

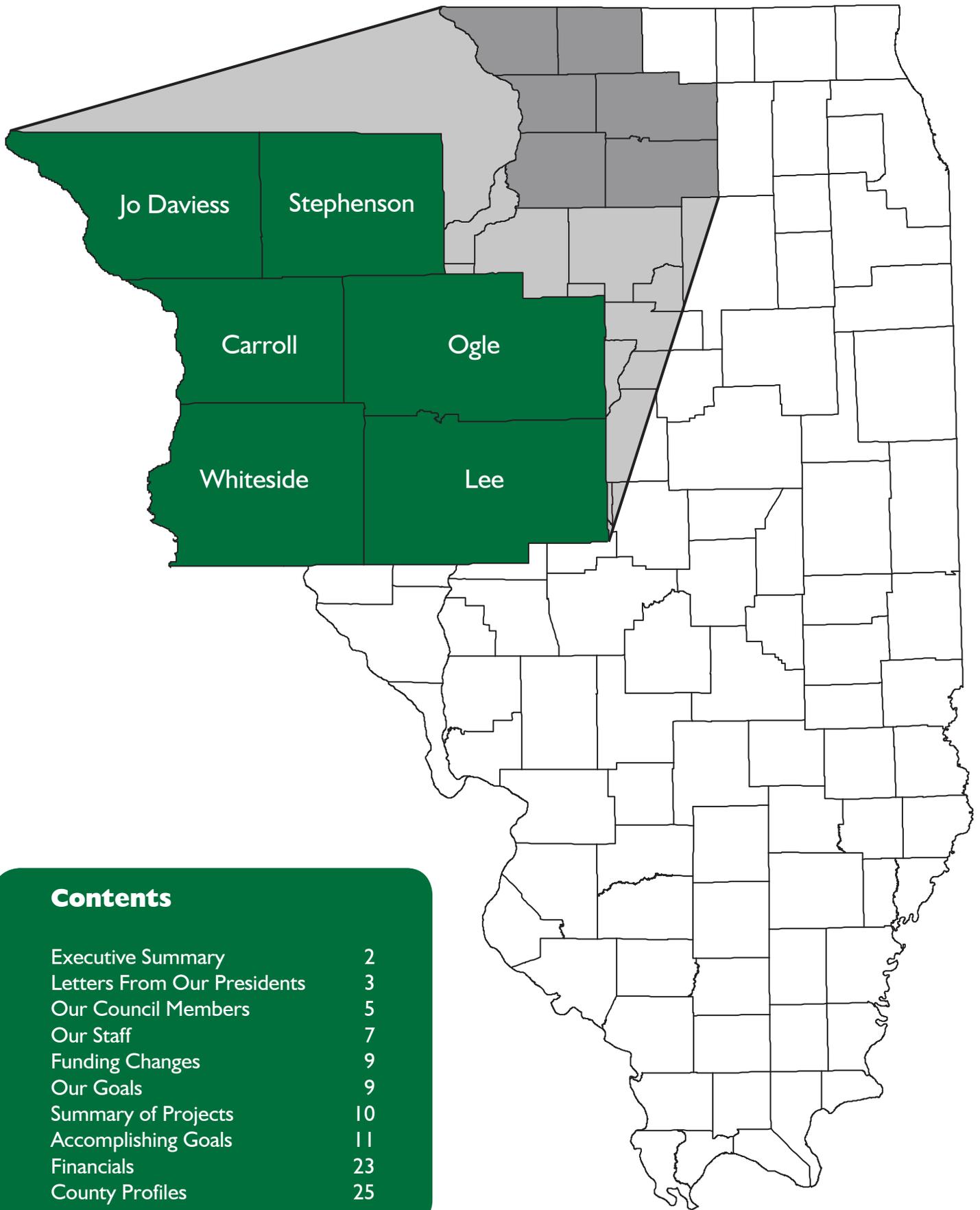
BLACKHAWK HILLS



Resource Conservation and Development

Jo Daviess • Stephenson • Carroll • Ogle • Whiteside • Lee

2011 - 2012 Annual Report



Contents

Executive Summary	2
Letters From Our Presidents	3
Our Council Members	5
Our Staff	7
Funding Changes	9
Our Goals	9
Summary of Projects	10
Accomplishing Goals	11
Financials	23
County Profiles	25

Cover photo provided by Daniel Payette

Report Summary

This year's annual report highlights Blackhawk Hills' major goals and initiatives from 2011-2012. The document – redesigned for 2012 – addresses the organization's transition to a regional council, topics of multi-jurisdictional concern, and funding distributions.

Major Goals

Over the past year, Blackhawk Hills' initiatives focused on the following region-wide goals:

- **Encourage Long Term Regional Comprehensive Planning**
Regional plans are essential to attracting growth and preserving resources. Blackhawk Hills works with federal and state agencies to promote and develop regional plans.
- **Assist with Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Planning**
Plans at the local level support community development and outline timelines for improving and replacing infrastructure. Blackhawk Hills leverages funds for planning and ensures that suitable projects receive support.
- **Support Economic, Community, and Workforce Development**
Recognizing people and location-based elements of development is critical. The partnerships that Blackhawk Hills establishes help the six counties invest in both human and community resources.
- **Support Natural Resources Preservation and Conservation**
Initiatives that both recognize the region's physical beauty and support the efficient use of resources ensure that future generations may maintain a certain quality of life. Blackhawk Hills-sponsored conferences and discussions address significant environmental and recreational concerns.
- **Support Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Collaboration**
Working with public and private sector officials to plan and encourage collaboration helps the entire region share in the benefits of development and resource-pooling. Round tables and meetings with officials maintain intergovernmental relationships and spread knowledge beyond local geographies.



A reflection on the past year from our 2011-2012 Council President

Dear Friends,

We are happy to share our 2011-2012 Annual Report with you.

The past year has brought many changes and challenges for Blackhawk Hills. With cuts to the federal budget, the funding for the Resource Conservation and Development Councils was eliminated. Despite the loss of funding, Blackhawk Hills has carried on and successfully completed many of our goals and projects.

The pages that follow are filled with information about our goals as well as the projects and organizations we have worked with over the past year. We strive to make the communities of Northwest Illinois better places to work and live. We are committed to understanding the needs of our communities and connecting with the organizations that help meet those needs.

On behalf of the Blackhawk Hills Council Members and staff, I offer my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the legislators, agencies, organizations, counties, and communities for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Tonne, D.D.S." The signature is written in a cursive style.

William Tonne, D.D.S

**The mission of
Blackhawk Hills
Resource
Conservation and
Development is to
assist the
people of
Northwest
Illinois with the
development of
rural economies by
improving and
conserving all
resources.**

A look to our future from our 2012-2013 Council President



Dear Friends,

As we close another successful year for Blackhawk Hills, we look forward to a bright future of enhanced regionalism and cooperation.

Blackhawk Hills has not been without challenges this past year, but we have proven resilient in the face of federal funding cuts.

Moving forward, we hope to take advantage of Blackhawk Hills' new status as a Regional Council. Such designation should provide better recognition at the state and federal levels and increased opportunities for regional funding.

We hope you find the pages that follow both useful and informative. In the coming months, we hope to keep you updated through newsletters and press releases.

I look forward to serving as President of Blackhawk Hills in the coming year and working with the communities and counties of northwest Illinois. I offer my thanks to the Council for the opportunity to lead Blackhawk Hills and to the communities and organizations for your continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Colson".

Ron Colson

The mission of Blackhawk Hills Economic Development District is to develop and implement a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that will enhance job opportunities and improve the quality of life for local communities.

