

# 65 years of SIPAC innovation

BY CASEY UEBELHOR

Staff Writer ■ [fireporter@psci.net](mailto:fireporter@psci.net)

Perhaps no morning so perfectly depicts Indiana's mid-October than that of Wednesday, October 17.

Leaves, just beginning to drop, have not yet faded from greenness, though lawns, driveways and the occasional piece of political propaganda twinkle under melting frost. A white sun mitigates the cold, so that the sky reflects on ponds as dusty blue. Where branches and brambles shade waters, mists rise from silvery surfaces: trapped heat escapes, looking like pulled cotton.

Somewhere about ten miles east of Dubois, Hwy. 545 turns into North Cuzco Road South. A drive through that country showcases all sizes of orange pumpkins interrupting the autumn melancholy. Pastel mums brighten porches and brick-encased mailboxes. Blue and white Jeeps smile shyly from beds of prim (though yellowed) landscaping, and hand-painted signs proclaim, "Happy Halloween."

The elevation rises just before a traveler turns onto East Purdue Farm Road, heading toward the 1,300+ acre hilltop farm known

as Southern Indiana Purdue Agricultural Center (SIPAC). Here, the land bunches like a bedspread. (Later one discovers it is just as cushioned, as one stumbles and high-steps through its lush pasture.)

The farm is part of Purdue's PAC system, which includes eight farm locations across the state. For the benefit of local farmers and commercial agriculture, PAC farms conduct field crop and animal research and demonstrate best practices and agricultural technology. Farm superintendent Jason Tower explains why proper research requires so many locations: "The state's so different geographically from North to South. It's important that we're doing research and demonstration projects in the environment that producers are working on."

In fact, beginning in the late 1940s, private citizens advocated for a Purdue presence in the south part of the state, and landscape diversity was a key factor in their advocacy. "Purdue Extension helped lead the effort," explains Tower, "and Indiana Farm Bureau — they kind of worked together. The southern 40 counties all had a dollar quota they had to raise, depending on how close you were

to this site...Private citizens then gave to each county to meet the quota."

Eight farms were privately purchased in the Dubois / Cuzco area in 1952 and bestowed upon the University the following year. "The Extension helped lead that effort," tells Tower, "because they saw every day what their producers were dealing with and where they needed help."

Indiana soils are incredibly diverse, and southern Indiana soils are particularly unique, according to Tower, as the soils contain a layer of densely packed material called a fragipan. Only 12% of US soils contain fragipans, which behave in similar fashion to cement, restricting water flow and root penetration. Northern soils tend

to be sandier, having been covered in layers of glacial deposits.

Because the glaciers didn't reach it, Indiana's southern landscape is clay-like, hilly and wet. Researchers interested in promoting a fitting and healthy agricultural industry for

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Goats on the SIPAC farm line up at the fence, ready to munch in an adjacent pasture. Farm superintendent Jason Tower will herd them to another well-cultivated field later in the afternoon for fresh grazing. Goats have enjoyed a SIPAC presence for approximately 14 years.



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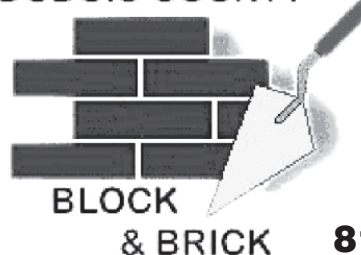
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