



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



# SERVING SOUTHEAST OHIO

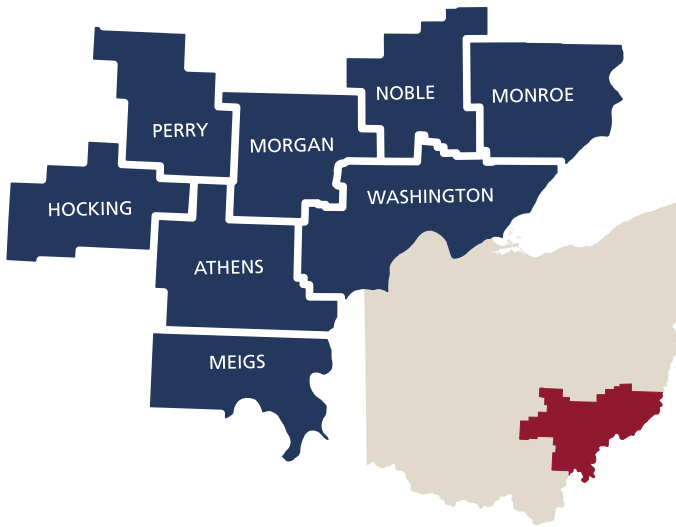
## Dear Friends,

In this year's annual report, we recognize not only the past year's accomplishments but also 50 years of service to older adults in Southeast Ohio as the region's Area Agency on Aging. Since 1974, Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging have enhanced the lives of older adults and provided vital support. We are proud to be at the forefront of providing a wide array of home and community-based services that help individuals age with dignity and independence. It inspires us every day to see the positive impact our network of local partners and providers has on the lives of older adults in our region. We're also grateful to the region's county commissioners and representatives in the General Assembly and Congress, who know the positive impact these programs have in their communities and the importance of their continued support. In 2023, we were able to serve more than 9,200 individuals and caregivers across our eight counties. From congregate meals and care management to wellness classes and supportive services, the impact is felt in every aspect of the aging community. As we celebrate this milestone, we look forward to serving older adults throughout Southeast Ohio for decades more.

The past year also saw us engage more extensively with communities and organizations throughout the region as we helped them identify projects and shape applications for the Appalachian Community Grant Program. This historic one-time state initiative is poised to invest \$500 million into Ohio's 32 Appalachian counties. In our eight-county region alone, our Development and Planning divisions worked with more than 400 representatives of local governments and organizations who brought forth more than 300 projects for consideration. Of these, 71 projects totaling \$381 million were identified to be included in Round 2 ACGP applications at the end of 2023. While the program won't be able to fund all of the projects identified, many received valuable technical assistance through the process that has positioned them well to seek other state and federal funding opportunities. The process also deepened our relationship with organizations and local leaders who serve our region and share our mission to improve the quality of life for the residents of Southeast Ohio. The impacts of the ACGP and the resulting collaborative efforts will be felt across our region for years to come.

Lenny Eliason  
**President**

Chasity Schmelzenbach  
**Executive Director**



## Our Membership & Leadership

Buckeye Hills Regional Council's mission is to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the region by promoting the interests and needs of our constituents to persons and agencies empowered to create positive change.

»»»  
SERVING RESIDENTS  
& COMMUNITIES

**8**  
across  
counties

### The General Policy Council

functions as the overall governing body of Buckeye Hills. The Council is comprised of representatives from across the region, two-thirds of whom are elected public officials. The remaining one-third represent various interests such as business, industry, agriculture, education, health, and issues related to the needs of our vulnerable populations including low-income, older adults, and disabled persons.

### The Executive Committee

The 15-member Executive Committee consists of regional representatives including: four non-elected representatives; one minority representative; Mayors of the District's two largest cities; and eight representatives appointed by the eight boards of county commissioners.

