

# The Herald-Times

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## Indiana's defense and agricultural economies

**Matt Craig** Guest columnist

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In February, Indiana was chosen as the newest site for a federal program that will help private landowners and organizations around military bases by providing resources to improve, protect and preserve their land. More than 3.5 million acres in southern Indiana, from Edinburgh to Jasper, and from Madison to Vincennes, are now part of the Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape.

The Sentinel Landscapes Partnership was established in 2013 through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense and Department of the Interior. The purpose of the program is to connect landowners within the landscape boundary to state and federal programs for opportunities that will help them sustainably run their land in ways that also support the military bases near them.

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The Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape is one of 10 in the country and aims to be a win-win initiative for the military, agriculture and the environment. Naval Support Activity Crane, Atterbury-Muscatatuck Training Center, Indiana Air Range Complex and Lake Glendora Test Facility all fall within the landscape and will be enhanced by the designation. In addition, this part of the state is home to six state parks, seven state forests, nine state fish and wildlife areas, 39 state-dedicated nature preserves, one national forest and three national wildlife refuges.

This unique partnership is a great achievement for southern Indiana. Millions of federal dollars and partner resources are expected to target Indiana for this project. Landowners in this part of the state will have access to tools that will not only help better serve Indiana's military installations but also protect and enhance what they own.

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Resources, and conservation organizations could increase support for the parks and forests as well as wildlife in the area.

Radius Indiana is a proud partner to the defense and agriculture economies. We are grateful to be a part of opportunities that grow our region and support those who live and work here. We look forward to seeing the achievements and accomplishments that grow from this partnership in our part of the state.

*Matt Craig is director of Crane Community Support for Radius Indiana.*