

As a member of CTIC, you'll be connected to a world of people from government, academia, the nonprofit sector, agribusiness, the agriculture and food supply chain, and the farm who are deeply committed to practical, productive conservation farming systems.

Spot the trends, get hands-on in our projects and programs, learn from many of the top experts on conservation farming, stay connected, and keep the conversation going. Join us and help CTIC continue more than four decades as a trusted source of information on conservation farming practices.

A suite of membership levels provides opportunities for individuals, organizations, and companies to get involved. **Click here** to download more details on how you can join CTIC.

*DON'T FORGET TO SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE  
THROUGHOUT THE TOUR AND TAG US!*



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