



BLACKHAWK HILLS REGIONAL COUNCIL

2013 - 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

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COMMUNITIES SERVED

Adeline	East Dubuque	Lyndon	Rochelle
Albany	Elizabeth	Menominee	Rock City
Amboy	Erie	Milledgeville	Rock Falls
Apple River	Forreston	Monroe Center	Savanna
Ashton	Franklin Grove	Morrison	Scales Mound
Byron	Freeport	Mt. Carroll	Shannon
Carroll County	Fulton	Mt. Morris	Stephenson
Cedarville	Galena	Nelson	County
Chadwick	German Valley	Nora	Sterling
Coleta	Hanover	Ogle County	Steward
Compton	Harmon	Orangeville	Stillman Valley
Creston	Hillcrest	Oregon	Stockton
Dakota	Jo Daviess	Paw Paw	Sublette
Davis	County	Pearl City	Tampico
Davis Junction	Lanark	Polo	Thomson
Deer Grove	Leaf River	Prophetstown	Warren
Dixon	Lee	Ridott	West Brooklyn
	Lee County		Whiteside County
	Lena		Winslow

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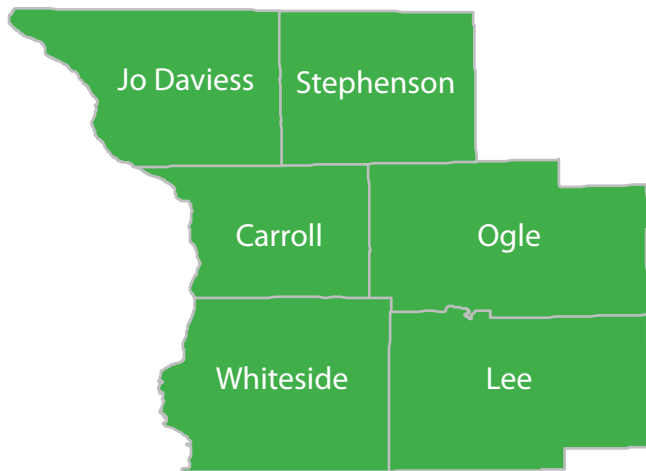
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ORGANIZATION

Overview and Mission

Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) assists the people and agencies of northwest Illinois in developing and implementing a regional outlook - one that enhances economic growth, workforce development, natural resources conservation, and quality of life for communities. The council focuses on leadership, program and project development, planning, and actions that leverage local resources. Our region includes Jo Daviess, Stephenson, Carroll, Ogle, Whiteside, and Lee Counties and covers approximately 3,777 square miles of territory.

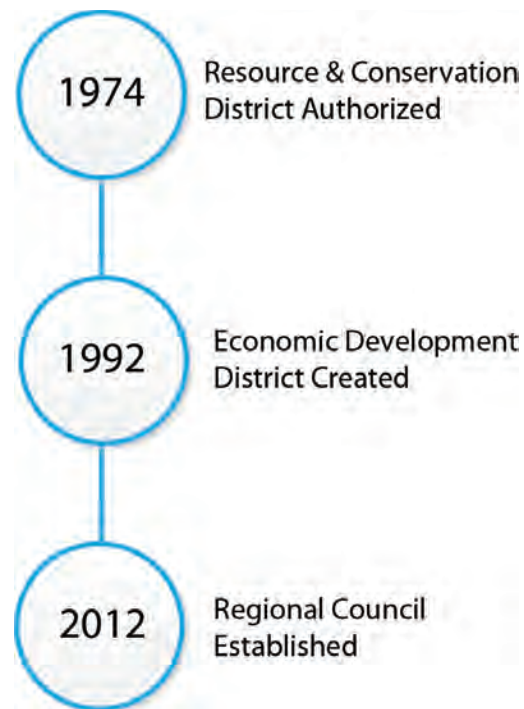


BHRC is sponsored by the area's county boards and soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs). Moreover, BHRC is overseen by an 18-member governing board, which includes one county board representative, one soil and water conservation district representative, and one area representative from each of the region's six counties.

History

BHRC began as Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development District in 1974, when it was authorized by the United States Secretary of Agriculture.

Shortly thereafter, the district received 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service. In 1992, the Economic Development Administration designated the territory as an Economic Development District, to be managed by BHRC. In 2012, with the support of county boards and soil and water conservation districts, Blackhawk Hills became a Regional Council, reflecting the organization's involvement in and commitment to regional planning projects and initiatives.



