

**BLACKHAWK HILLS  
REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**2017-2018**

**Annual  
Report**



Blackhawk Hills Regional Council

309 1st Ave, Rock Falls, IL | 815.625.3854  
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# Board of Directors

## Carroll County Reps

- Darrell Stitzel, County Board
- Ed Juracek, SWCD
- Dennis Bowman, Area Representative

## Lee County Reps

- Tim Deem, County Board
- Emily Zimmerman, SWCD
- Janice McCoy, Area Representative

## Stephenson County Reps

- Sam Newton, County Board
- Seth Wenzel, SWCD
- Dennis Groezinger, Area Representative

## Jo Daviess County Reps

- Ron Smith, County Board
- William Tonne, SWCD
- Marvin Schultz, Area Representative\*\*

## Ogle County Reps

- Ron Colson, County Board
- Marcia Heuer, SWCD
- Michael Reibel, Area Representative

## Whiteside County Reps

- John Espinoza, County Board
- Eric Epps, SWCD
- Glen Kuhlemier, Area Representative\*\*\*

## Staff

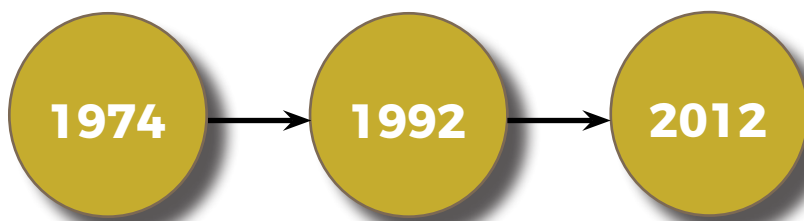
- Daniel J. Payette, Executive Director
- Julie M. Jacobs, Office Manager
- Andrew Shaw, GIS Mapping & Enterprise Zone Specialist

\* = President  
\*\* = Vice President  
\*\*\* = Secretary/Treasurer

# About Us

Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) is based in Rock Falls, IL, and serves Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside counties in northwest Illinois. BHRC is sponsored by local county boards and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and is overseen by an 18-member council, consisting of 3 representatives from each of the 6 counties. The organization's geographic scope includes 64 incorporated municipalities and about 3,839 mi<sup>2</sup> of territory.

# History



BHRC began as Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development District (RC&D) in 1974, when it was authorized by the United States Secretary of Agriculture. Shortly thereafter, the district obtained 501(c) (3) status. In 1992, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated an Economic Development District within BHRC&D's territory, to be maintained by Blackhawk Hills. In 2012, with the support of county boards and soil and water conservation districts, Blackhawk Hills was recognized as a non-for-profit regional planning organization.

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# Focus Areas

**Community & Economic Development**

**Natural Resources Conservation**

**Planning - Local & Regional**

# The CEDS & EDD

BHRC creates and maintains the six-county region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Economic Development District (EDD). Since the district's inception, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) has awarded approximately \$15 million in public works and disaster relief funding. Past EDA-supported projects include a public wastewater treatment facility, road reconstruction, road/rail grade separation, water and sanitary sewer improvements, and a short line railroad extension. In late 2017, BHRC started the CEDS update process, meeting with the Regional CEDS (RCEDS) Committee to discuss goals for 2019 and beyond. In 2018, BHRC began scheduling county-level CEDS forums. At the forums, BHRC staff presented on county and region-specific economic data and sought input through group mapping activities, writing exercises, and general discussion.



## Freight Study

The multi-year, multi-state freight study is nearly complete. Recommendations are numerous, and include such ideas as regulatory harmonization between neighboring states and investment in intermodal/transload facilities. In January 2018, BHRC led a delegation with the East Central Intergovernmental Association to Springfield to meet with Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Blankenhorn to request a road safety assessment of the US 20 corridor between Freeport and East Dubuque.

## Trails Study

Nineteen counters, seven trails, and almost a year full of data later, we have evidence to suggest trail use within the region is healthy. We estimate strong counts (10,000 or more) on portions of at least five of the seven trails studied. Additionally, staff consolidated many of the region's trail layers and noted the location of amenities, as well as elements for improvement and investment. Counting and other work in trail assessment/development will continue in 2018-2019 with the support of partners from the region, as will updates to [www.nwiltrails.org](http://www.nwiltrails.org).