2011 - 2012 Council Officers



William Tonne, D.D.S.
President

Council Members

Carroll County



Kevin Reibel
County Board



Ed Juracek
Soil & Water Conservation District



Cathy Brunner
Area Representative

Jo Daviess County



Kim Monk
County Board



William Tonne, D.D.S.
Soil & Water Conservation District



Vacant
Area Representative

Lee County



Isaac Mercer
County Board



Vacant
Soil & Water Conservation District



Marilyn Shippert
Area Representative



Ron Colson
Vice President



Glen Kuhlemier
Secretary/Treasurer

Ogle County



Marcia Heuer
County Board



Lynne Kilker
Soil & Water Conservation District



Ron Colson
Area Representative

Stephenson County



Sam Newton
County Board



Charles Moen
Soil & Water Conservation District



Della Moen
Area Representative

Whiteside County



Kenneth Roeder
County Board



Tim Keller
Soil & Water Conservation District



Glen Kuhlemier
Area Representative



Theresa Wittenauer
Economic Development Coordinator

Theresa Wittenauer joined Blackhawk Hills in December 2006 as the Economic Development Coordinator. Her primary responsibilities include serving as the project manager for the district, working directly with the regional and local Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committees, updating and maintaining the CEDS document for the six-county region, and securing the annual planning grant. Theresa holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Urban Planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She holds a Master of Public Administration degree in Urban Management and a Master of Science degree in Geography and Urban Economic Development both from Northern Illinois University (NIU). Prior to working at Blackhawk Hills, Theresa worked at the Center for Governmental Studies at NIU as a Research Associate with the Community and Economic Development Group. She currently resides in Amboy, Illinois with her husband Jeramey and two sons, Westin and Jaron. She currently serves on the Northwest Illinois Workforce Investment Board, Lee County Tourism Council, and as Chairman of the City of Amboy's Planning Commission.



Julie Jacobs
Administrations Coordinator

Julie Jacobs joined Blackhawk Hills in January 1987. She has more than 25 years of experience in the non-profit and government sectors. Julie has received training in non-profit management, board development, grant writing, and administrations. She has also taken several classes at Sauk Valley Community College. Since 2004, Julie has served on the Tri-County Opportunity Council Board and presently serves as the Secretary. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce. Julie has been recognized both locally and nationally for her work including receiving the Sterling Business Machine Secretary of the Year Award and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Women of Courage and Vision Award. Julie currently resides in Sterling, Illinois and enjoys spending time with her husband, Brad, and two daughters, Brittney and Kayla.



Daniel Payette
Outreach Coordinator

Daniel Payette joined Blackhawk Hills in March 2011 as the Outreach Coordinator. His primary responsibilities include support of the iFiber broadband project and maintaining Blackhawk Hills' information technology systems. His outreach efforts for iFiber include various governments, libraries, schools, colleges, healthcare facilities, and non-profits in the region. Dan is a native of Shannon, Illinois and a graduate of Eastland High School in Carroll County. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Affairs and Political Science from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and a Master of Science degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His professional interests include land use and brownfields redevelopment. Outside of work, Dan enjoys photography, directs choir, and volunteers with his hometown high school speech and theatre programs.



Melanie Flesch
Assistant Outreach Coordinator

Melanie Flesch joined Blackhawk Hills in March 2012 as the Assistant Outreach Coordinator. Her primary responsibilities include outreach support on the iFiber broadband project, as well as general marketing including research, reporting, social media development, and design. Melanie was born and raised in East Dubuque, Illinois where she graduated from East Dubuque High School. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration from Clarke University with a concentration in marketing. She has specialized in working with small businesses over the past three years and has provided marketing consultation services with her company, Truly Organized Marketing. Her past work experience includes the positions of Marketing Project Specialist for Heartland Financial and Sales and Marketing Director for Dubuque Area Steamatic. She is a past president of the Quality Referrals Chapter of Business Networking International. Personally, she has donated her time to the event planning committee of the Dubuque Regional Humane Society including chairing the Scruffy Shuffle, an annual fund raising event held each May. Melanie currently resides in Sterling, Illinois.



A special thank you to Dave Dornbusch for serving as the RC&D Coordinator for Blackhawk Hills for thirteen years.

Transitioning From a Funded RC&D to an Unfunded RC&D

As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, Blackhawk Hills has been active in northwest Illinois since 1974. Throughout the organization's 38-year history, Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) has been involved with various projects to improve agriculture, energy efficiency, recreation, and economic and community development. The council has also acted as a liaison between the region and multiple federal agencies and support organizations.

In 2011, despite program successes and measurable returns on investment nation-wide, the United States Congress decided to cut the \$51 million RC&D program. This meant the elimination of federal funding for RC&D Councils in all 50 states, including northwest Illinois' Blackhawk Hills RC&D Council. After receiving confirmation about the cuts, the country's approximately 375 councils were faced with a stark decision: to continue operating independently – without federal funding – or disband as an RC&D.

The extent of federal funding cuts to Blackhawk Hills RC&D totaled approximately \$130,000. The funding was used to pay for RC&D programming, staff, building rental, internet, telephone, and other expenses.

Despite the loss of personnel and resources, Blackhawk Hills RC&D has elected to continue to provide services to the six-county region. The organization will still support rural economic development, as well as projects that provide for natural resources conservation and preservation. Blackhawk Hills RC&D will also maintain its relationship with the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils (NARCDC). Information about NARCDC and its continuing activities may be found online at <http://www.rcdnet.org>.

The Goals of Blackhawk Hills

Encourage Long Term Regional Comprehensive Planning

Assist with Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Planning

Support Economic, Community, and Workforce Development

Support Natural Resources Preservation and Conservation

Support Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Collaboration

Blackhawk Hills Summary of Projects

Encourage Long Term Regional Comprehensive Planning	11
• Management and Planning of the Economic Development District	11
• Five County Economic Study and Recovery Plan	11
• Becoming a Regional Council	12
Assist with Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Planning	13
• Rochelle Project E-Rail	13
• Local Capital Improvement Plans	13
• Broadband Project	14
Support Economic, Community, and Workforce Development	17
• Local Foods Initiative	17
• Tri-County Opportunity Council (TCOC)	17
• Lee County Tourism Council	18
• Rock River Trail Initiative (RRTI)	18
Support Natural Resources Preservation and Conservation	19
• Driftless Area Initiative (DAI)	19
• Renewable Energy Biomass	19
• Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference	19
• Envirothon	20
• Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)	20
Support Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Collaboration	21
• Website Assistance Program	21
• Geographic Information System (GIS) and Information Technology (IT)	21
• University of Illinois Extension	22
• Entrepreneurs and Inventors Club (E&I)	22
• Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)	22
• Partnership for a Connected Illinois (PCI) and eTeam	22

Encourage Long Term Regional Comprehensive Planning

- Management and Planning of the Economic Development Administration District
- Five County Economic Study and Recovery Plan
- Becoming a Regional Council

Management and Planning of the Economic Development Administration District

Blackhawk Hills was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) in March 1992. As such, Blackhawk Hills is responsible for the management and planning of the EDD, which includes updating and maintaining the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document. The EDA CEDS 5-Year Report has been adopted by our council and submitted for the time period 2008-2013. An annual update has also been approved and submitted for the current year.

The Regional CEDS Committee meets every quarter with an average of 20 to 25 participants from the region. These meetings are used to give updates on the broadband initiative, on funding from the USDA and other sources, and on regional projects and issues. This past year, we have offered presentations from the University of Illinois Extension, iFiber, and the Quad Cities Regional Economic Development Authority.

