Conservation Technology Information Center

CTIC connects, champions and provides information on sustainable agricultural systems and technologies that are productive, profitable and preserve natural resources.

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February 10, 2026

Viridis View – A Conservation Benchmarking Collaborative
Request for Proposals (RFP)

Conservation in agricultural systems is at a pivotal moment, with a multi-year decline in commodity prices and stressed ag economy, generational turnover in farm operations, federal funding pauses, contract cancellations and new program rollouts. Recent years have seen major changes in the scale and sources of new public and private investments to promote adoption of regenerative practices, including a $700 million announcement from USDA in December 2025. However, the most recent USDA AgCensus (published in early 2024) suggests that the rate of adoption of one key practice, cover crops, has actually slowed in recent years. Despite the significant public and private investments into promoting and incentivizing the adoption of conservation practices, stakeholders are currently limited to the AgCensus (released only once every five years) to learn whether the investments have moved the needle at the landscape level. Collectively, the nation invests billions of dollars in such practices, but are we making sufficient progress in the key geographies at the rate needed to accomplish visionary goals?

CTIC is seeking partners to join a new initiative, Viridis View – A Conservation Benchmarking Collaborative, to help answer this critical question. Issuance of this RFP reflects our conviction that there is an urgent need for greater collaboration across the entire conservation and ag tech community, including data scientists now using machine learning and other advanced methods to process remote sensing data in order track conservation trends in near real-time. We seek aligned organizations and institutions that are willing to share their spatial datasets to the public at free or substantially reduced prices and work pre-competitively to increase accuracy of these data. Based on past efforts, we believe there is a compelling business case for companies to partner with us as a way to generate leads for their offerings.

In order to help answer questions on this unique opportunity, CTIC will host a virtual (Zoom) information session at 11 a.m. CST on Tuesday, February 17, as well as daily office hours (11-2 CST) for any potential partners wishing to learn more. We thank you in advance for your interest in helping with this critically important effort.

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Background

Promoting and tracking the adoption of a key conservation practice (reduced tillage) is the premise upon which CTIC was founded in 1982. Ever since this time, CTIC has been a widely-trusted source for Crop Residue Management (CRM) tillage survey data, collected nationally through the year 2004 with funding from USDA NRCS. In subsequent years, CTIC began to engage in what is now a 16-year partnership with The Nature Conservancy and Regrow (including Regrow's predecessors, Applied GeoSolutions and Dagan) on the development of the Operational Tillage Information System (OpTIS), which uses publicly available remote sensing data to track the adoption of conservation tillage and cover crops.[1]

With the new CTIC strategic plan, we are inviting industry and academic partners that are similarly aligned in showcasing annual cover crops and tillage data for the row cropping regions of the lower 48 states (CONUS) for the years 2015-2030. The current OpTIS dataset covers CONUS row cropping regions for the years 2015-2021. These data are being made available to the public free of charge through the CTIC website at geographic scales (Crop Reporting District and HUC8 watershed scale) that do not raise privacy or proprietary concerns.[2] CTIC is now seeking partners who would be interested in joining a new collaboration: Viridis View, in which they would also have their estimates on the adoption of such conservation practices available to the public through the CTIC website, for free or at a reduced fee. CTIC is particularly interested in data for CONUS row cropping regions for the period 2015-2030, but longer time series going back to the year 2000 (or even earlier) are also of interest, as are data on other conservation practices (e.g., edge-of-field buffers, etc.). Pending cost estimates, it is currently expected that multiple partners will be selected, each having their projections being made available on the CTIC website, using a revised version of the current data visualization tool. CTIC does not have an estimate for the cost of each offered dataset, but proposals will be evaluated on the basis of cost, quality, and the degree to which they adequately cover the temporal and spatial scales of interest (see below for details). **We seek to find aligned organizations that are willing to join Viridis View and share their spatial datasets to the public at free or substantially reduced prices, and work pre-competitively to increase the accuracy[3] of such data.**

[1] CTIC continues to support Regrow's OpTIS dataset as providing useful conservation estimates, but the number of other potential data providers has increased dramatically since 2010, and CTIC's new Strategic Plan reflects this.
[2] We believe that smaller scales, such as county or HUC12, would also avoid such privacy or proprietary concerns.
[3] A recent publication highlighted the challenges in confirming the accuracy of such data (McGill et al., 2026).

Timeline

CTIC will accept proposals on this RFP through 5 p.m. CDT March 13, 2026. There will then be a careful process of consultation with the funder and potential partners, including an invite-only workshop in Raleigh NC on the afternoon of June 3, 2026, ahead of CTIC's Annual Tour (see Attachment 1). Contingent on the outcome of those discussions and that process, CTIC intends to select, inform, and assemble Viridis View partners for a kickoff discussion (virtual) late summer 2026, with the work initiated as soon as possible thereafter.

Current OpTIS Data

The current OpTIS data are delivered to the public free of charge on the CTIC website (see Figure 1 for an example). The data (adoption of reduced tillage and/or cover crops) are delivered at two geographic scales, Crop Reporting District (CRD) and HUC8 watershed-scale.