Priorities

BHRC priorities include:

- * Encouraging long term regional comprehensive planning.
- * Assisting with infrastructure and capital improvement planning.
- * Supporting economic, community, and workforce development.
- * Supporting natural resources preservation and conservation.
- * Supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and collaboration.

The following pages highlight a handful of BHRC's efforts in each of the priority areas over the past year.

ENCOURAGING LONG TERM REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING



EDD CEDS 5-Year Update

2013 marked the start of an overhaul and reworking of the Economic Development District's (EDD) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy - also referred to as the CEDS. The CEDS overhaul provided localities the opportunity to update community and county development characteristics, industrial/business park inventories, and EDD-eligible critical infrastructure/project needs lists. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of the region was also completed using feedback and submissions from various regional stakeholders. We are pleased to report improved participation from municipalities and counties throughout Blackhawk Hills' territory.

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Rural Planning Grant

An IDOT rural planning grant, awarded in 2013, is being used to assess rural transportation assets and corridors in the counties of Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside. The original grant proposal called for special emphasis on the Upper Mississippi River International Port District (UMRIPD). The plan will document public meetings, highlight new and existing plans, and define goals, objectives, and alternatives/solutions. Blackhawk Hills intends to update the document - including GIS mapping - on a regular basis to include in the annual and five-year CEDS updates.

Upper Mississippi River International Port District

Blackhawk Hills staff are working with UMRIPD to apply for an Economic Development Administration (EDA) Technical Assistance (TA) Grant. The TA grant would be used to fund a study to determine the feasibility of developing river port sites and transportation access along the Mississippi River in Carroll and Jo Daviess Counties. It would also analyze and rank sites included in the study area. The port district, with Blackhawk Hills' assistance, intends to explore general development and environmental issues as well - including at the former Savanna Army Depot (now the Savanna Depot Park).

Local MAPPING Sessions

Blackhawk Hills participated in Western Illinois University MAPPING sessions in Elizabeth and Savanna. Staff worked with local and regional stakeholders to better define community goals during breakout sessions and address questions about what resources and grants might be applicable for development and infrastructure projects. In addition, Blackhawk Hills is currently administering donations for Lanark's 2014 MAPPING sessions.

ASSIST WITH INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

iFiber Project

Work is nearly complete on the iFiber regional broadband network. With the help of project partners, including Northern Illinois University as project lead, electronics equipment has been installed and “lit” at most community anchor institution (CAI) sites in Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside Counties. As a grant sub-recipient and project partner, Blackhawk Hills Regional Council works one-on-one with CAIs to ensure that these end-users understand their responsibilities, as well as opportunities as iFiber customers and early adopters. Outreach includes efforts to register end-users with the Northern Illinois



Monitoring Center, so that they may be notified in the event of scheduled maintenance or unplanned outages. Staff has also provided information to for-profit entities and private citizens who ask about using the network for commerce or residential use. As an indication of the iFiber network’s economic development potential, Internet Service Providers have expressed interest in using iFiber assets to better serve their existing customers or extend reach to new end-users. Services available over iFiber include Internet bandwidth, voice-over-IP (VoIP) phone, disaster recovery storage, and other cloud-based computing applications.

Rochelle Project E-Rail

The City of Rochelle held a “Banner Busting Celebration” on October 18, 2013, to showcase the grand re-opening of the City of Rochelle Railroad. The ceremony was hosted by the Greater Rochelle Economic Development Corporation (GREDCO) and held at Illinois River Energy. The nearly \$7.5 million project expands rail service to the Union Pacific and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads via the City of Rochelle. The project also opens up rail service to new prospects for further industrial development in the greater Rochelle area. The project was funded through multiple agencies, including the Illinois Department of Transportation’s Bureau of Railroads, the Economic Development Administration (EDA), and the City of Rochelle.

City of Savanna Disaster Funding Application

The City of Savanna was awarded EDA disaster funding to assist in the relocation and construction of a new wastewater treatment facility. EDA’s total contribution to the project was \$2,020,000, and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency contributed \$7,900,000. The new facility will provide additional protection against future flooding, as well as improved capacities for industrial users.

