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Blackhawk Hills Regional Council

2019-2020 Annual Report

BHRC Board of Directors & Staff

Carroll County Reps

- Darrell Stitzel, County Board
- Ed Juracek, SWCD*
- Jill Janssen, Area Representative

Lee County Reps

- Tim Deem, County Board
- Kari Wolfe, SWCD
- Janice McCoy, Area Representative

Stephenson County Reps

- Sam Newton, County Board
- Seth Wenzel, SWCD
- Vacant, Area Representative

Jo Daviess County Reps

- Ron Smith, County Board
- Nicole Haas, SWCD
- Marvin Schultz, Area Representative**

Ogle County Reps

- Marcia Heuer, County Board
- Kayse Rushford, SWCD
- Michelle Pease, Area Representative

Whiteside County Reps

- John Espinoza, County Board
- Eric Epps, SWCD
- Vacant, Area Representative

Permanent Staff

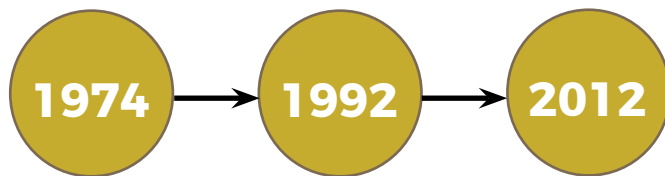
- Daniel J. Payette, Executive Director
- Julie M. Jacobs, Office Manager
- Andrew Shaw, GIS Mapping & EZ Specialist



* President

** Vice President

Our History



BHRC began as Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development District in 1974. In 1992, the federal Economic Development Administration designated BHRC as an Economic Development District. Then in 2012, with the support of the region's county boards and soil and water conservation districts, Blackhawk Hills, a 501(c)(3), was recognized as Northwest Illinois' regional planning organization.

Focus Areas

Community & Economic Development

Livability & Natural Resources Conservation

Planning: Local & Regional

2020 Decennial Census

Sensing Congressional seats and federal funding at risk, the State of Illinois allocated moneys to support the count of every Illinoisan during the 2020 Census. BHRC was the recipient of two sub-grants to be used to conduct Census outreach supporting awareness and education for various populations within the six counties of Northwest Illinois. With COVID-19 impacting what type of outreach was possible, BHRC - in partnership with the City of Freeport and the Greater Freeport Partnership - arranged for the purchase and distribution of over 10,000 bottles of Census-branded hand sanitizer. Staff also launched the website www.nwilcounts.org, a local, online Census resource for the public. Here, BHRC reports weekly on progress with respect to county and municipal self-response rates.

Highlighted Projects & Programs



Yard sign created for Census awareness and outreach

Multi-Use Trail Development

Our latest planning efforts include the development of a master wayfinding guidebook to unify trail-based signage in Northwest Illinois. This process has included the creation of site-specific plans for the Galena River Trail (Jo Daviess County), Joe Stengel Trail (Lee and Ogle counties), and Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail (Whiteside County). We intend to continue offering planning services for the area's remaining trails as funding permits. Throughout 2019, BHRC staff surveyed trail users on questions ranging from trail user type to overall satisfaction. Furthermore, BHRC staff deployed additional trail counting devices throughout the various systems, observed trail conditions, and refined amenity inventories and GIS mapping files.