## Technical Assistance

BHRC completed an update of the Mount Morris comprehensive plan, addressing housing, recreation, economic development, transportation, land use and other issues. In the past year, staff also produced and refined a number of mapping products, including commuter maps for each of BHRC's six counties. Additionally, we provided grant writing assistance on projects ranging from infrastructure investment to energy conservation upgrades.



# Enterprise Zone & Business Outreach

The enterprise zone program is a state-created program that promotes business growth and economic development through property tax abatements, sales tax exemptions on certain building materials, and other incentives. Since early 2017, BHRC has administered the zone covering Lee and Ogle counties, provided technical assistance for zone expansion, counseled prospective zone applicants considering construction projects, and advised other regions about new zone applications. We also built [www.leeoglezone.com](http://www.leeoglezone.com) to help with zone administration and outreach.

## Entrepreneurship, Networking, & Education

The Whiteside Area Career Center (WACC) Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program is in its fifth year. BHRC was instrumental in founding the program locally and continues to serve as its fiscal sponsor. In addition, the Council hosted its best-attended fall summit at Timber Lake Playhouse in October 2017. Presenters spoke on a diverse range of topics, including freight, entrepreneurship, and alternative approaches to economic development. We continue to support governmental networking/issues roundtables throughout the year. Furthermore, we sponsor environmental education through the Envirothon, Conservation Days, and Grazing Workshop.

## Annual Meeting & Awards



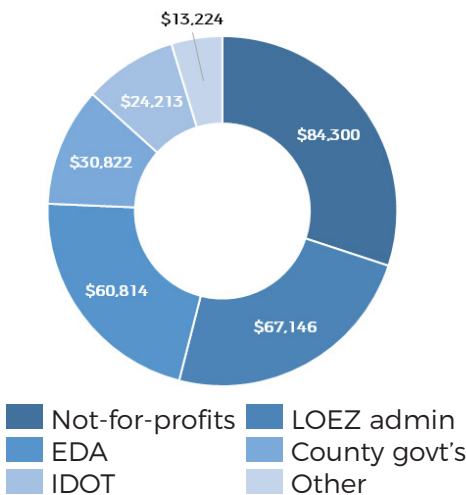
Photo: Encore! Mount Morris reps & Ed Juracek, second from left | credit: BHRC

BHRC held its 2017 Annual Meeting & Spring Summit at Manny's Too in Fulton, IL. Bonnie McDonald, President of Landmarks Illinois, spoke about the power of place and the role of historic structures in fostering economic development and generating wealth. Business Districts, Inc, Cindy Bohde Enterprises, and Wohltgroup presented on the imperative of local municipalities/counties positioning and branding themselves deliberately. At the event, the multi-partner Storybook Trail Committee received the I ♥ Northwest Illinois Award. The Encore! Mount Morris group was presented with the Carson DeJarnatt Excellence in Community & Economic Development Award.

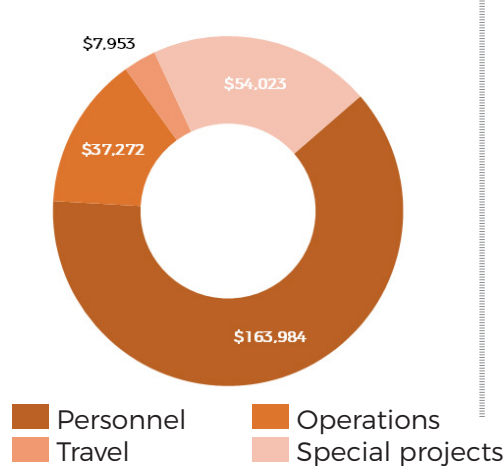
## Financials

April 1, 2017 - March 31, 2018 Unaudited Statement of Financials

**17/18 REVENUES** - \$280,519



**17/18 EXPENDITURES** - \$263,232



**3/31/18 FISCAL SPONSORSHIP BALANCES** - \$165,216