SUPPORT ECONOMIC, COMMUNITY, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Tri-State Advanced Manufacturing Center for Excellence

Blackhawk Hills and its regional partners in Iowa and Wisconsin are working to identify workforce training, technical assistance, and entrepreneurship support programs to support the region's advanced manufacturing industries. BHRC, with assistance from the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, the East Central Intergovernmental Association (located in Iowa), and other stakeholders, hope to better enable the region's employers and entrepreneurs to retain and attract private investment and create jobs within the 25-county partnership area. A recent \$120,000 grant award positions the region for phase two of the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership grant program, administered by the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

A Hut for Our History

Our agency provided grant application assistance to the Byron Museum of History for an Illinois Department of Natural Resources-administered Public Museum Capital Grant. The "A Hut for Our History" project calls for the renovation of recently acquired museum space, as well funding for new and expanded exhibits. Grant award recipients should be notified in late 2014.

Prospering Together

Stephenson County's Prospering Together initiative, a strategic plan designed to support economic health, community vitality, and "caring about people" in Stephenson County, is ongoing. BHRC continues to meet with key economic health stakeholders and support implementation efforts. Recent work includes assessing progress, re-focusing resources, and making appropriate modifications to long-term goals.

Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Districts Realignment

The re-aligned WIB now includes Bureau, Carroll, Jo Daviess, LaSalle, Lee, Ogle, Putnam, and Whiteside Counties. Blackhawk Hills has worked to re-energize links between economic and workforce development and private businesses. BHRC's executive director also serves on the Regional Workforce Partnership Board.

SUPPORT NATURAL RESOURCES PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION



Public Sector Energy Efficiency Incentives Program

Blackhawk Hills was approved as a DCEO Illinois Energy Now/Public Sector Energy Efficiency Program sub-contractor. Staff received training for conducting onsite evaluations and completing applications for energy efficiency (EE) incentives. The agency has supported the City of Amboy, Lee County 9-1-1, Village of Lena, City of Rock Falls, and Whiteside County Airport. We have also worked with and conducted research for the Coloma Township Park District, Paw Paw Library, and City of Sterling. Our agency continues to encourage public bodies with lighting, HVAC, insulation, and related EE projects to contact our office to determine eligibility for the program.

Rock River Trail Initiative

Stakeholders have met to inventory corridor assets and assess strategies to market the river trail to users and user-communities. Assets, such as our shared Native American and other ethnic settlement history, were noted, as well as our unique rural experience that has wide appeal for travelers from Chicago, Madison, Milwaukee, and elsewhere. Opportunities for the trail include a common vision and marketing brand, corridor/trail based events to attract visitors, and river oriented activities, such as birding and fishing. Challenges remain, including cost sharing and community involvement.

Renewable Energy Biomass Symposium

In partnership with the University of Illinois Extension, Blackhawk Hills hosted the Tri-State Heating with Biomass Symposium on October 24, 2013. Over forty people participated. Community leaders, residential fuel suppliers, entrepreneurs, investors, and home/building owners were invited to explore the Tri-State area's potential to use locally-grown, renewable woody biomass as a cost-competitive option to heat facilities.

SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION, AND COLLABORATION

Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities

The Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program is a way to educate high school students to become experienced entrepreneurs while also receiving academic credit hours. The first Whiteside Area Career Center CEO class started in 2013. 2013's program has 23 students from 12 different area high schools. To date, the students have met with over 50 area businesses and their leaders. They have also heard presentations discussing business related topics from over 55 guest speakers. Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) serves on the CEO executive and advisory boards and acts as the fiscal agent for the program. Board meetings are held monthly.

Northwest Illinois Development Guide

BHRC is producing a development guide to the agencies, incentives, and resources of northwest Illinois. The document will provide a starting point for local officials – especially those in our smallest communities – for identifying and learning about the stakeholders involved in regional economic development. GIS maps will be integrated, and the narrative will be used to supplement the CEDS update and report to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) concerning the region's transportation networks and assets.

Associations of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils

Blackhawk Hills participates in the State, Regional, and National Associations of RC&D Councils. The Illinois Association of RC&D Areas is a statewide organization committed to providing education, leadership, and coordination. Glen Kuhlemier of Blackhawk Hills serves as Vice President of the State Association. Additionally, Julie Jacobs, Blackhawk Hills Office Manager, acts as Illinois representative on the North Central RC&D Regional Board and participates in their quarterly teleconferences.

As a dues paying member of the National Association, Blackhawk Hills participates in webinars, training, and special offers that are provided exclusively through the National Office.

