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The Commercial Weather Data Pilot program began in 2016 when the U.S. Congress directed NOAA to study the purchase of commercially available weather data. Responses to market surveys indicated RO data were the most mature of the observations of interest and as a result the first two Pilot studies focused on these measurements. In the first Pilot (2016-2018) sufficient data were not available for a conclusive evaluation, but in the second round (2018-2020) two companies, GeoOptics and Spire Global, both provided sufficient quantities of data. The commercial RO products were evaluated for consistency, quality, impact on numerical weather prediction systems and usefulness in space weather applications.

Following this, NOAA awarded both GeoOptics and Spire two-year Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity contracts. The first purchase under this multi-award contract was for 30-days of low-latency data at a rate of 500 occultations per day from each vendor. This was used to test and tune NOAA's near-real time ingest, processing, and distribution systems for the commercial data streams. The products generated from these data were evaluated and statistically compared to those from other RO sources. A second delivery order, to acquire 1,300 occultations per day for a six-month period, will begin in March 2021, during which NOAA will begin using the Commercial RO data in its operational models for the first time.

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