Staff regularly attends the County CEDS Committee meetings that are held at the local level in the individual counties. Participants at the county CEDS meetings help share information at a local level and give updates on projects and initiatives our office is undertaking. These meetings are held monthly or bi-monthly, depending on the county administering the meeting.

Other regional meetings we host include the County Board Chairman's meeting and the County Zoning Administrators meetings. These meetings help officials share information and discuss current issues the region may be facing. These meetings are bi-monthly and very well attended. Staff is also bringing back the Regional GIS and IT meetings to address technological and logistical issues. These meetings all serve as a way for Blackhawk Hills to determine what the current needs are within our region and what type of assistance may be required at local and regional levels.

Five County Economic Study and Recovery Plan



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Center for
Governmental Studies

Outreach, Engagement, and Information Technologies

An application was submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in September 2011 to conduct a study on labor shed and cluster analysis, wages, and underemployment levels for the counties of Carroll, Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside. Stephenson

County has also contributed funds to the project in order to be included in portions of the study which is being managed by the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies.

The goal of the study is to obtain information on what types of businesses our area should be attempting to attract to the region based on what resources and labor base we have to support those businesses. The study is in reaction to layoffs and industrial closings that have occurred throughout the region. The EDA has funded the project and an advisory committee consisting of at least one economic development representative from each of the counties involved are steering the parameters of the survey. Blackhawk Hills staff is participating on this advisory committee.

BLACKHAWK HILLS Regional Council



Jo Daviess • Stephenson • Carroll • Ogle • Whiteside • Lee

**The new logo for
Blackhawk Hills
Regional Council.**

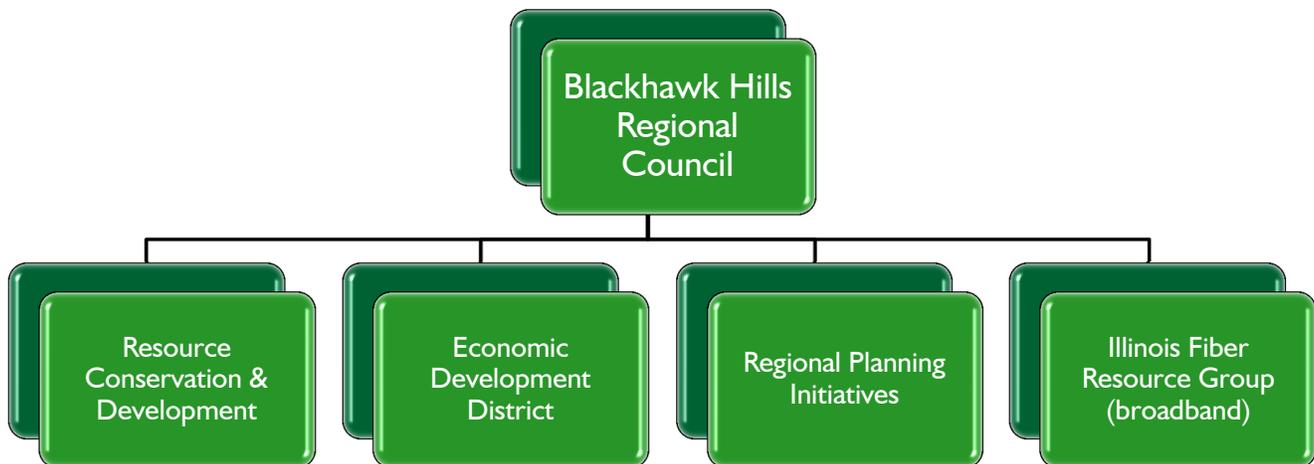
Becoming a Regional Council

Following the loss of Resource Conservation and Development funding, Blackhawk Hills began the process of becoming a Regional Council. As Blackhawk Hills Regional Council, we will continue to be a multi-service entity with state and locally-defined boundaries that delivers a variety of local, state, and federal programs. The designation allows us to offer expanded services related to comprehensive planning, grant administration, data research, mapping, and technical assistance.

Regional Councils can enhance the economic competitiveness of a region and help strengthen the national economy as a whole. They have recently become more prominent in receiving federal and state aid for their regions. Certain programs and projects in which state or federal aid are involved must be submitted to the area's Regional Council for review in order to be considered.

According to the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), Regional Councils were conceived in the 1960's and today are organizations skilled at providing services, creating partnerships, problem solving, and fiscal management. The role of the Regional Council has been shaped by the changing dynamics in local, state, and federal government. There is now a growing recognition that local governments must work together to resolve social and environmental challenges in their regions.

As of April 2012, all six counties that Blackhawk Hills serves approved the change to Regional Council status. Blackhawk Hills will now be known as Blackhawk Hills Regional Council. Please refer to the organization chart below for the structuring of the organization.



Assist with Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Planning

- Rochelle Project E-Rail
- Local Capital Improvement Plans
- Broadband Project

Rochelle Project E-Rail

An application was submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and approved for the City of Rochelle in the amount of \$2.4 million. This project consisted of improving the municipal water, sanitary sewer, communications and electric utilities, as well as expanding the Rochelle Dual Access Railroad.

The Project Benefit Area consists of 540 acres of land located in the southeast corner of the City of Rochelle. Although this land is close to I-88, I-39, and the Union Pacific Railroad's Global III inter-modal facility, the acreage surrounding the Project Benefit Area lacks the essential infrastructure to allow for it to reach its development potential.

The new facilities will service the growing industrial area in Rochelle and is expected to help create 290 jobs and generate \$58 million in private investment, according to grantee estimates.



Local Capital Improvement Plans

Blackhawk Hills earmarked planning funds to assist six additional communities with populations of less than 5,000 to develop or update their Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This was the second time we have offered this program to communities in our region.

To apply for the program, communities needed to submit the following items to our office: the name of the community, who would develop the plan, the approximate completion date of the plan, and the estimated total cost of developing the plan (\$3,000 minimum). The \$1,500 incentive payment was granted to the first six communities that contacted our office with their proposal and the required documentation.

The communities that participated included the cities of Byron, East Dubuque, Fulton, and Lanark and the villages of Chadwick and Orangeville. Over the two year period this program has been offered, Blackhawk Hills has assisted sixteen communities in developing a CIP.

Broadband Project

Construction on the nine county regional broadband network began in July 2011. Crews working for the Illinois Fiber Resources Group (iFiber) started in Lee County, IL, near Sublette. The project – which is funded through a variety of federal, state, and local sources – has a budget of approximately \$68.5 million. A majority of the funding (approximately \$46 million) comes from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), which is a bureau of the United States Department of Commerce. The State of Illinois also provided \$14 million in matching funds.

iFiber was established and recognized as an Illinois not-for-profit in April 2011. The organization was created to provide oversight during the network's construction and manage the system once the fiber is lit. iFiber consists of an eight member board, including two board members appointed by Blackhawk Hills. William Tonne and Samuel Newton were appointed in January 2011 to represent the six county Blackhawk Hills region. Currently, William Tonne serves as iFiber Treasurer. The remainder of the board's membership includes representatives from Northern Illinois University (2), the City of Rockford (1), Boone County (1), LaSalle County (1), and the North Central Illinois Council of Governments (NCICG) (1). The board typically meets once every month.

An official ground-breaking ceremony was held on August 29 at Sauk Valley Community College. The event included area legislators and a representative from the Illinois Governor's Office. Construction crews from three construction firms – Aldridge Electric, Kelso-Burnett, and PirTano Construction – were in attendance, along with the project's engineering firm, Baxter and Woodman.