Illinois Association of Regional Councils (ILARC)

Our organization actively participates in ILARC meetings and special events. We have worked closely with the association over the past year to explore new services and economic development tools. This includes efforts to support the state's Public Sector Energy Efficiency Program and secure IDOT rural planning funds.

Regional Meetings

Blackhawk Hills sponsors development sessions for the area's County Board Chairs, County Zoning Administrators, and County GIS Officials. We also meet with neighboring regional councils and planning agencies to discuss opportunities for collaboration and grant applications.



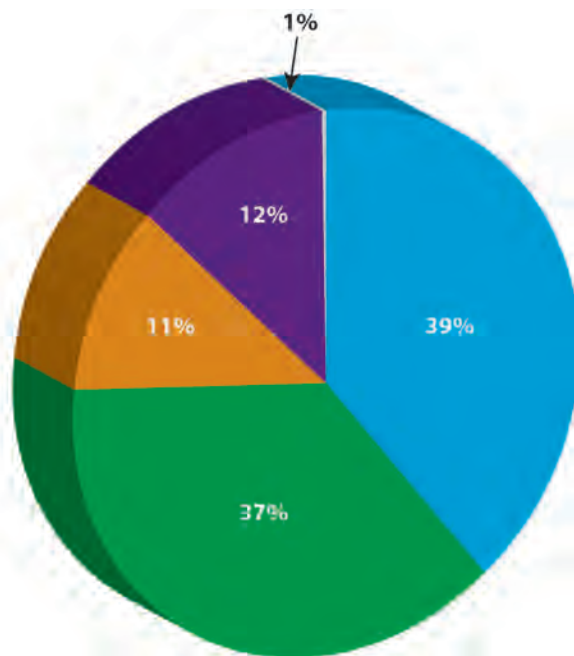
Investing in CEO is simple.

Heard of CEO? Hosted a CEO class? Thought about supporting the program? Call our office at (815) 625-3854 and arrange to support the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, today. Contributions are tax deductible.

FY 2013-2014 FINANCIALS AND FUNDING DISTRIBUTIONS

Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as of March 31, 2014

Fiscal Year April 1, 2013 - March 31, 2014. Copies of complete audited financial statements may be obtained by writing to Blackhawk Hills Regional Council, 102 E Rte 30, Ste 3, Rock Falls, IL 61071.

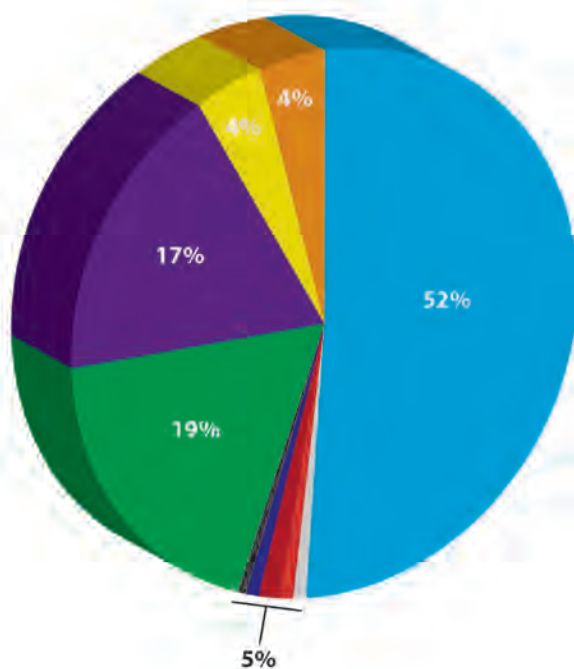


REVENUE

Other*	\$804.78	(1%)
Donations	\$56,608.00	(12%)
Local	\$50,210.63	(11%)
State	\$0.00	(0%)
Federal	\$172,605.75	(37%)
'12-'13 Carryover	\$182,219.14	(39%)

TOTAL REVENUE **\$462,448.30**

*The "other" category includes interest and miscellaneous revenue.