### 2023 General Policy Council & Executive Committee

#### Athens County

**Charlie Adkins**  
County Commissioner

**Chris Chmiel**  
County Commissioner

**Lenny Eliason**  
BHRC President  
County Commissioner

**Tracy Galway**  
Village of Nelsonville  
City Manager

**Gary Goosman**  
Village of Amesville  
Mayor

**Jeff Jenkins**  
Private Sector

**Chris Knisely**  
City of Athens  
City Council President

**Neil Lane**  
Private Sector

**Steve Patterson**  
City of Athens Mayor

**Jeff Risner**  
City of Athens  
City Council Member

**John Simpson**  
Private Sector

#### Hocking County

**Jeff Dickerson**  
Private Sector

**Greg Fraunfelter**  
City of Logan  
Mayor

**Larry Kienzle**  
Private Sector

**Sandra Ogle**  
County Commissioner

**Chris Robers**  
County Auditor

#### Meigs County

**Jane Ann Aanstead**  
Private Sector

**Don Anderson**  
Village of Pomeroy  
Mayor

**Brian Howard**  
Private Sector

**Zachary Manuel**  
County Commissioner

**Jimmy Will**  
County Commissioner

#### Monroe County

**Bill Bolon**  
County Commissioner

**Diane Burkhart**  
County Commissioner

**Carol Hehr**  
Village of Woodfield  
Mayor

**Mick Schumacher**  
County Commissioner

#### Morgan County

**John Finley**  
Village of McConnelsville  
Mayor

**Cecil Mayle**  
County Commissioner

**Ron Moore**  
BHRC Vice President  
Private Sector

**Adam Shriver**  
County Commissioner

#### Noble County

**Darrell Crum**  
Village of Caldwell  
Village Administrator

**Ty Moore**  
County Commissioner

#### Perry County

**Kent Cannon**  
County Engineer

**Ben Carpenter**  
County Commissioner

**Jeff Dennis**  
Private Sector

**Eric Emmert**  
Village of New Lexington  
Mayor

**Tom Johnson**  
Village of Somerset  
Mayor

**Scott Owen**  
County Commissioner

**Fred Redfern**  
Private Sector

#### Washington County

**James Booth**  
County Commissioner

**Gary Doan**  
Muskingum Township  
Trustee

**Mike Lorentz**  
City of Belpre  
Mayor

**Kevin Ritter**  
BHRC Treasurer  
County Commissioner

**Ben Rutherford**  
Private Sector

**Josh Schlicher**  
City of Marietta  
Mayor

**Brad Webb**  
Private Sector

\* Executive Committee  
Members noted in red

# 2023 Snapshot



**\$52 million**

**TOTAL PROJECT COSTS**

Local Communities and private business leveraged \$10 million (20%) against the \$42 million (80%) provided through state and federal funding resources for planning and community development to support 51 local projects.

**125 roads**



**OHIO PUBLIC WORKS**

More than 125 roads in Ohio Public Works Commission District 18 were resurfaced or otherwise improved in Round 37 of the program, which awarded \$8.5 million in the district for 24 projects totaling \$22 million.



**5,898 households**

The Appalachian Regional Commission and Governor's Office of Appalachia supported 16 projects totaling \$25.6 million that brought improved water and sewer service to 5,898 households and 425 businesses.

**WATER & SEWER**



The Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program provided grants totaling \$2.25 million for two projects in Hocking County and one in Belmont County to support the acquisition of green space and the protection and enhancement of river and stream corridors.

**13 projects**



**PLANNING**

The U.S. Economic Development Administration's support of the RISE Ohio initiative enabled communities across the region to develop plans for 10 projects that capitalize on their historic buildings, local infrastructure, and development resources. Additional support from the Ohio Department of Development's Brownfield Remediation Program helped prepare three sites for future development.



**3,182**  
enrollees

SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET  
NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provided 3,182 individuals with \$50 in vouchers to purchase fresh, local produce from more than 40 local farmers and markets across the region.



**56**  
homes

HOME MODIFICATION & MINOR REPAIR

The Ohio Department of Development's Housing Assistance Grant Program enabled 36 individuals to stay in their homes by providing emergency repairs and renovations to improve accessibility, while the PASSPORT Medicaid Waiver program supported minor home modifications for 20 individuals.