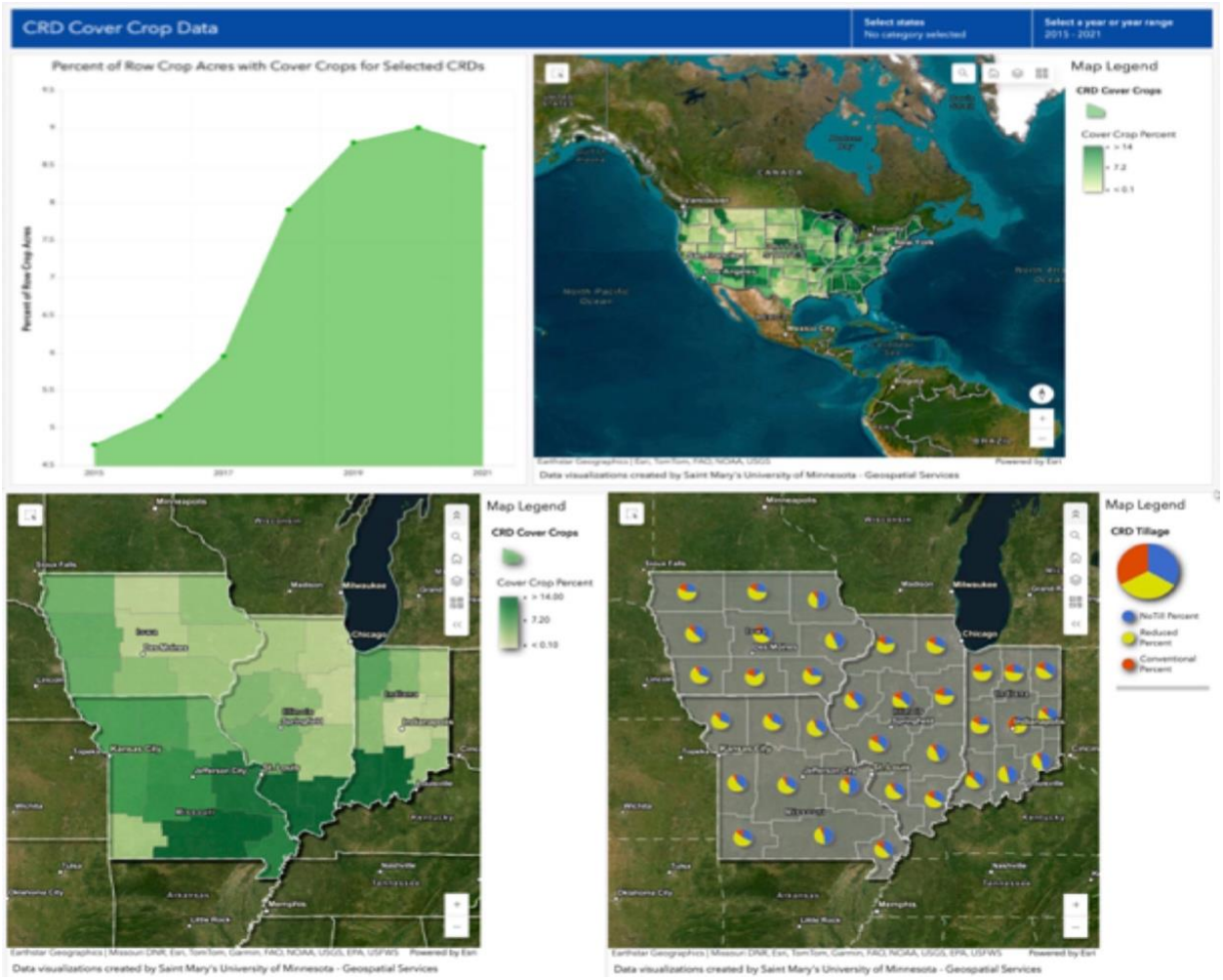

Figure 1. Example screenshots of current OpTIS data on cover crops and tillage.

We are not necessarily 'wedded' to the current website visualization tool and will be issuing a separate RFP to select an appropriate vendor to deliver the new data that will be made available to the public by the new partner(s) assembled via this RFP.

Description of the Conservation Trend Data now being sought

CTIC is particularly interested in cover crops and tillage data for CONUS row cropping regions for the years 2015-2030. Historical data (back to 2000 or even earlier) are also of potential interest, as are data on other conservation practices (e.g., edge-of-field buffers, etc.). Please see Table 1 for details.