EXPENSES

Travel	\$14,525.17	(4%)
Rent & Utilities	\$14,893.69	(4%)
Projects - Earmarked	\$61,847.98	(17%)
Projects - Past	\$68,407.76	(19%)
Meetings, Conferences, & Trainings	\$2,536.75	(1%)
Insurance	\$2,783.07	(1%)
Equipment & Supplies	\$5,188.34	(1%)
Dues & Subscriptions	\$2,260.00	(1%)
Other**	\$3,226.88	(1%)
Salaries, Wages, & Benefits	\$184,904.00	(52%)

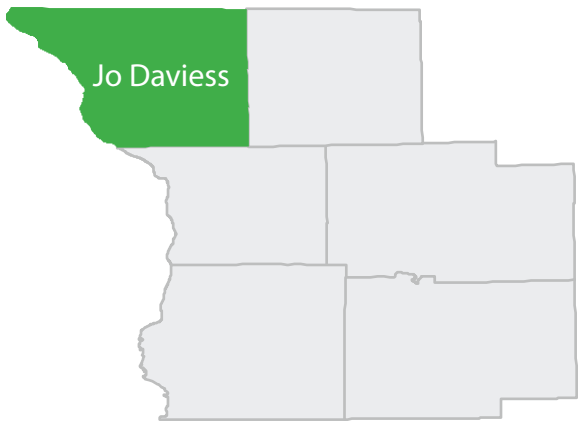
TOTAL EXPENSES **\$360,573.64**
CARRYOVER TO '14-'15 **\$101,847.66**

**The "other" category includes advertisement, consultants & professional fees, postage, and miscellaneous expenses.

Providing grants and funding assistance to organizations

remains integral to Blackhawk Hills Regional Council's outreach efforts. Whether a community or organization receives funding depends on an entity's ability to develop a project proposal, the availability of local match dollars/in-kind contributions, and whether a project meets guidelines established by federal/state governments or other granting organization.

OVERVIEW BY COUNTY



JO DAVIESS COUNTY

Please see pages 8-11 of the supplemental BHRC Development Guide for more county and community details and economic development data.

SELECT PROJECTS/INITIATIVES BY COUNTY

- *iFiber
- *Upper Mississippi River International Port District Study
- *EDA Technical Assistance Grant
- *Tri-State Heating with Biomass Symposium
- *Tri-State Advanced Manufacturing Center for Excellence
- *DCEO Public Sector Energy Efficiency Incentives
- *Grazing Workshop
- *Envirothon
- *IDOT Rural Planning Transportation Study



STEPHENSON COUNTY

Please see pages 20-23 of the supplemental BHRC Development Guide for more county and community details and economic development data.

SELECT PROJECTS/INITIATIVES BY COUNTY

- *iFiber
- *Riverfront Enterprise Initiative and University of Wisconsin-Madison Collaboration
- *Yellow Creek Watershed Partnership (YCWP) 319 Grant Application
- *Tri-State Heating with Biomass Symposium
- *Tri-State Advanced Manufacturing Center for Excellence
- *DCEO Public Sector Energy Efficiency Incentives
- *Grazing Workshop
- *Envirothon
- *IDOT Rural Planning Transportation Study



CARROLL COUNTY

Please see pages 5-7 of the supplemental BHRC Development Guide for more county and community details and economic development data.

SELECT PROJECTS/INITIATIVES BY COUNTY

- *iFiber
- *Upper Mississippi River International Port District Study
- *EDA Technical Assistance Grant
- *Lanark MAPPING Program Donation Administration
- *Tri-State Heating with Biomass Symposium
- *Tri-State Advanced Manufacturing Center for Excellence
- *DCEO Public Sector Energy Efficiency Incentives
- *Grazing Workshop
- *Envirothon
- *IDOT Rural Planning Transportation Study
- *Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities

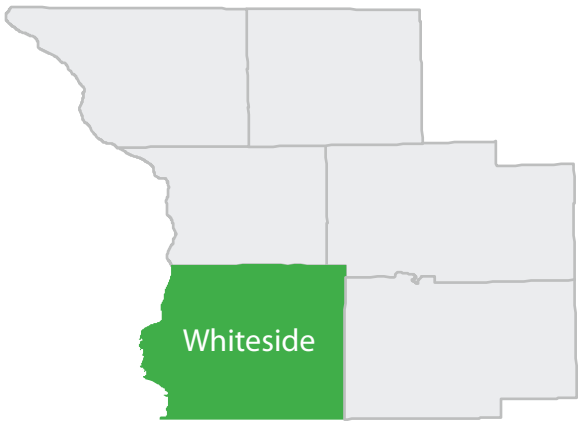


OGLE COUNTY

Please see pages 16-19 of the supplemental BHRC Development Guide for more county and community details and economic development data.

