



Blackhawk Hills

■ RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AREA
■ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

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ANNUAL REPORT

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From Our President *By Cathy Brunner*

The Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD Council is proud to present you with this 2007 Annual Report. The purpose of this Annual Report is to highlight a few activities and projects that the RC&D Council and staff were involved with over the preceding year.

This past year brought about many changes and challenges for Blackhawk Hills. With changes in the federal budgets and the resignation of the Economic Development Director, Blackhawk Hills Council decided to make some changes to its organization. The Council chose to drop the Economic Development District in its title and operate as one organization, Blackhawk Hills RC&D, Inc. The Council hired two new staff people, an Economic Development Professional and an Executive Secretary. The Council also welcomed five new Board Members to its organization.

On behalf of the Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD Council, I would like to thank all the legislators, agencies, organizations, counties, and communities who support the RC&D program.



Blackhawk Hills RC&D Staff LtoR: Theresa Wittenauer, Economic Development Professional; Julie Jacobs, RC&D Executive Secretary; and Dave Dornbusch, RC&D Coordinator.

Our Governing Board

The Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization that serves as a vital focus point for many local, state, and federal programs. A governing body called the Council administers the RC&D program. The 18-member Council, three from each county, is made up of one representative from each of the local sponsors (Soil and Water Conservation District and County Board) and one area representative, selected at large by the two sponsors.

The Council Members at Blackhawk Hills RC&D service the organization in many ways. They donate their personal resources and time to facilitate the programs in Northwest Illinois.

New members to the RC&D Council this past year are John Newcomer, Edie Block, Beth Baranski, Bridgette Stocks, and Ed Uphoff.

RC&D Council Members & Staff

Carroll County

- John Newcomer, SWCD
- Edie Block, County Board
- Cathy Brunner, Area Rep.

JoDaviess County

- Dr. William Tonne, SWCD
- Beth Baranski, County Board
- Bridgette Stocks, Area Rep.

Lee County

- Thomas Millard, SWCD
- Isaac Mercer, County Board
- Ed Uphoff, Area Rep.

Ogle County

- Lynne Kilker, SWCD
- Ron Colson, County Board
- Marcia Heuer, Area Rep.

Stephenson County

- Charles Moen, SWCD
- Samuel Newton, County Board
- Della Moen, Area Rep.

Whiteside County

- Tim Keller, SWCD
- Karen Nelson, County Board
- Glen Kuhlemier, Area Rep.

RC&D Officers

- Cathy Brunner, President
- Dr. William Tonne, V-President
- Karen Nelson, Sec.-Treasurer

Staff

- Dave Dornbusch, RC&D Coordinator
- Theresa Wittenauer, Economic Development Professional
- Julie Jacobs, Executive Secretary



Economic Development

The RC&D Council serves the region as an Economic Development District (EDD). The EDD was established under criteria of the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). The program's purpose is to accelerate overall economic development program planning on a regional basis and to utilize all applicable federal, state, and local agencies, groups, and organizations in implementing the plan(s).



Forestry Management Workshop

Blackhawk Hills was a co-sponsor to the Forestry Management Workshop that was held on August 23, 2006 at the Loud Thunder Forest Preservation. Over 140 people participated in the successful event. Best Management Forestry Practices were demonstrated and developing a Forestry Management Plan was discussed.

This mission of the Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD Council is to assist the people of Northwest IL with the development of rural economies by improving and conserving all resources.

Women & the Wild: An Outdoor Skills Workshop

Blackhawk Hills co-sponsored the first Outdoor Skills Workshop on May 6, 2006 at the Oakdale Nature Preserve. This unique event offered participants the opportunity to experience the outdoors in new ways. Another workshop was planned for May 12, 2007.

NW Illinois Livestock Project

Blackhawk Hills RC&D was given another opportunity to work with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the Illinois Milk Producers on the Northwest Illinois Livestock Project. The intended purpose of the project was to provide assistance to producers who were in violation of the Clean Water Act with respect to milkhouse waste discharge. Blackhawk Hills RC&D has \$167,000 available to assist producers.

Grazing Workshop

Blackhawk Hills was a co-sponsor of the Grazing – A Viable Option Workshop. The workshop was an excellent opportunity for livestock producers and others to learn more about grazing from several beef, sheep and dairy grazers who have incorporated a significant amount of managed grazing to their operations.