Table 1. Characteristics of Conservation Trend Data to Consider (options†)

Time Period (year refers to the cropping/grazing year following the conservation practices)	**2015-2021 (to parallel current OpTIS data)** **2022-2025 (up to present)** **2026-2030 (future)** Historical data (annually, ~2000-2014)
Region	**CONUS** Corn Belt (or just the 'I-States': IA, IL, IN) Rangelands
Geographic Resolution	State Crop Reporting District (CRD) **HUC8 (or smaller, e.g., HUC12)** **County** Field-scale
Data Format	**Please specify** so that the Data Visualization Vendor can make adequate plans
Conservation Practices	**Cover crops** (**presence/absence**, measures of emergence and ground coverage, time period of coverage (winter-kill vs. spring-burndown, etc.) **Tillage** (no-till, conservation tillage [>30% residue], reduced tillage [15-30% residue], conventional tillage [<15% residue]) Grassland/rangeland practices Edge-of-field (buffers, etc.) Other
In-Kind Match	Any discounts and/or in-kind contributions the partner is willing to offer or contribute to this collaborative effort

† Boldface is used to indicate the data elements that are of highest priority to include in the proposal

CTIC requests that all proposals provide a range of cost estimates that vary according to the various options on the types and amounts of data each partner could deliver. In addition, we request each partner to specify 'lump sum' budget numbers with their proposal that communicate the minimum budget necessary for them to provide CONUS tillage and cover crops data for the indicated time periods and thereby engage in this collaborative, pre-competitive effort. However, we have also added an option for academics or any others who would prefer to join the effort only in a scientific advisory role, rather than as a data provider.

Potential Benefits for Viridis View Partners

Partners who join the collaborative effort will have the potential to realize several benefits:

- Showcase data and analytics capabilities across CTIC membership and the broader conservation agriculture community
- Generate new customer leads for proprietary data and analytics offerings
- Discover new techniques for improving data accuracy
- Gain access to additional ground-truthing data
- Identify potential partners for new bilateral collaborations
- Increase visibility within the grant-funding world

Written Proposal Submission Process

Partners interested in engaging in Viridis View are asked to submit a narrative proposal (please be complete, yet succinct) to CTIC no later than 5 p.m. CDT on March 13, 2026. Proposals should be submitted by email to Ryan Heiniger (heiniger@ctic.org) and accompanied by a completed proposal submission form (Attachment 2). Questions about this RFP should be addressed to Dave Gustafson (gustafson@ctic.org), who will host a recorded (for distribution) Zoom informational session at 11 a.m. CST on Tuesday, February 17, and who will also have daily office hours from 11-2 CST (cell phone 314-409-7123). As noted earlier, there will be a careful process of consultation with the funder and prospective partners, including the invite-only workshop in Raleigh NC. Contingent on the outcome of those discussions and that process, CTIC intends to select, inform, and assemble Viridis View partners for a kickoff discussion (virtual) late summer 2026. CTIC reserves the right to not select a partner from among the submitted proposals.

Attachment 1. Description of Viridis View Workshop – DRAFT

Title: Designing a new collaboration to publicly and more accurately track conservation adoption trends

Hosted by: CTIC

Location: North Carolina State University (bldg./room TBD)

Date/Time: 3-June-2026, Noon-5 pm (pre-workshop ahead of CTIC's Annual Tour on June 4) – all workshop participants will be invited to attend tour (registration required)

Target Number of Participants: 30-40

Background: There is a compelling need for pre-competitive collaboration to enable more accurate, real-time tracking and public reporting of conservation practice adoption (no-till, cover crops, etc.). Using advanced machine learning methods to process remote sensing data offers a cost-effective means to accomplish this, with multiple companies now providing such information to private-sector clients. A number of academics are also working in this area. This workshop will allow participants to begin co-developing a new public-private collaboration through which such data could be made publicly available to all relevant stakeholders at a spatial resolution that does not incur privacy or proprietary concerns. All such methods rely on ground-truthing data, and the workshop will include brainstorming around the collective assembly of anonymized, shared datasets, potentially following the methods developed in a 2021 Indiana Pilot conducted by CTIC, TNC, Arva, and Corteva (the "Conservation Validation Network").

Separately, CTIC is about to issue an RFP soliciting partners who would potentially be interested in having their conservation trend data also made available to the public via the CTIC website (as OpTIS data are now made available).

Workshop Objectives:

- Summarize the overall "state of the state" on opportunities for innovations and greater pre-competitive collaboration in this area
- Hear from leading experts across academia, government, and industry
- Conduct a robust conversation involving all workshop participants on how a new public-private collaboration could work and what needs to happen next

The desired ultimate workshop outcome would be to launch a new public-private collaboration through which high-confidence conservation practice adoption trend data (based on remote sensing) could be made publicly available to all relevant stakeholders at a spatial resolution that does not incur privacy or proprietary concerns.

Attachment 2. Proposal Submission Form

Viridis View Proposal Submission

Submission Deadline: 5 p.m. CDT, March 13th, 2026

Email proposals with this completed form to: heiniger@ctic.org

Budget Numbers:

$_____ (CONUS, tillage & cover crops, 2015-2021, county scale)

$_____ (CONUS, tillage & cover crops, 2022-2025, county scale)

$_____ (CONUS, tillage & cover crops, 2026-2030, county scale)

$_____ (Total In-Kind contribution reflected in the overall proposal)

or

☐ I would prefer to join the effort in a scientific advisory role, rather than as a data provider.

☐ My organization has data but not at the temporal or spatial scale as above but we would still like to partner with CTIC.

Submit written proposal to: heiniger@ctic.org no later than 5 p.m. CDT, Friday, March 13th, 2026. CTIC reserves the right to accept or reject all proposals.

Proposal Submitted by:

Name:_____

Company Name:_____

Address:_____

City/State/Zip:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____