SELECT PROJECTS/INITIATIVES BY COUNTY

- *iFiber
- *Demographics for Ogle County Planning
- *A Hut for Our History – Byron Museum of History
- *City of Polo Comprehensive Plan
- *Tri-State Heating with Biomass Symposium
- *Tri-State Advanced Manufacturing Center for Excellence
- *DCEO Public Sector Energy Efficiency Incentives
- *Grazing Workshop
- *Envirothon
- *IDOT Rural Planning Transportation Study
- *Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities



WHITESIDE COUNTY

Please see pages 24-27 of the supplemental BHRC Development Guide for more county and community details and economic development data.

SELECT PROJECTS/INITIATIVES BY COUNTY

- *iFiber
- *Morrison Strategic Planning Session
- *Tri-State Heating with Biomass Symposium
- *Tri-State Advanced Manufacturing Center for Excellence
- *DCEO Public Sector Energy Efficiency Incentives
- *Grazing Workshop
- *Envirothon
- *IDOT Rural Planning Transportation Study
- *Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities



LEE COUNTY

Please see pages 12-15 of the supplemental BHRC Development Guide for more county and community details and economic development data.

SELECT PROJECTS/INITIATIVES BY COUNTY

- *iFiber
- *Tri-State Heating with Biomass Symposium
- *Tri-State Advanced Manufacturing Center for Excellence
- *DCEO Public Sector Energy Efficiency Incentives
- *Grazing Workshop
- *Envirothon
- *IDOT Rural Planning Transportation Study
- *Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities

As a federally recognized Economic Development District,

Blackhawk Hills Regional Council works with federal officials and local entities to seek out, apply for, and secure grant funding for public infrastructure. Road, water, and sewer projects (with emphasis on job creation and retention) typically qualify. Telecommunications, disaster relief, and technical assistance projects may also be eligible.



2013 ANNUAL MEETING AND OUTLOOK

Blackhawk Hills' 2013 Annual Meeting was held in Dixon, IL. A room full of guests were treated to a presentation by Joshua Albrecht of Dixon's Downtown Main Street. Albrecht spoke about planning and organizing for the 2012 Mumford and Sons Stopover Tour that encompassed the entirety of Dixon. He also addressed issues related to community development and special events planning stemming from the wildly popular band's visit.

Each year, at the annual meeting, BHRC presents two awards: the Carson DeJarnatt Award for Economic Development and the Volunteer of the Year Award. The decision to award particular individuals, organizations, or programs is made by the Blackhawk Hills Regional Council Board of Directors.

The Carson DeJarnatt Award - named after Sterling local Carson DeJarnatt - was presented to Jason Anderson, Executive Director of GREDCO. Jason was recognized for his many years of work and successes in securing Economic Development Administration funds, as well as business and industrial projects for the greater Rochelle area.

This year's winner of the Volunteer of the Year Award was the Savanna Historical Society. The society was recognized for its efforts to restore a historic space and promote cultural and tourism events along a major local highway and economic corridor.

In the coming year, Blackhawk Hills looks forward to expanding its planning services and connecting with new constituencies. The organization intends to build bridges with entities seeking support for comprehensive and strategic planning, grant writing, GIS mapping, and other professional support services.