**5,022**  
older adults

OLDER AMERICANS ACT



Older adults across the eight-county region received services provided by the Older American Act, including meals, transportation, adult daycare, support for family caregivers, and more, totalling \$2 million.

**4,068**  
calls

INFORMATION & REFERRAL

Our Information & Assistance team answered 4,068 calls from individuals seeking help with aging matters and guidance on Medicare enrollment, long-term care options, and more.



**1,040**  
individuals

WAIVER PROGRAMS

More than \$9.1 million in services were provided through Ohio's PASSPORT and Assisted Living Medicaid Waiver Programs, allowing individuals to age in place in their own homes and communities.

**\$63.8 MILLION**

**INVESTED IN  
SOUTHEAST OHIO**

# 2023 Highlights



## Appalachian Community Grant Program

Leveraging technical assistance funding from the State of Ohio, Buckeye Hills Regional Council was able to assist Southeast Ohio communities in addressing their project needs as they prepared applications for the last round of the Appalachian Community Grant Program. Through these funds, Buckeye Hills provided:

- 1,489 hours of project management, legal, and grant writing technical assistance for a value \$74,984
- 31 building assessments and reports for a value of \$550,858
- 71 Projects Identified with total project costs of \$381 million.

This \$500 million program provides planning and development grants for communities located in Ohio's 32-county Appalachian region. Program funds are provided by Ohio's designation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars. The program is administered by the Governor's Office of Appalachia within the Ohio Department of Development.



## Economic Impact of the Arts

Buckeye Hills Regional Council worked with 45 arts and culture organizations to gather economic data and audience surveys for the sixth edition of the Arts & Economic Prosperity national study conducted by Americans for the Arts.



The study found that Southeast Ohio's nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$24,677,808 in economic activity in 2022. That economic activity—\$12,209,889 in spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and \$12,467,919 in event-related spending by their audiences supported 452 jobs and generated \$3,417,338 in local, state, and federal government revenue.

The Buckeye Hills region's participation in the study was made possible with support from the Ohio Arts Council and the U.S. Economic Development Administration. Visit [buckeyehills.org/arts](http://buckeyehills.org/arts) to view the full study.



## BHRC Provides Testimony Regarding Home- and Community-Based Services for Older Adults

In April, BHRC Aging & Health Director Jennifer Westfall testified to the Ohio House Finance Committee regarding the welcome reimbursement rate increase for home—and community-based service providers in the state budget and the need to do more to ensure older adults can age with support and dignity in their homes and communities. As a result of the advocacy of Buckeye Hills, working together with the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging Network and the Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio's 2024-2025 budget allows for reimbursement rate increases that are already helping ease the strain on the region's community-based service providers and even leading to a much-welcomed increase in the number of providers serving the region. This will help reduce waitlists for services that help more than a thousand older adults in Southeast Ohio each year.

## ARC Federal Co-Chair visits project sites in Noble, Monroe



Prior to October's Appalachia Forward conference in St. Clairsville, Appalachian Regional Commission Federal Co-Chair Gayle Manchin visited recent ARC-supported projects in Monroe and Noble Counties. In Monroe County, Manchin heard an update on the Switzerland of Ohio School District telemedicine project that's expanding access to affordable health services. At Shenandoah High School in Noble County, Manchin saw how students are connecting with hands-on agriculture and farming experiences.

## Medicare Savings

Each year during Medicare Open Enrollment season, Buckeye Hills fields calls from hundreds of individuals seeking assistance to review their Medicare health plans and find savings on their prescriptions. In 2023, Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program (OSHIIP)-trained staff members Brandi Hesson, Gerri VanNoy, Judy Kuhn, and Kara Wright assisted 207 individuals, helping them save \$164,201.40 on their health plans and prescription costs.

## AOMC Advanced Manufacturing Education Tour

Buckeye Hills Executive Director Chasity Schmelzenbach joined the Appalachian Ohio Manufacturers' Coalition and more than 30 partners from across the region on a visit to the Institute of Advanced Learning and Research in Danville, Virginia, and the Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center (formerly the Robert C. Byrd Institute) in South Charleston, West Virginia.