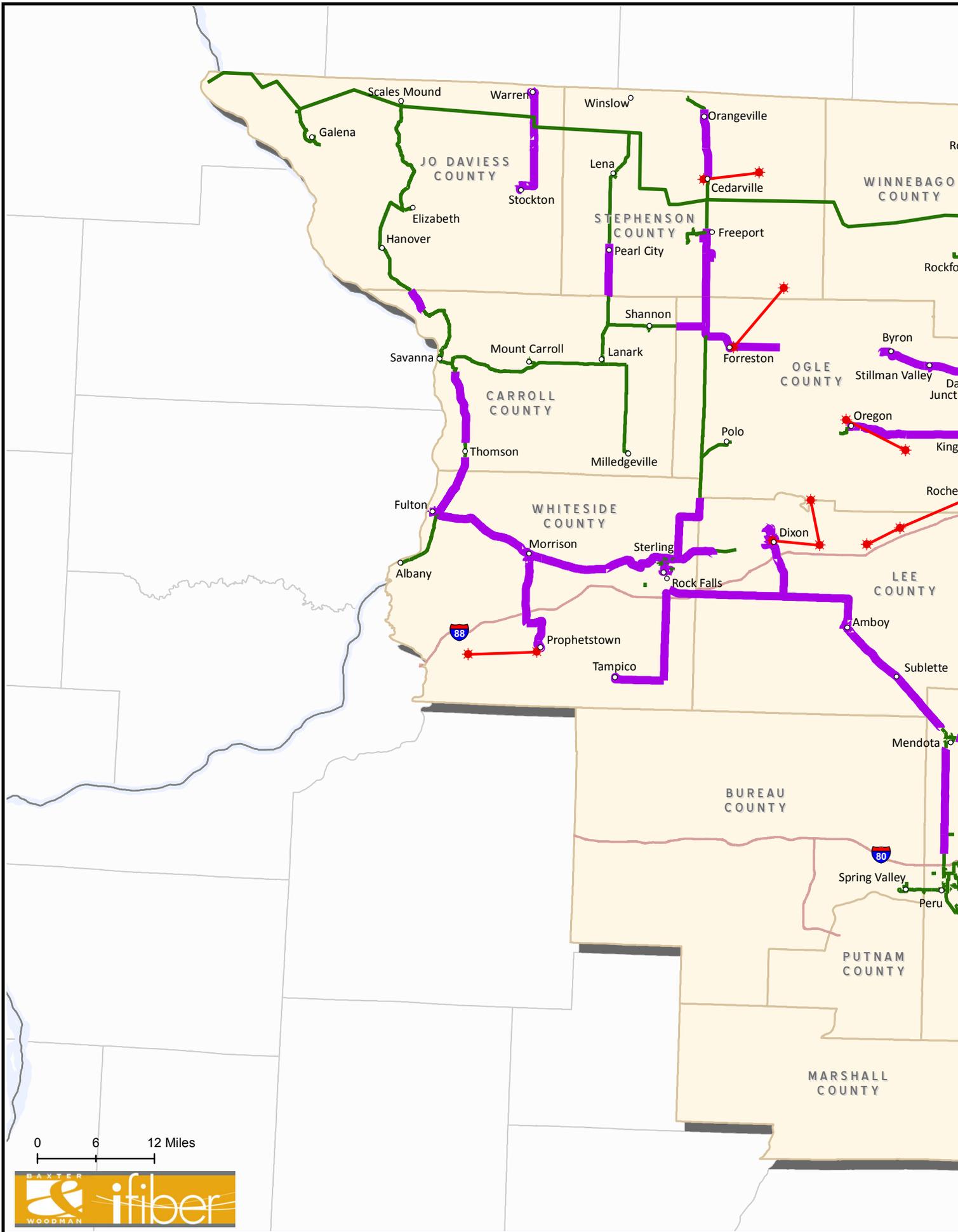


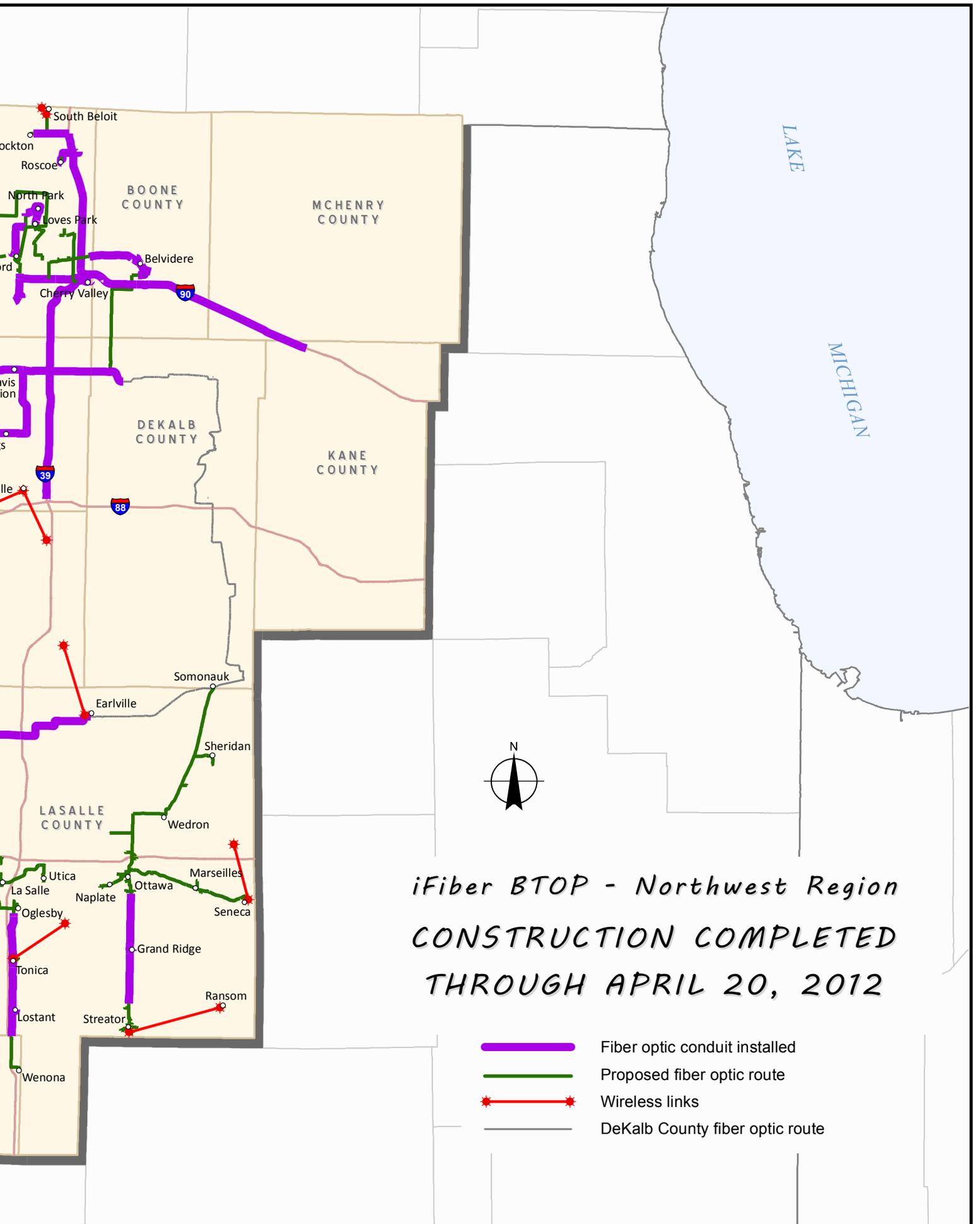
As of April 2012, nearly 300 miles of fiber optic conduit had been installed and 150 miles of fiber leased across all nine counties – including Boone, Winnebago, and LaSalle. Outreach teams have completed initial meetings with nearly 95% of the community anchor institutions (CAIs). CAIs appearing in the grant include K-12 education, community colleges, libraries, municipal and county governments, public safety, health care, not-for-profits, and other related entities. Approximately 65% of CAIs have provided either letters of intent and/or services agreements to participate on the network.

iFiber's initial goals, which are shaped by NTIA guidance, include establishing a core network to serve the nine counties and as many CAIs as possible. These CAIs will enjoy between 400Mbps to 1Gbps of transport bandwidth and cloud access. After the network build-out is complete and CAIs receive service, iFiber will encourage private sector service providers to expand service options to business and residential users.

