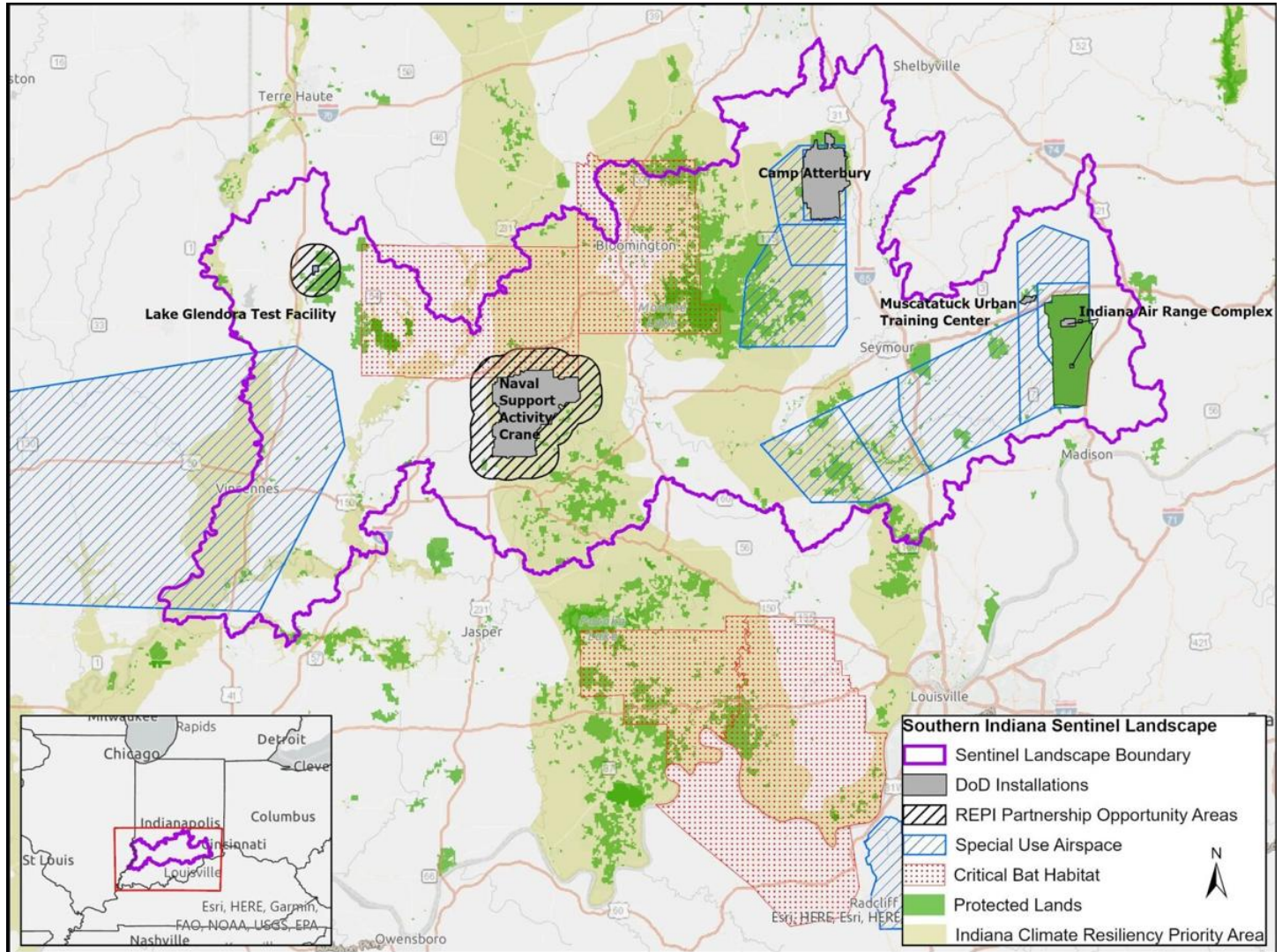


FEATURED

# Federal designation goes to millions of Southern Indiana acres

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Earlier this year more than 3.5 million acres near military installations — Naval Support Activity Crane, Lake Glendora Test Facility, Atterbury Muscatatuck Training Center and the Indiana Air Range Complex — earned the Sentinel Landscape designation. The map above shows the locations and designated areas.

Photo courtesy of the Conservation Law Center



SOUTHERN INDIANA — It's a title that Southern Indiana shares with only nine other regions nationwide.

Earlier this year more than 3.5 million acres near military installations — Naval Support Activity Crane, Lake Glendora Test Facility, Atterbury Muscatatuck Training Center and the Indiana Air Range Complex — earned the Sentinel Landscape designation.

This means the lands around these locations, often used as buffers between the facilities and civilian life, will be protected.

The Conservation Law Center at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law in Bloomington will help to manage this designation.

It took about six months to work on the application for these lands, said Andrea Lutz, Conservation Law Center Director of Advancement.

"It's an interesting thing to have the Department of Defense partnered in conservation," Lutz said. "The military manages so much land in our country, they're a big part of conservation people don't think about."

The Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior are all part of the project. In addition to Indiana, officials chose lands in Florida and Texas to be part of the program.

"(We were) putting together the application, pulling together a plan and showing the federal Department of Defense, 'Listen we are serious about conservation and we are serious about your mission as well,'" she said. "We can work together to make this a really impactful thing for the state."

The Conservation Law Center is part of IU Bloomington, and Lutz said it's a pro bono law firm that helps conservation organizations statewide.

"Like a land trust in Indiana (for example)," she said. "As a non-profit it's expensive, so we supply that legal advice and support free of charge."

The CLC is interested in making sure land can be conserved across Indiana and often, she said, it's only conserved in pieces and parcels, like a park or nature preserve. The Sentinel Landscape connects these kinds of areas.

This designation will allow the maintenance of healthy forests and saving of habitats for wildlife. Two of those animals are the endangered Indiana bat and threatened northern long-eared bat. Partners will also work on protecting local rivers and watersheds.

Lutz said a major goal of this project is also to support agricultural land in Indiana. The group is still working on the ins-and-outs of the designation.

"This is not something where we are looking to change how people use land without their buy-in or without their interest," she said.

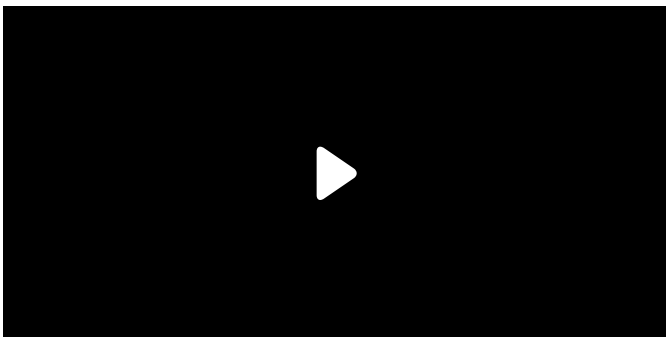
Ideas about conservation have changed since the law center opened in 2005.

"I think back in the day, 40 years ago, people thought conservation was more liberal," she said. "They wanted to put kind of a political stamp on it. We are not a political organization whatsoever. We are looking to have cleaner water, more conservation and to save endangered species."

Conservation Law Center Executive Director Christian Freitag said in news release that this is one of the biggest conservation projects of all time in Indiana.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for farmers, forest owners and other private landowners to gain even greater access to existing federal land management programs," he said.

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