A family surveyed on the Jane Addams Trail between Wisconsin and Freeport

Development & Technical Assistance

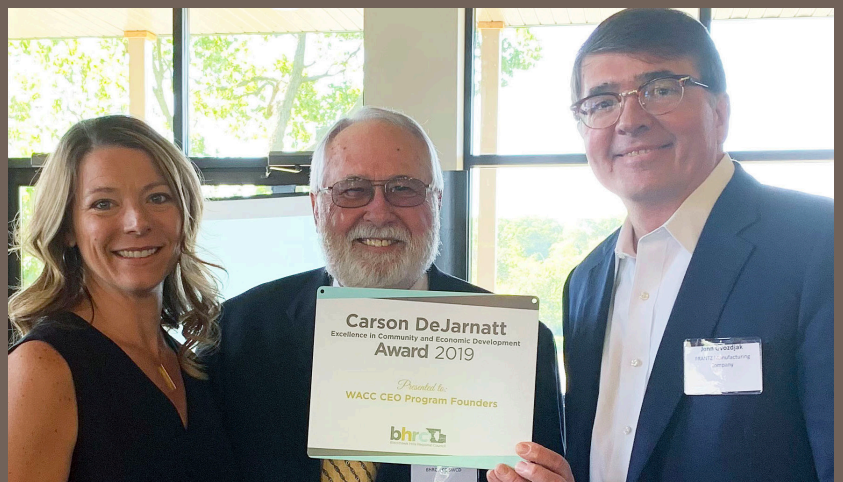
To further Northwest Illinois' Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) implementation, BHRC continues to provide project development support related to Economic Development Administration (EDA) and other agency grant applications. Recent projects include support for the re-investment in the former Shimer College Campus in Carroll County (Mount Carroll) and assistance to the Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home in Lee County (Dixon). Current broadband-related work involves building the basis for a new application for iFiber network expansion within the tri-state area. Our recent efforts also include the facilitation of an eleven-county water resources planning study, facilitating for the Urban and Developed Lands Working Group of the Healthy Land & Water initiative (www.healthylandandwater.org), administering the Lee-Ogle Enterprise Zone and its project fund, and supporting implementation of Illinois' new Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program.

Freight & Passenger Rail

To strengthen an ongoing port development project, BHRC wrote and solicited letters of support for a federal BUILD grant application that, if approved, would improve port assets in the bi-state (Illinois and Iowa) area, including near East Dubuque. Related to other transportation matters, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has agreed to fund a study to determine the feasibility of passenger rail service between Freeport and Dubuque, IA. BHRC will help the East Central Intergovernmental Association facilitate public outreach and data collection over the study's course.

2019 Annual Meeting

BHRC held its 2019 Annual Meeting & Spring Summit at the Hairy Cow in Byron. Erin Guthrie, then Acting Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, spoke on the then newly-elected Governor's priorities for the agency. Rebekah Kowalski of Manpower followed, speaking about future workforce needs. The **I ♥ Northwest Illinois Award** was presented to the Friends of the Nachusa Grasslands, while the **Carson DeJarnatt Excellence in Community & Economic Development Award** was presented to the founders of the Whiteside Area Career Center (WACC) Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) Program.