Project History

The Northwest Illinois Broadband Taskforce was established in November 2008 to address broadband challenges in the six-county Blackhawk Hills region. In 2009, Blackhawk Hills partnered with NIU and applied for Broadband Technology Opportunities Program funding in Round 1 – funding which was denied in January 2010. Expanding the partnership, NIU, Blackhawk Hills, the City of Rockford, Boone County, LaSalle County, and NCICG re-applied in Round 2 (March 2010). In September 2010, the partnership's application was approved, leading to the creation of iFiber.





iFiber BTOP - Northwest Region
CONSTRUCTION COMPLETED
THROUGH APRIL 20, 2012

- █ Fiber optic conduit installed
- █ Proposed fiber optic route
- *—* Wireless links
- DeKalb County fiber optic route

Support Economic, Community, and Workforce Development

- Local Foods Initiative
- Tri-County Opportunities Council (TCOC)
- Lee County Tourism Council
- Rock River Trail Initiative (RRTI)

Local Foods Initiative

The Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission recently received a Rural Business Opportunity Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to support local food initiatives. They asked to partner with Blackhawk Hills and focus on our two northern counties of Jo Daviess and Stephenson. A number of meetings have been held in the region concerning a push to promote local foods. Blackhawk Hills, along with the University of Illinois Extension, began looking for opportunities to help coordinate all efforts to make one strong push for local foods in our region.

It continues to be a goal to increase awareness of the Market-Maker Program to local farmers and producers. This program, developed by the University of Illinois, is a web-based resource that connects farmers, fishers, processors, distributors, food retailers, and consumers. Blackhawk Hills sees this as an economic generator for our area, as agri-tourism continues to soar in northwestern Illinois.

These meetings have opened up the doors to the possibility of working closer with the County Farm Bureaus and we continue to collaborate on many other projects concerning the economic area of local farming and community gardening.



Tri-County Opportunities Council

The Tri-County Opportunities Council (TCOC) is a Community Action Agency serving the nine Illinois counties of Bureau, Carroll, LaSalle, Lee, Marshall, Ogle, Putnam, Stark, and Whiteside. The TCOC works to focus available local, state, federal, and private resources to assist low-income individuals and families in acquiring useful skills and knowledge to gain access to new opportunities and achieve economic self-sufficiency.



The TCOC oversees the following programs: Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), Foster Grandparents, Homemakers, Head Start/Early Head Start/Migrant Head Start, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and Weatherization and Housing Program.

Julie Jacobs, Blackhawk Hills Administrations Coordinator, has served on the Governing Board of the TCOC for eight years and has served as the Board's Secretary for the last six years.

Lee County Tourism Council



Theresa Wittenauer, Economic Development Coordinator, actively serves on the Lee County Tourism Council's (LCTC) Board of Directors. For her role, she helps with the planning of events and provides technical assistance when needed. The LCTC meets on a monthly basis and, over the past year, was primarily focused on the Reagan 100th Birthday Celebration.

Blackhawk Hills was named the 2012 Star Award at the LCTC's annual meeting which was held on April 18, 2012. Julie Jacobs, Administrations Coordinator, accepted the award on behalf of Blackhawk Hills from Diane Nicholson, Executive Director of the LCTC. We were recognized for our efforts since our inception in 1974 and for our coordination and support during the creation of the LCTC in 1988. Blackhawk Hills was also recognized for our involvement in a number of other initiatives in northwest Illinois over the past year.



The LCTC and Blackhawk Hills both work closely with the Blackhawk Waterways Convention and Visitors Bureau, a regional tourism agency.

Rock River Trail Initiative

The Rock River Trail Initiative (RRTI) was formed in 2010 to help establish a recreation water trail and a historic scenic road route along the entire length of the Rock River from its headwaters in Wisconsin to its outlet in the Mississippi River. The initiative includes promoting eco-tourism and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. This will be done by enhancing the river's ecosystem through natural resource conservation and supporting the economic development and revitalization of communities along the river.

Theresa Wittenauer, Economic Development Coordinator, and Julie Jacobs, Administrations Coordinator, attended several meetings to discuss further communication between all of the local communities and groups that benefit from the Rock River.



Blackhawk Hills will be working with local RRTI board members to form a Tri-County Committee covering Ogle, Lee, and Whiteside Counties. This Committee will promote recreational activities along the Rock River and the surrounding trails that connect to the river. This will mean promoting the River Fronts and businesses in the area by looking for grant opportunities for the River Fronts, bike trails, water trails, and scenic road routes.

Support Natural Resources Preservation and Conservation

- Driftless Area Initiative (DAI)
- Renewable Energy Biomass
- Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference
- Envirothon
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG)

Driftless Area Initiative



Blackhawk Hills is one of the six Resource Conservation and Development Councils that originally established the Driftless Area Initiative (DAI). DAI is a multi-state partnership whose goal is to develop a unified voice for natural resource issues in the Driftless Area.

The mission of DAI is to unite organizations and individuals within the Driftless Area of the Upper Mississippi River Basin for collaborative action to enhance and restore this region's ecology, economy, and cultural resources in a balanced, integrated fashion. Della Moen, Blackhawk Hills Council Member, serves as the Secretary for the DAI Board.

Renewable Energy Biomass

Blackhawk Hills, in conjunction with the Driftless Area Initiative (DAI), works to promote production and utilization of perennial biomass crops to meet energy needs while reducing erosion, improving water quality, and benefiting wildlife.

The 2nd Annual Biomass Conference was held at the Grand River Center in Dubuque, IA on November 2-3, 2011. The conference featured speakers and discussion pertaining to direct use biomass applications, feedstock development, feedstock harvest transportation, and biomass market development in the Midwest.



Jo-Carroll Energy
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
The power of human connections®

Blackhawk Hills is also working with Jo-Carroll Energy on developing a Biomass Energy Plant that would use 20 percent biomass from local farmers. The University of Minnesota is conducting a study to determine the Forest Biomass Analysis for Jo-Carroll Energy.

Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference



Blackhawk Hills was one of the sponsors of the Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference. The event was held on March 16, 2012. There were 79 participants and of those participants including 56 producers. Three vendors also participated in the event.

The program featured eight speakers. The various topics included fence and watering systems, finances, forage species, pasture renovation, technical and financial assistance, and a grazier panel.

Envirothon

The Soil & Water Conservation Districts in the Blackhawk Hills area hosted the annual Envirothon Competition on March 6, 2012. The Envirothon, a year-long learning process, provides an opportunity for high school students to learn more about the environment. The students are provided with study materials related to aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and non-point source pollution/low impact development. Students use the provided study materials to establish a knowledge base on each of the topics. They also listen to presentations on each topic given by area professionals on the day of the event. Upon completion of the year-long process, the students are tested on the five subject areas.

