



# VUJC Land Stewardship Initiative

*soil health...the root of everything*

## VUJC LSI 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Wild rollercoaster ride is probably the single best phrase that can use to describe the Land Stewardship Project (LSI) for 2017. The year was filled with highs, lows, and some unexpected twists.

The spring started off well. The cover crops planted last fall were growing well. The fields were lush with rye, peas, and crimson clover. These cover crop plants were terminated and the main cash crop of corn was planted on April 26th. There was a general feeling that the cover crops had enough time to grow and fix nitrogen to later be dispersed to the corn. Also, there was hope that it was early enough to see

an early crop harvest which could lead into early planting of the fall cover crops.

Two days later the fields were hit with a big rain. In late April, Dubois County experienced an eight inch rain that fell overnight with additional inches falling throughout the next few days. This was a cold, wet way to start May. Even after the deluge, the fields looked good and did not experience soil loss which was a point in the win column for cover crops. The soil was armored from the pounding rains by the remaining root systems from the cover crops holding the soil in the crop fields.

However, with the saturated soils and the



low temperatures, the corn (which usually sprouts in about 5 days) did not emerge until May 10th. The popular opinion in Dubois County was that if the original planting date occurred within the six days prior to the giant rainstorm then the emergence was stunted and a replant was necessary. This was certainly found to be true on the LSI property. Some stands of corn were lush and well populated, some were thin, and some acres never emerged. In total 18 acres were replanted at the end of May.

Things were plodding along well throughout the summer. Both original and replanted corn were growing, though there were differences between the two stands. The April corn ears were larger in diameter and had better pollination than the May corn ears.

In general, all the corn was growing well except for patches that were missed during the replant. Without tearing up everything and starting over in a replant area this is bound to happen. Some patches were growing grass, but some were growing weeds. Cockleburs became an issue in two of the fields. The decision was made to mow the offending plants to prevent seed from entering the field. At harvest time, there

was a yield of 137 bushels per acre which was lower than expected but much better than if the fields were left alone and not replanted.

Currently, rye, oats and radish are the cover crops growing in the fields in preparation for the 2018 soybean crop. The hope is to plant soybeans into the growing cover crops and terminate the cover crops after planting. In 2018, the adventure begins again.

Created in 2012, the Land Stewardship Initiative (LSI) is a partnership between the Dubois County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Vincennes University Jasper Campus (VUJC). This site has been designated as the Southwest Hub Farm for the Conservation Cropping System Initiative (CCSI). LSI's goal is to be a demonstration site for no-till farming practices and to educate the community about soil conservation practices. Fifty acres of land had been set aside at VUJC to be farmed using continuous no-till and cover cropping systems in a corn and soybean rotation. Many waterways and filter strips have been built into the land to prevent soil erosion and nutrient loss. Water samples are taken monthly from field tiles to monitor the environment impact.



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