

Viridis View: Tracking Progress in Ag Conservation

Nine days remain to respond to new collaboration opportunity from CTIC

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Recent years have seen major changes in the scale and sources of new public and private investments to promote adoption of regenerative practices in US agriculture, 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?

The Conservation Technology Information Center ([CTIC](#)) is seeking partners to join a new initiative, [Viridis View](#) – A Conservation Benchmarking Collaborative, to help answer this critical question. CTIC has just published a new [Request for Proposals](#) (RFP), with responses due on **Friday, March 13, at 5 pm CDT**. The RFP seeks to find organizations that are willing to share their spatial datasets on the adoption of key ag conservation practices (e.g., conservation tillage and cover crops) to the public at free or substantially reduced prices, and work pre-competitively to increase the accuracy of such data.

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. The current OpTIS dataset covers row cropping regions the Lower 48 States (CONUS) 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.

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.

Viridis View: a new collaboration opportunity from CTIC to track progress in ag conservation

Issuance of the RFP by CTIC reflects a 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. Based on past efforts, it is believed there is a compelling business case for companies to partner as a way to generate leads for their offerings. There are also opportunities and benefits for individual researchers to participate, even if they are not able to offer data for some or all of the region of interest. 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

Following receipt of the proposals, there will 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](#). 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.

CTIC will accept proposals on the new RFP through **5 p.m. CDT March 13, 2026**. In order to help answer questions on this unique opportunity, I hosted a virtual (Zoom) information session on Tuesday, February 17. A recording of the information session and the slides are available upon request. I am also now holding daily office hours (11-2 Central) for any potential partners wishing to learn more. Please feel free to reach out to me by phone (314-409-7123) or by email (gustafson@ctic.org).