Outdoor Stewardship

Blackhawk Hills RC&D has a strong commitment to environmental stewardship. The RC&D Council was a sponsor of the Envirothon competition, a nationwide competition of teams of students from local high schools. Blackhawk Hills RC&D Council has set up a scholarship program to recognize the Envirothon winners.

The RC&D staff also serves as volunteers at the Outdoor Stewardship Days. The Stewardship Days focus on educating grade school students on the environment and conservation.



Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Visit with Senator Harkin.



Visit with Senator Barack Obama's Staff.

Legislative Contacts

Cathy Brunner, Blackhawk Hills RC&D President, and Steve Gonzalez, IL Association of RC&D Areas President, represented IL at the National RC&D Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C. They were able to meet with both IL US Senators' staff and all 16 Congressional Representatives' staff. They also met with Senator Tom Harkin, who serves on the US Senate Ag Committee.

Locally the RC&D Council and Staff were able to meet with US Senator Barack Obama's staff and US Congressman Phil Hare.

USDA-Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Blackhawk Hills' Coordinator and Executive Secretary continued to assist the USDA Field Offices with the review of EQIP requests for payments.

Driftless Area Initiative

Blackhawk Hills is one of six RC&D Councils, located in four States, who are working together promoting cooperation across state and organizational lines to address resource concerns in the Driftless Area of the Mississippi River. Chuck Moen, Blackhawk Hills RC&D Council Member, is leading the developing efforts of a marketing brochure for the Initiative.

JoDaviess Land and Farm Preservation Committee

The RC&D assisted the JoDaviess Land and Farm Preservation Committee in hosting a series of workshops to help new landowners understand their roles and responsibilities.

US Highways 20 & 30

Blackhawk Hills Council continues to support the development efforts of four lane highways for US Route 20 and US Route 30.

Ready, Set, Go

Blackhawk Hills RC&D Council was one of the co-sponsors of the Ready, Set, Go Workshop held on October 17, 2006 in Platteville, Wisconsin. The one day event was designed as an interactive workshop for elected officials and community and business leaders in smaller communities. As part of the workshop, a scenario planning game was piloted to explore the applicability of this type of tool for communities in the Midwest. The workshop was presented by David Buerle, Innovative Leadership Australia. A total some 120 people participated in the workshop.

Marketing the Area

Blackhawk Hills developed a marketing piece for the business and industrial parks in the area. An Economic Development Administration grant was received to assist with this project.

Blackhawk Hills also began work on developing a marketing piece for the organization itself in an effort to make ourselves more visible and recognizable to the general population. The overall process will include an internal marketing plan, as well as a new logo, website, marketing display and brochures, which will all blend together in appearance and focus. Watch out for a new look!

Entrepreneurs & Inventors Club

Blackhawk Hills continues to provide technical and financial assistance to the Entrepreneurs & Inventors Club. The Council earmarked \$2,000 to help the club with their 501(c)3 application and to promote the Club. The Club held five meetings with an average of 30 people in attendance.

Training & Conferences

The RC&D Council and Staff continue to increase their knowledge by attending training sessions and conferences. Blackhawk Hills participates in the following training sessions or conferences: IL Association of RC&D Meetings, RC&D Leadership Forum, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Employee Meetings, IL Institute for Rural Affairs/Rural Partners Conference, IL Development Council Conference, and the National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Training Conference.

Regional Committees

The RC&D continues to host regional committee meetings to stay informed of economic, environmental, and social needs as they relate to county boards, communities, development corporations, chambers of commerce, and business and industry. Each committee has its own activities and programs. This action alone saves the region thousands of dollars annually. Committees include: RC&D Council/Economic Development District, County Board Chairpersons, Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Zoning Administrators, District Conservationists, and Regional Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Committee.

The vision of the RC&D/EDD is to provide a balanced approach for a strong rural economy, enhanced quality of life, and conservation of our natural resources through the formation of partnerships and coalitions.

Appreciation

Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD could not begin to accomplish all we do without the generosity of many donors to the Council. Blackhawk Hills RC&D appreciates the contributions from all the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, County Boards, Legislators, committee members, corporations and organizations that help us make things happen in our region. Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD especially thanks US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration for their continued financial support.

**For more information on Blackhawk Hills RC&D/EDD,
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