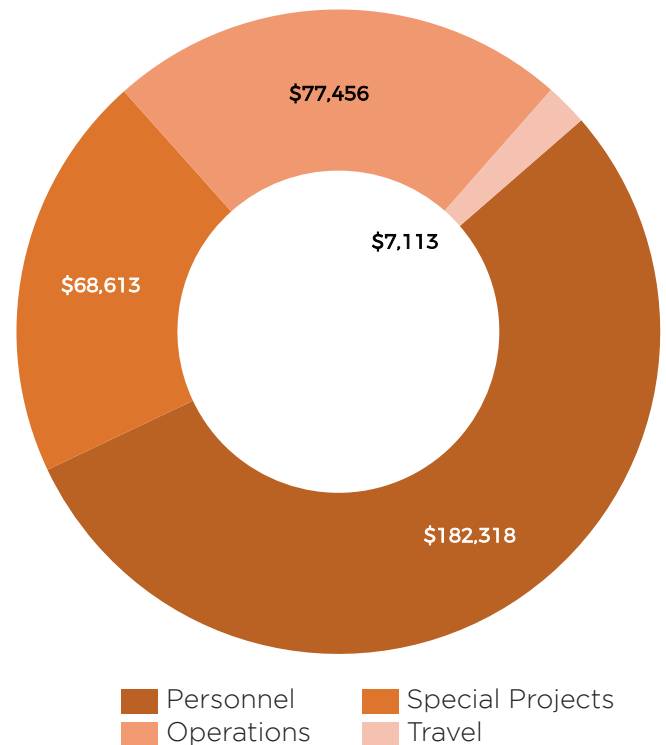
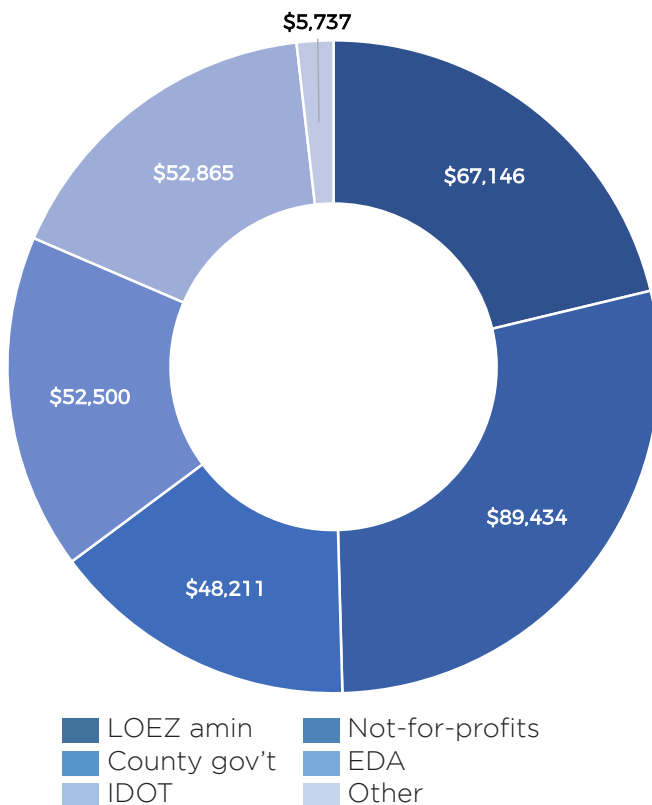
Edward Juracek (BHRC Pres., middle) with 2 of 4 WACC CEO co-founders: Theresa Wittenauer (former BHRC Exec. Dir.) and John Guozdjak (Frantz Mfg Pres. & CEO)

2019-2020 Financials

April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020 Unaudited Statement of Financials

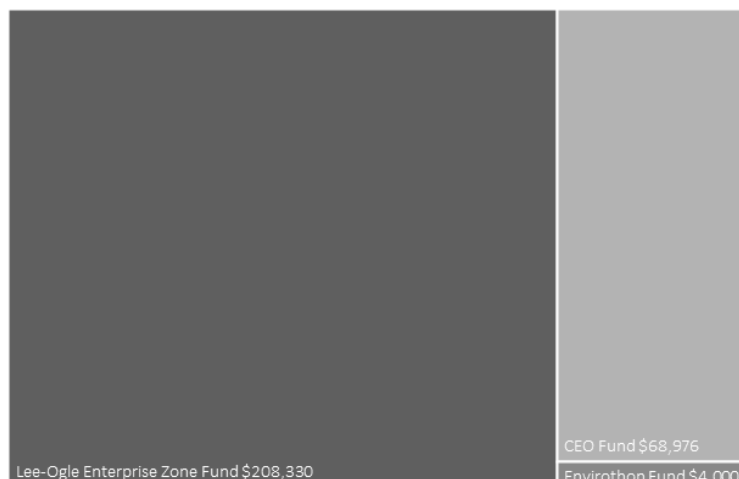
REVENUES - \$315,893

EXPENDITURES - \$335,500



2019-2020 Fiscal Sponsorship Funds

BHRC sponsors three programs related to our organization's mission: Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities, the Lee-Ogle Enterprise Zone, and the Envirothon.



**3/31/2020 FISCAL SPONSORSHIP
BALANCES** - \$281,306



Implementing the CEDS & Proposing Projects to BHRC

Want to help us implement the latest Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy? Let us know. Or, have a new project, program, or policy in mind? Check out the following resources:

- Grants Database - blackhawkhills.com/grants
- Project Proposal Form - blackhawkhills.com/proposalform