This past year, 23 teams participated in the competition. Members of the winning team will each receive a \$400 college scholarship and advance to the Illinois Envirothon Competition to be held in May 2012. The top three schools were:



Dixon High School students from left to right: John Thomas, Vivian Villegas, Justin Hohlen, Kacie Jo Dillow, and Joey Hammitt

- 1st Place - Dixon High School
- 2nd Place - Dakota High School
- 3rd Place - Erie High School

Julie Jacobs, Blackhawk Hills' Administrations Coordinator, served as the Emcee and a group leader at the competition. Blackhawk Hills is one of the funding sources for the scholarships.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant

Serving as the regional economic development and planning entity, Blackhawk Hills was awarded \$828,569 to be used for Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) in our area. All attempts were made to ensure projects and funds were spread throughout our six counties.

Twenty-seven communities and local entities of government were awarded grants to assist with projects in community facilities that promoted the conservation of energy. Twenty-five of the projects were completed by the deadline of March 31, 2012. The funds came from stimulus dollars from the U.S. Department of Energy, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Illinois Association of Regional Councils.



New energy efficient lights at the East Dubuque High School gymnasium.



Daniel Payette presenting Don Hoyle and Caryl Buford of the Village of Orangeville with a check for energy efficient street lights.

Support Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Collaboration

- Website Assistance Program
- Geographic Information System (GIS) and Information Technology (IT)
- University of Illinois Extension
- Entrepreneurs and Inventors Club
- Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)
- Partnership for a Connected Illinois (PCI) and eTeam

Website Assistance Program

A number of our communities and counties had outdated websites or no websites at all. When Blackhawk Hills received \$10,000 from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), we earmarked the funds to assist communities and counties within our administrative boundaries in the development of websites or updating of current websites. These funds were matched by local investments totaling of over \$15,000.

Nine entities participated in the program including the villages of Davis Junction, Hillcrest, Lena, Mt. Morris, and Steward, the cities of Morrison and Sterling, Lee County, and the Jo-Carroll Local Redevelopment Authority.

Program participants were invited to attend a series of two workshops.

Blackhawk Hills hosted the first workshop on November 4, 2011, with M45 Marketing Services of Freeport, Illinois presenting. Approximately 25 participants attended the event which was designed to assist with the basic construction and development of their website. The second workshop will be held in June 2012 and will center on how to maintain and regularly update the content and activities of a website.



Theresa Wittenauer presenting Sally Gray, Linda Miller, Diane Palmer, and Jerry Stauffer of the Village of Mt. Morris with a check for the website assistance program.

Geographic Information Systems and Information Technology

Blackhawk Hills sponsored roundtable discussions with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Information Technology (IT) officials. GIS and IT from county and municipal governments heard presentations on the Win-GIS Consortium. The group's second meeting featured a discussion of legal issues in GIS, specifically those related to open records requests for governmental GIS data. Attendees have included representatives of Boone, Winnebago, and LaSalle counties.

University of Illinois Extension

The University of Illinois Extension offices have undergone reorganization and consolidation. With this change, it has become a major goal of Extension to promote community and economic development education initiatives and cooperate in regionally focused activities. We are working on collaborating on regional initiatives and trying to find ways to partner on projects to help expand our existing resources. Typically, Blackhawk Hills identifies regional service and resource needs while Extension offers the programs to educate and train.



Entrepreneurs and Inventors Club

Blackhawk Hills continues to provide technical and financial assistance to the Blackhawk Hills Entrepreneurs and Inventors (E&I) Club. This club formed in 2005 and is one of the only surviving E&I Clubs in the Northern Illinois and Quad Cities Region. The E&I Club is a place where individuals can meet to share knowledge, experiences, challenges, and ideas and find the resources and tools to attain success in their ventures.

The club continues to meet monthly. Planning took place over this past year to help add new elements to the group, such as finding ways to obtain youth involvement in our local communities. One approach was to begin a partnership with the University of Illinois Extension to determine how local foods can provide entrepreneurial opportunities for youth who would like to be involved in local farmer's markets or co-ops. Another approach was following the framework setup by the Effingham CEO Program. We have been coordinating efforts with the Whiteside Area Career Center and other partners to launch the program to Sauk Valley area high schools in Fall 2013.

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

AmeriCorps VISTA is a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty in rural areas. VISTA members commit to serve full-time for at least one year at a nonprofit organization or local government agency, working to fight illiteracy, improve health services, create businesses, and strengthen community groups. The primary mission is to create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

Blackhawk Hills would like to thank John Huggins for his three years of service to the region as the Blackhawk Hills sponsored AmeriCorp VISTA volunteer. Over the three year period, Blackhawk Hills provided financial assistance to support John in his role with VISTA and his efforts to help improve life in the region.

As a part of John's VISTA service, he provided administrative support for the Entrepreneur and Inventor's Club on behalf of Blackhawk Hills. In this role, John provided meeting coordination, club administration, website maintenance and assistance, and helped create training sessions and workshops for club members.

Partnership for a Connected Illinois

The Partnership for a Connected Illinois (PCI), also known as "Broadband Illinois," is responsible for collecting broadband data across the state, ensuring broadband access in the state's 102 counties, and maximizing the use and impact of broadband connectivity. In late 2011, Blackhawk Hills' Theresa Wittenauer was invited to participate on one of PCI's various regional eTeams; she now serves as a non-profit representative on the northwest Illinois eTeam.

Blackhawk Hills Financials

Funding Distributions

Providing grants assistance and funding to organizations remains an integral part of Blackhawk Hills' efforts. In 2011-2012, the council distributed over \$520,000 throughout the six-county region. Whether a community or organization receives funding is dependent on an organization's ability to engage in the project proposal process, the availability of local match dollars/in-kind contributions, and whether a project meets guidelines established by federal/state governments and other organizations that provide funding.

Statement of Financial Position as of March 31, 2012 (unaudited) Fiscal Year April 1, 2011 - March 31, 2012

Revenue

Carryover from 2010-2011	\$465,445.13
Federal	\$432,459.56
State	\$ 0
Local	\$ 23,671.31
Misc.	\$ 2,614.81
Interest	\$ 519.57
	\$924,710.38