The trip provided an opportunity to learn how the two sites are fostering jobs and economic development in their communities and how those ideas and partnerships might be replicated in Appalachian Ohio.

## ARC Spotlight on The Ridges

Throughout 2023, the Appalachian Regional Commission spotlighted investments supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Highlighted projects included Buckeye Hills' work with Ohio University and the City of Athens to create a plan to revitalize, preserve,



and repurpose The Ridges. The development strategy plan was completed in mid-2023 with a 10-year timeline to establish 720 new housing units and 20,000 square feet of new commercial space. The Ridges are expected to attract \$227 million in investment and contribute \$181 million dollars of value to the local economy, plus an additional \$45 million in state-wide impact.

## 2023 NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Awards

Buckeye Hills Regional Council received three 2023 Impact Awards from the National Association of Development Organizations. The annual Impact Awards program honors NADO members for their creative approaches to advancing regional economic development and improving quality of life.



Buckeye Hills projects that received recognition included the 2022 Appalachian Community Grant Program Convening, the Downtown Revitalization Guidebook, and the 2022 Broadband Listening Sessions. The 2023 class of awardees included 108 projects from 71 organizations spanning 28 states. These projects have made significant impacts on their regions and demonstrate the diversity of services and program delivery provided by regional development organizations across the country.

## Planning Director Named

Buckeye Hills Regional Council named Melissa Zoller as Planning Director to head the council’s newly created Planning division in 2023. Zoller joined the Buckeye Hills team in 2001 and has worked in the council’s Development Division for over 20 years. Zoller has worked on a wide variety of projects for Southeast Ohio Communities as a Development Specialist and, most recently, as the agency’s Transportation Manager. Zoller is excited to continue working with communities in Southeast Ohio to plan for future growth and development.

## BHRC Mobility Manager Earns Distinguished Service Award

Mobility Manager Julia Hinzman was awarded the “Distinguished Service Award” at the Washington County Veterans Hall of Fame and Award Ceremony in November.



Julia was honored due to her diligent work and dedication to assisting local veterans with rides to their medical appointments. Julia, along with Mobility Manager Kelly Isaly, helped residents of Monroe, Noble, and Washington counties secure 980 rides for non-emergency medical appointments.

## Transportation Awareness Days



Buckeye Hills Regional Council Mobility Managers hosted a series of Transportation Awareness Days in Monroe, Noble, and Washington Counties in October. At each event, attendees learned about local transportation options for help getting to the doctor, pharmacy, grocery store, work, and more. Local agencies, including Job and Family Services, Community Action, Health Departments, and more, were also on hand to share resources.

## Southeast Regional Digital Inclusion Alliance

BroadbandOhio selected Buckeye Hills Regional Council as one of five organizations across the state to lead Regional Digital Inclusion Alliances (RDIA) that will champion digital opportunity at the grassroots level. BroadbandOhio announced the initiative as a key component in its effort to develop a statewide digital opportunity plan during its Digital Opportunity Summit. Buckeye Hills and the other lead organizations worked alongside BroadbandOhio in developing the state’s digital opportunity plan, leveraging local relationships to ensure the final plan meets federal requirements of the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program while also meeting the needs of all Ohioans.

## Planning Staff Discuss Brownfields with Ohio Rep. Mark Johnson in Perry County



At the invitation of General Assembly legislative staff, in August, members of BHRC’s Planning staff met with Ohio House Representative Mark Johnson to discuss the impacts of brownfield funding in Southeast Ohio communities as the state prepares to roll out an additional \$350 million through the Brownfield Remediation Fund in 2024-2025. The Legislature again designated set-asides of \$1 million in funding for each of Ohio’s 88 counties. After a discussion of the positive impacts of brownfield funding in the region, Representative Johnson and staff visited sites in New Lexington that had recently found new business uses after remediation.

