

2016 CEDS Annual Report

Overview

During spring and summer 2015, Buckeye Hills released a fully rewritten CEDS document for the eight county service region in southeastern Ohio. The revised CEDS provided information generated and gathered from a committee of economic development and community representatives from across the region. The document, accessible online at <http://ceds.buckeyehills.org>, provided content and discussion regarding the background of the region, a SWOT analysis, strategic direction, an action plan, information on disaster resilience, as well as a framework for evaluating progress toward the goals formed by the CEDS committee. This annual report will provide updates for all of those areas, as well as a general discussion of conditions and circumstances encountered in the Buckeye Hills region over the past year, as well as an outlook for the immediate future.

Background information on the creation and refinement of the goals and objectives discussed below is available on the Buckeye Hills CEDS website referenced above.

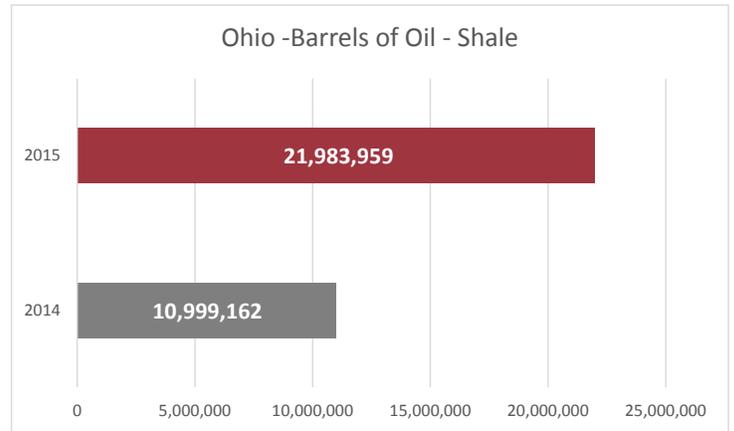
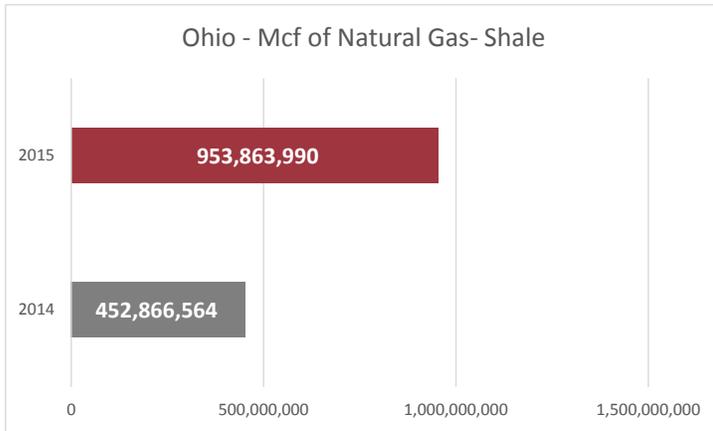
Additional statistical information is under development for deployment on the Buckeye Hills website at <http://www.buckeyehills.org>. This information should be available during late spring 2016.

Regional Developments

Oil and Gas

The most impactful event on the Buckeye Hills regional economy since spring 2015 has been the extended period of low oil prices in the global market, which has caused a slowdown in domestic oil and gas exploration. Prior to this date, the region had been experiencing modest but steady economic growth and a general decline in unemployment due largely to oil and gas exploration and related activities. As international oil prices began to recede, exploration and development of oil and gas resources in southeastern and eastern Ohio began to slow, and in some cases stall. While not totally due to this circumstance, regional unemployment had been falling, but in late 2015 and early 2016 has ticked back up to over eight percent regionally. The low had been 5.5% in September 2015. The tables below outlines the production increases in barrels of oil and Mcf of gas from shale based resources between 2014 and 2015. The increases in production were 99.9% and 110.6% for oil and gas respectively. While the overall level may

be down as compared to projections, this is still an indication of very strong competitive advantage for southeast and eastern Ohio¹.



