

Communicating the value of trees across 7 counties and 284 municipalities

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ABSTRACT

In 2010, the Morton Arboretum partnered with the USDA Forest Service to conduct an i-Tree Eco project. It included over 2000 plots across the seven-county Chicago region. The project revealed serious issues in the urban forest, including low species diversity and an abundance of invasive species. The Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) was formed to address these issues. It aims to improve the health and sustainability of the region's trees and forests. However, the management decisions that will achieve these goals are generally made at the municipal scale, and the i-Tree Eco dataset was not at a fine enough resolution to direct these actions.

In response, CRTI reached out to managers to colate existing tree inventories into a single dataset. This has resulted in a one-of-a-kind dataset: nearly a million, spatially referenced trees. Pairing it with high-resolution, LiDAR based tree canopy data has enabled CRTI to describe the regional forest in a manner that has never been done on such a broad area. i-Tree Streets, Eco and Landscape have allowed us to communicate the value that these trees provide to communities. CRTI has published packets and interactive maps that describe the distribution and value of each municipality's urban trees. These products have allowed CRTI to reach a broad audience, from municipal mayors and managers, to residents and funding organizations. They have paved a road to improved forest management; be it in drafting of forestry ordinances and management plans, and expansion of size and species diversity.

BIOGRAPHY

Lindsay earned a BS in biochemistry from Indiana University in 2007 and an MS in plant biology in conservation from Northwestern University in 2013. She has been working in urban forestry with the Chicago Region Trees Initiative (CRTI) and the Morton Arboretum for five years. Lindsay uses mapping to better understand how trees influence urban landscapes. She heads data analysis and mapping for the Chicago Region Trees Initiative, and is working on a project to remotely identify tree species across the seven-county Chicago Region. She also works to turn these findings into products - including interactive maps, flyers and presentations - that can be used by forest managers, tree stewards, and the broader public. Lindsay also works to identify where tree plantings could have the biggest impact.

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