City of Savanna and the Savanna Historical Society officials and volunteers



L-R: Theresa Wittenauer, Jason Anderson, and Ron Colson

OUR 2013-2014 SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

LOCAL AND REGIONAL

Carroll County Board
Carroll County Soil and Water Conservation District

Jo Daviess County Board
Jo Daviess County Soil and Water Conservation District

Lee County Board
Lee County Soil and Water Conservation District

Ogle County Board
Ogle County Soil and Water Conservation District

Stephenson County Board
Stephenson County Soil and Water Conservation District

Whiteside County Board

STATE OF ILLINOIS

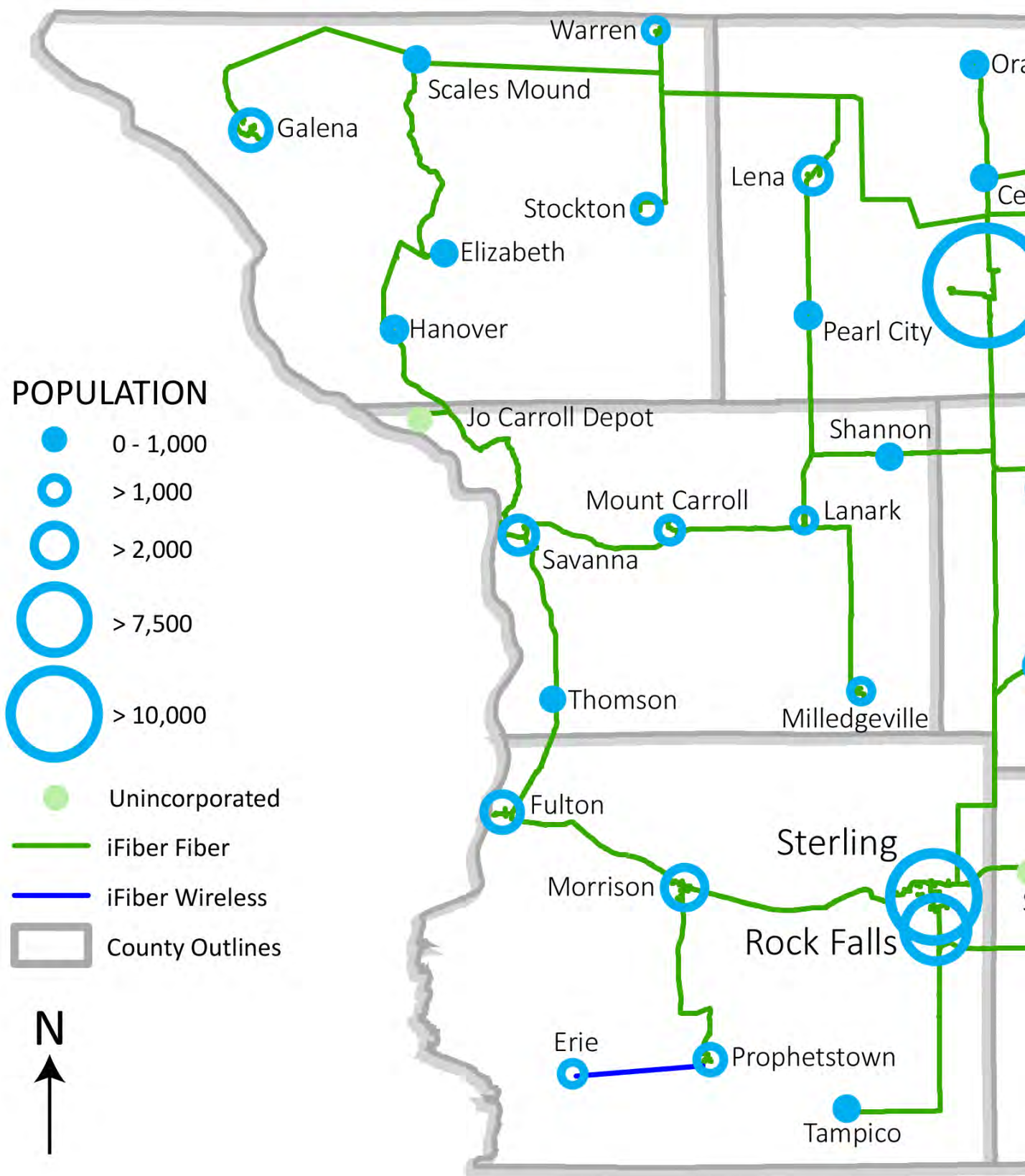
Illinois Association of Regional Councils
Illinois Department of Transportation

FEDERAL

Economic Development Administration
National Telecommunications and Information Administration