Buckeye Hills is continuing to work with EDA, the Ohio State University, the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA), the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments, and the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) to formulate strategies for communities in shale impacted areas to help them mitigate and minimize any impacts of a shrinking or declining oil and gas industry. Final reporting and documentation from this effort will be published during summer 2016.

Broadband

Broadband deployment and adoption has been a major focus of LDD organizations in Ohio for the past several years. One of the most important state partners in that effort has been Connect Ohio. Connect Ohio is an agency that provided service mapping, adoption and pricing survey, as well as other difficult to obtain information related to the status of broadband in Ohio. Funding for this agency was not renewed in FY 2016, so many of these important services are now unavailable to communities and development professionals alike across the state. Without this information it will be difficult for Buckeye Hills to ascertain the level of progress toward stated broadband adoption goals stated in the CEDS Action Plan. Buckeye Hills remains hopeful that alternative sources of funding can be identified so this important work can be continued.

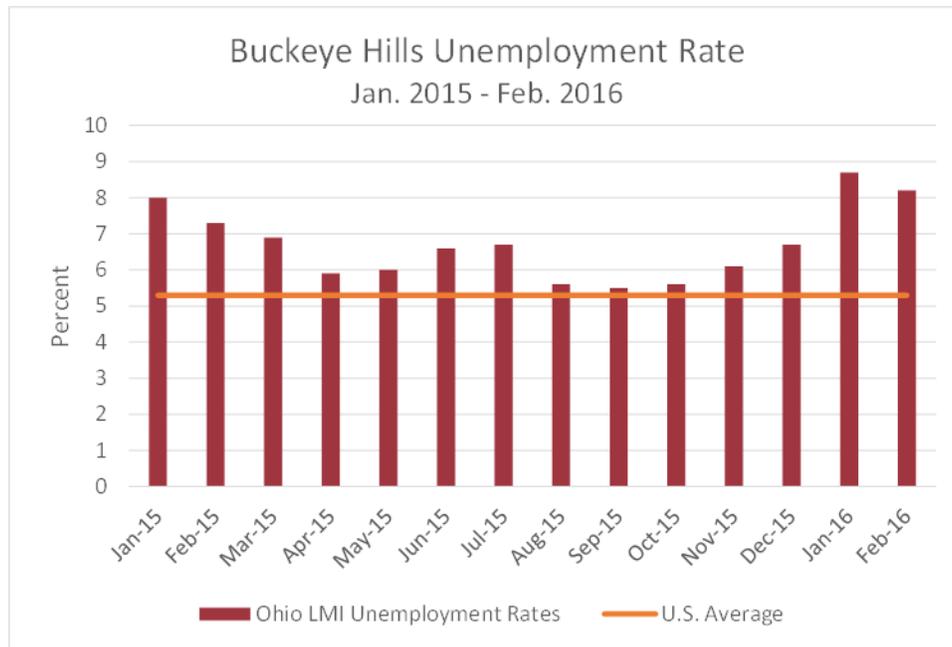
Unemployment

Monroe County and other eastern Ohio counties recently experienced a series of layoffs in coal related industries, leaving nearly 1,000 workers unemployed. Buckeye Hills has been working in close partnership with EDA and the Appalachian Regional Commission to inform local partners

¹ Ohio DNR - <http://ohiodnr.gov/news/post/ohio-s-oil-and-natural-gas-production-continues-upward-trend-in-fourth-quarter>

of the opportunities available as part of the Power initiative announced in mid-2015. Work has already started on developing projects and partnerships that are targeted at accessing these resources, and transforming local economies that have been impacted by the downturn in the coal economy.

Further exacerbating these issues are persistent low levels of per capita income in the region. According to the most recent 5 year estimates from the American Community Survey the Buckeye Hills region still has only 71% of the federal average per capita income at \$20,430.



Goal Areas and Action Plan Progress

During 2015, Buckeye Hills collaborated with local leaders and industry partners to craft an economic action plan for the region. This plan included goals and objectives centered around five core topics for the region; **workforce, infrastructure, economic diversification, education, and community challenges.**

Sections below will detail the progress made over the past year toward each of the objectives developed to further the stated goals of the region.

Ensure that the workforce of the Buckeye Hills region has all the skills necessary to participate and succeed in the 21st century workforce.