Expenses

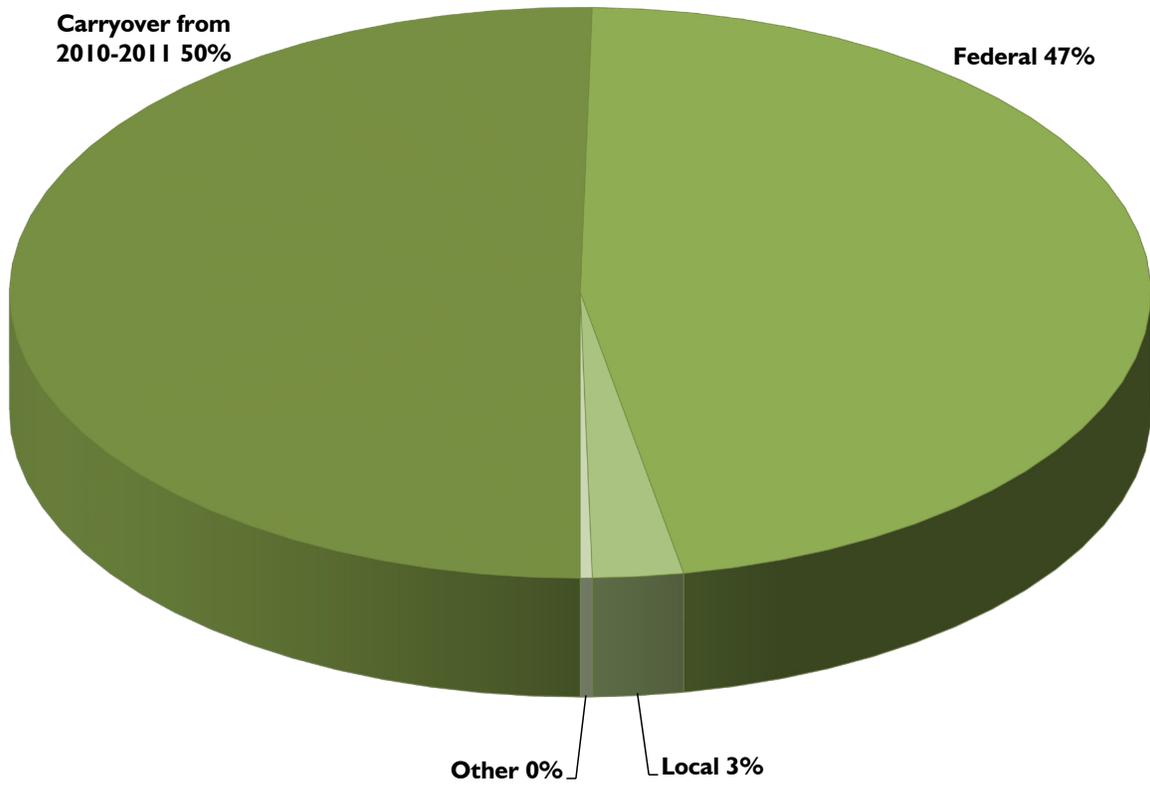
Salaries, Wages, and Benefits	\$158,656.05
Insurance	\$ 976.75
Consultants and Professional Fees	\$ 2,675.56
Travel	\$ 21,135.17
Meetings, Conferences, and Training	\$ 2,043.72
Equipment and Supplies	\$ 22,638.57
Printing and Copying	\$ 318.85
Postage	\$ 326.40
Rent and Utilities	\$ 13,648.36
Advertisement	\$ 759.55
Dues and Subscriptions	\$ 910.00
Projects	\$520,687.70
Misc.	\$ 533.68
	\$745,310.36

Carryover to 2012-2013

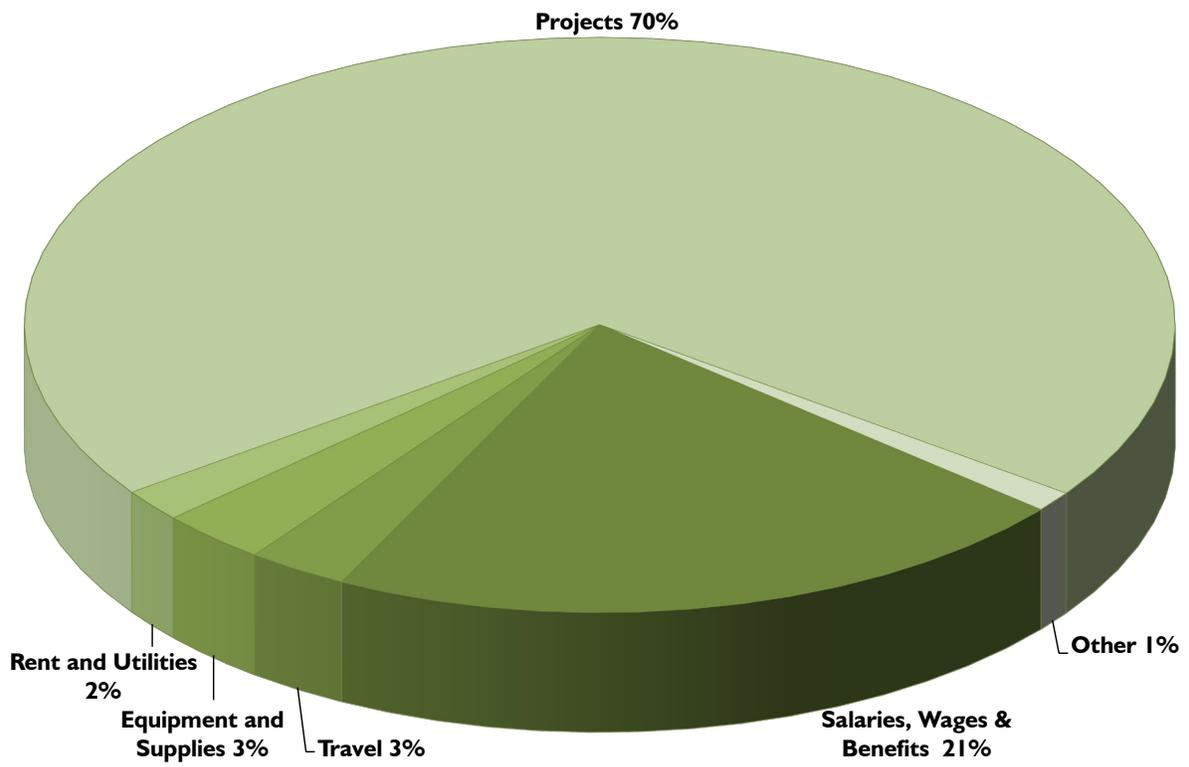
\$179,400.02

Copies of Blackhawk Hills' complete audited financial statements may be obtained by writing to:
Blackhawk Hills, 102 East Route 30, Suite 3, Rock Falls, IL 61071

Revenue



Expenses



Carroll County

Total Population 15,387

Unemployment 9.8%

Statistical data obtained from <http://2010.census.gov>
and www.ides.illinois.gov

Industry

• Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	5.0%
• Construction	9.4%
• Manufacturing	17.7%
• Wholesale Trade	3.0%
• Retail Trade	9.9%
• Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	6.7%
• Information	2.2%
• Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5.9%
• Professional, Management, Administrative, Waste Management	6.6%
• Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	19.4%
• Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	7.3%
• Other Services including Public Administration	7.1%

Educational Enrollment

• Elementary School	1,512
• High School	769
• College or Graduate School	637

Income

• \$ 0 - \$24,999	25.8%
• \$25,000 - \$49,999	28.8%
• \$50,000 - \$74,999	22.1%
• \$75,000 - \$99,999	11.2%
• \$100,000 and above	12.0%



Projects in Carroll County

- Capital Improvement Planning
 - City of Lanark
 - Village of Chadwick
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)
 - Carroll County
 - Replacement of single pane entry door with energy efficient double-pane door at the Highway Department
 - City of Mt. Carroll
 - Replacement of electrical components in the existing decorative street lights to be more cost effective and energy efficient
 - City of Savanna
 - Installation of high performance glass in facade windows and doors, energy efficient track light fixtures, LED emergency exit signs, and two geothermal units at the Museum and Cultural Center
 - Installation of energy efficient lights, heating and air conditioning system, and windows for the new City Hall Administrative Offices and Police Department
- Five County Economic Study and Recovery Planning
- iFiber
- Website Assistance Program
 - Jo-Carroll Depot Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA)

Jo Daviess County

Total Population 22,678

Unemployment 7.8%

Statistical data obtained from <http://2010.census.gov>
and www.ides.illinois.gov