OTHER PARTNERS

Illinois Fiber Resources Group

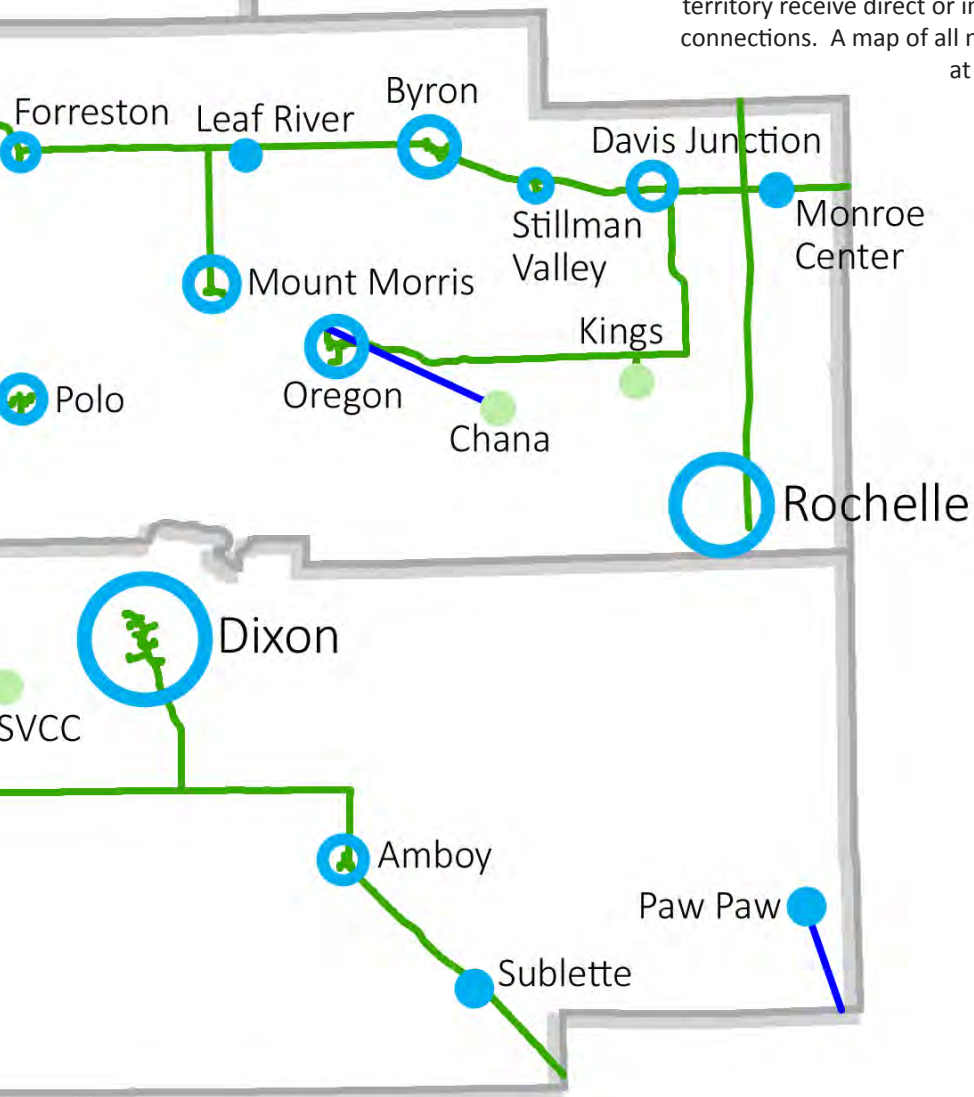




Illinois Fiber Resources Group

IFIBER ROUTE MAP

The grant portion of the nine county iFiber regional broadband project ended on December 31, 2013. This map details current service routes in the six Blackhawk Hills counties only. Please note that mapped details are simplified illustrations and that actual routes may - for numerous reasons - vary somewhat from the information presented. Approximately 300 sites in Blackhawk Hills' territory receive direct or indirect service via iFiber fiber or wireless connections. A map of all nine counties served by iFiber is available at www.ifiber.org.



Serving the Communities of: Adeline • Albany • Amboy • Apple River • Ashton • Byron • Carroll County • Cedarville • Chadwick • Coleta • Compton • Creston • Dakota • Davis • Davis Junction • Deer Grove • Dixon • East Dubuque • Elizabeth • Erie • Forreston • Franklin Grove • Freeport • Fulton • Galena • German Valley • Hanover • Harmon • Hillcrest • Jo Daviess County • Lanark • Leaf River • Lee • Lee County • Lena • Lyndon • Menominee • Milledgeville • Monroe Center • Morrison • Mt. Carroll • Mt. Morris • Nelson • Nora • Ogle County • Orangeville • Oregon • Paw Paw • Pearl City • Polo • Prophetstown • Ridott • Rochelle • Rock City Rock Falls • Savanna • Scales Mound • Shannon • Stephenson County • Sterling • Steward • Stillman Valley • Stockton • Sublette • Tampico • Thomson • Warren • West Brooklyn • Whiteside County • Winslow • and Others



102 E Rte 30, Ste 3
Rock Falls, IL 61071

Phone: 815-625-3854
Fax: 815-625-4072
info@blackhawkhills.com
facebook.com/blackhawkhills