## READY LDDs

Support from the Appalachian Regional Commission’s READY LDDs program will help Buckeye Hills provide additional technical assistance to communities in Southeast Ohio to help better identify, access, and implement federal funding through American Rescue Plan Act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and other funding sources. The \$100,000 grant award is part of \$2.5 million in awards made throughout Appalachia by the ARC.



## Noble County Sites Benefit from Brownfield Remediation and Site Revitalization Programs

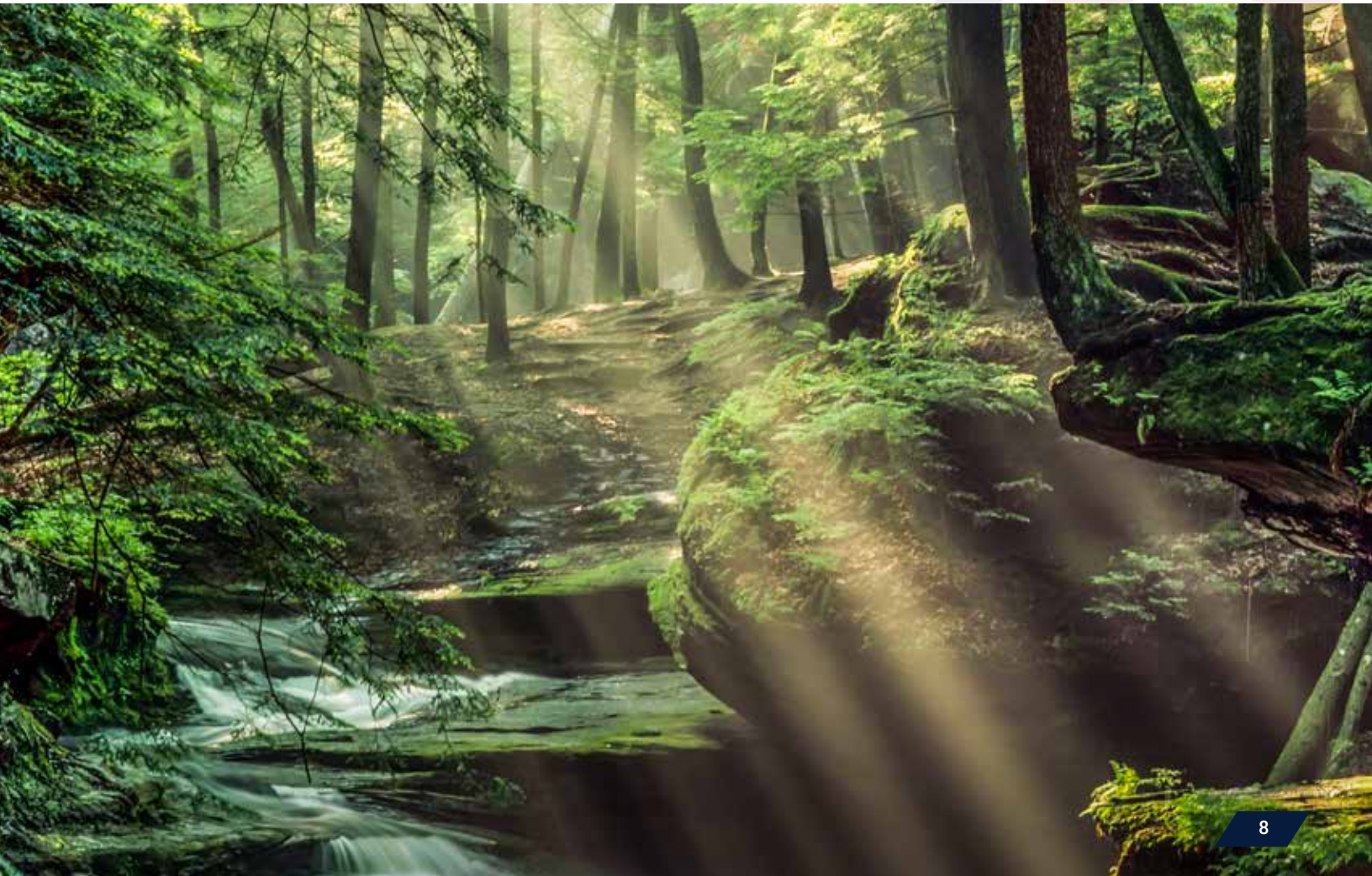
The Ohio Department of Development invested a total of \$1,043,500 in Brownfield and Demolition and Site Revitalization projects in Noble County in 2022 and 2023. The grant funds, which were managed in partnership with Buckeye Hills Regional Council, are supporting the removal of unusable underground storage tanks in Caldwell and Summerfield as well as demolishing and revitalizing blighted properties in Belle Valley, Caldwell, and Summerfield.