Industry

• Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	4.9%
• Construction	6.0%
• Manufacturing	13.6%
• Wholesale Trade	2.0%
• Retail Trade	12.0%
• Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	5.1%
• Information	1.8%
• Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	7.1%
• Professional, Management, Administrative, Waste Management	6.7%
• Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	19.2%
• Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	13.3%
• Other Services including Public Administration	8.3%

Educational Enrollment

• Elementary School	1,860
• High School	1,174
• College or Graduate School	911

Income

• \$ 0 - \$24,999	22.0%
• \$25,000 - \$49,999	28.0%
• \$50,000 - \$74,999	21.8%
• \$75,000 - \$99,999	14.1%
• \$100,000 and above	14.2%



Projects in Jo Daviess County

- Capital Improvement Planning
 - City of East Dubuque
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)
 - City of East Dubuque
 - Energy efficient lights for the gymnasium at East Dubuque High School
 - Jo Daviess County
 - Replacement of heating, ventilating, and air conditioning units and balancing of the system in the Jo Daviess County Public Safety Building
 - Village of Elizabeth
 - Replacement of the heat exchanger and air conditioning coils and balancing the entire system in the Jo Daviess Carroll Area Vocational Center
 - Village of Stockton
 - Boilers re-tubed and controllers replaced at Stockton High School and Elementary School
- iFiber
- Website Assistance Program
 - Jo-Carroll Depot Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA)

Lee County

Total Population 36,031
 Unemployment 10.0%

Statistical data obtained from <http://2010.census.gov>
 and www.ides.illinois.gov

Industry

• Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	2.5%
• Construction	4.7%
• Manufacturing	20.2%
• Wholesale Trade	2.7%
• Retail Trade	10.1%
• Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	6.8%
• Information	1.2%
• Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	4.7%
• Professional, Management, Administrative, Waste Management	7.1%
• Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	25.4%
• Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	6.4%
• Other Services including Public Administration	8.3%

Educational Enrollment

• Elementary School	3,671
• High School	1,936
• College or Graduate School	2,304

Income

• \$ 0 - \$24,999	24.5%
• \$25,000 - \$49,999	28.4%
• \$50,000 - \$74,999	20.1%
• \$75,000 - \$99,999	13.5%
• \$100,000 and above	13.6%



Projects in Lee County

- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)
 - City of Dixon
 - Energy efficient lights in the athletic area of Reagan Middle School and Dixon High School
 - Lee County
 - Installation of economizer for the boiler system in the Lee County Courts Building
 - Village of Sublette
 - Energy efficient windows and doors - 33 windows, 1 double-door, and 3 single-doors
- Five County Economic Study and Recovery Planning
- iFiber
- Website Assistance Program
 - Lee County
 - Village of Steward

Ogle County

Total Population 53,497
 Unemployment 12.1%

Statistical data obtained from <http://2010.census.gov>
 and www.ides.illinois.gov

Industry

• Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	2.6%
• Construction	8.5%
• Manufacturing	17.3%
• Wholesale Trade	3.6%
• Retail Trade	11.4%
• Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	8.4%
• Information	1.9%
• Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5.8%
• Professional, Management, Administrative, Waste Management	6.7%
• Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	18.1%
• Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	7.5%
• Other Services including Public Administration	8.2%

Educational Enrollment

• Elementary School	6,325
• High School	3,580
• College or Graduate School	2,870

Income

• \$ 0 - \$24,999	18.3%
• \$25,000 - \$49,999	24.5%
• \$50,000 - \$74,999	24.8%
• \$75,000 - \$99,999	15.4%
• \$100,000 and above	17.1%



Projects in Ogle County

- Capital Improvement Planning
 - City of Byron
- Five County Economic Study and Recovery Planning
- iFiber
- Rochelle Project E-Rail
- Village of Hillcrest Sewer Conversion
- Website Assistance Program
 - Village of Davis Junction
 - Village of Hillcrest
 - Village of Mt. Morris

Stephenson County

Total Population 47,711
 Unemployment 10.3%

Statistical data obtained from <http://2010.census.gov>
 and www.ides.illinois.gov

Industry

• Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	3.4%
• Construction	5.6%
• Manufacturing	20.5%
• Wholesale Trade	1.8%
• Retail Trade	10.0%
• Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	4.8%
• Information	1.0%
• Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6.3%
• Professional, Management, Administrative, Waste Management	6.8%
• Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	22.6%
• Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	7.9%
• Other Services including Public Administration	9.3%

Educational Enrollment

• Elementary School	5,173
• High School	2,783
• College or Graduate School	2,544

Income

• \$ 0 - \$24,999	28.9%
• \$25,000 - \$49,999	28.6%
• \$50,000 - \$74,999	19.6%
• \$75,000 - \$99,999	11.8%
• \$100,000 and above	11.1%



Projects in Stephenson County

- Capital Improvement Planning
 - Village of Orangeville
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)
 - Stephenson County
 - Energy efficient lights at the Courthouse and county-owned nursing home
 - Replacement of four furnaces for the Freeport Park District
 - Insulation upgrade and replacement of the roof at Dakota Elementary School
 - Village of Lena
 - Upgrade to the heating system in the police squad car garage
 - Village of Orangeville
 - LED energy efficient street lights on High Street from Richland Creek Bridge to Church Street
- Five County Economic Study and Recovery Planning
- iFiber
- Website Assistance Program
 - Village of Lena

Whiteside County

Total Population 58,498
 Unemployment 9.9%

Statistical data obtained from <http://2010.census.gov>
 and www.ides.illinois.gov

Industry

• Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	3.7%
• Construction	5.0%
• Manufacturing	19.9%
• Wholesale Trade	2.7%
• Retail Trade	13.2%
• Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	5.3%
• Information	1.2%
• Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5.0%
• Professional, Management, Administrative, Waste Management	5.8%
• Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance	22.1%
• Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	6.7%
• Other Services including Public Administration	9.4%

Educational Enrollment

• Elementary School	5,938
• High School	3,400
• College or Graduate School	2,612

Income

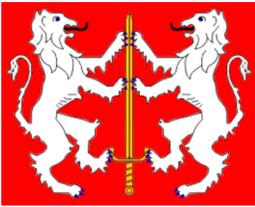
• \$ 0 - \$24,999	24.6%
• \$25,000 - \$49,999	30.9%
• \$50,000 - \$74,999	20.0%
• \$75,000 - \$99,999	12.5%
• \$100,000 and above	11.9%



Projects in Whiteside County

- Capital Improvement Planning
 - City of Fulton
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)
 - City of Rock Falls
 - Energy efficient lights and solar panel installation at the electric utilities building
 - Energy efficient lights and replacement of windows for the community building
 - Village of Tampico
 - Energy efficient lights in the gymnasiums at Tampico Elementary School, Tampico Middle School, Prophetstown Elementary School, and Prophetstown High School
 - Whiteside County
 - Replacement of 28 single-pane inefficient windows with high efficiency double-hung windows at the Morrison facility
- Five County Economic Study and Recovery Planning
- iFiber
- Website Assistance Program
 - City of Morrison
 - City of Sterling
- Western Whiteside County Business Climate Analysis

Blackhawk Hills would like to thank our financial supporters:



Carroll County, Illinois



Jo Daviess County, Illinois



Lee County, Illinois



Ogle County, Illinois



Carroll County SWCD



Soil and Water Conservation District



Whiteside County SWCD



If you would like Blackhawk Hills to be involved in a program or project, or if you would like to donate to Blackhawk Hills, please contact us.

Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development
102 East Route 30, Suite 3
Rock Falls, IL 61071
815-625-3854
815-625-4072 fax
www.blackhawkhills.com
info@blackhawkhills.com