The Brownfield Remediation program is designed to provide grants for the remediation of brownfields across Ohio to clean up the sites and prepare them for future economic

development. Properties applying for the program must meet the definition of a brownfield which is defined as an abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial, commercial, or institutional property where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by known or potential releases of hazardous substances or petroleum.



The Building Demolition and Site Revitalization program is designed to provide grants for the demolition of commercial and residential buildings and the revitalization of surrounding properties that meet the definition of blight, vacancy, or abandonment.

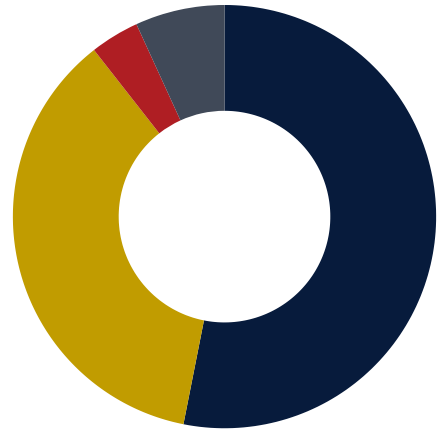


# 2023 Operations

## REVENUE

● Federal Grants and Awards:	\$3,709,846
● State Grants and Awards:	\$2,536,957
● Local Funds:	\$261,337
● Contract Income:	\$477,254

**TOTAL: \$6,985,394**



## EXPENDITURES

● Personnel:	\$3,225,483
● Fringe Benefits	\$1,463,446
● Operations:	\$1,999,781

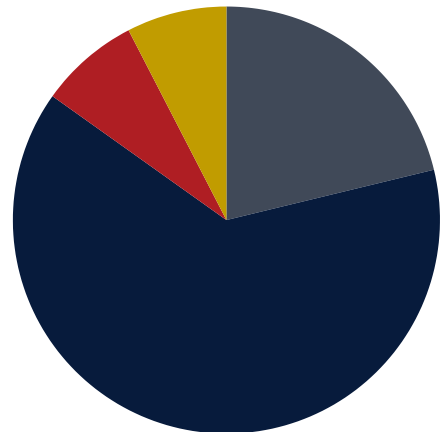
**TOTAL: \$6,688,710**



## EMPLOYEES

● Aging & Home Care:	42
● Administration	14
● Community Development:	5
● Planning:	5

**TOTAL: 66**



# Leadership Team

## CHASITY SCHMELZENBACH

Executive Director  
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## JENNIFER WESTFALL

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Communications Director  
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## JAMIE LEWIS

Information Technology Director  
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## ABOUT BUCKEYE HILLS

Buckeye Hills Regional Council serves as a forum through which local communities work cooperatively to improve our region. Founded in 1968, we work closely with government leaders, state and federal partners, and community partners to serve Ohio's Appalachian region.

Our organization is a designated Area Agency on Aging, District Liaison for the Ohio Public Works Commission, Economic Development District, Local Development District, Regional Transportation Planning Organization, and Aging & Disability Resource Center.

Since our inception, Buckeye Hills has brought more than \$1.5 billion in programs and services to Southeast Ohio communities.



1400 PIKE STREET  
 MARIETTA, OH 45750  
 800.331.2644

[BUCKEYEHILLS.ORG](http://BUCKEYEHILLS.ORG)



# Improving the quality of life in Southeast Ohio

BUCKEYE HILLS

**regional  
council**

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