Objective: Buckeye Hill staff will participate in a minimum of five (5) outreach activities with local educational institutions or workforce organizations, within the next five years, to communicate the importance of timeliness, professionalism, and reliability as key qualities of a productive member of the workforce.

Status: **On Target/ In Process**

During the past year, Buckeye Hills staff has completed **two (2)** educational outreach activities with local educational institutions; one visit to Marietta College, and one visit to Washington State Community College. During these visits, Buckeye Hills staff not only shared expertise on topics of interest (GIS, data research, analysis techniques, technology adoption and usage, etc.) but also discussed the importance of soft skills to maximize employability.

Objective: Buckeye Hills RTPO staff will select three (3) areas within the district for multimodal transportation system analysis by December 2015. Buckeye Hills will complete the multimodal analysis activities by June 2017.

Status: **On Target/ In Process**

During December 2015, Buckeye Hills selected three communities for further multimodal transportation system analysis as part of the RTPO work plan for 2016/2017. The communities selected were **the City of Logan (Hocking County), the Village of Middleport (Meigs County), and the Village of Woodsfield (Monroe County)**. The purpose of this additional analysis is to identify impediments to multimodal travel (specifically pedestrian and bike access) and recommend potential solutions to identified barriers and gaps. Work on this analysis will begin in summer 2016 and conclude by June 2017.

Objective: Buckeye Hills will serve as an information resource between workforce organizations (WIB/WIA/One Stops) and local development professionals, providing at least six (6) points of contact annually detailing available programs, current needs, and new opportunities.

Status: **On Target/ In Process**

To date Buckeye Hills has provided **two (2)** formal presentations of programs, assistance, and opportunities available to local development parties (MOVRC and WV Opt In). These presentations are in addition to the dozens of individual meetings and contacts where opportunities and programming have been discussed with local parties. Buckeye Hills staff will continue to capitalize on opportunities to share information with partners across the region.

Provide the residents and businesses of southeastern Ohio with utility infrastructure that will satisfy current demands, and scale to meet the needs of the future.

Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will complete and disseminate at least one (1) Local Government Innovation Fund study by winter 2016, outlining the potential scenarios for the utilization of low power and no power water treatment systems in communities of less than 250 residents.

Status: **On Target/ In Process**

This project is a partnership with staff from Rural Action in Athens Ohio. As of March 2016, research was still being completed including site visits and staff surveys. The final report is still on track for release in fall/winter 2016.

Objective: Buckeye Hills RTPO staff will complete one (1) prioritized Transportation Improvement Plan project listing for the region to be submitted to ODOT by June 2017.

Status: **On Target/ In Process**

During October 2015, Buckeye Hills RTPO staff began working closely with ODOT staff to launch a process of gathering transportation project information to be used as justification for a pilot capital program. This effort will tie in directly with the regional TIP effort that will be completed as part of the current RTPO work plan for the region. A first draft of this listing was completed in November 2015, with a second draft submitted for review in late March 2016.

Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will hold at least one (1) informational/ training session per year in each county providing current information regarding available public infrastructure financing and program guidelines.

Status: **Achieved**

During summer/fall 2015, Buckeye Hills development staff scheduled open informational visits in each of the eight counties in service region. These meetings served as an opportunity for discussion regarding projects and activities for the upcoming year, as well as an informational session where programs and upcoming opportunities were discussed. Events for 2016 will be scheduled for the late summer/ early fall time frame.

Work collaboratively to continue diversifying the regional economy to lessen the impact of any external threats to the traditional economic base.

Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will participate in the completion of one (1) study which will analyze the impacts of shale gas exploration in eastern and southeastern Ohio. This study will provide additional cluster analysis for future CEDS documents and will be completed by winter 2016.

Status: **On Target/ In Process**

Buckeye Hills continues to participate in an EDA funded shale impact study, in partnership with the Ohio State University, the Ohio Mid-eastern Governments Association, the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments, and the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization. This effort is focused on helping communities in southeastern and eastern Ohio anticipate, prepare, maximize, and recover from impacts of oil and shale gas exploration activities. The final reports and resulting CEDS documentation is on schedule to be released by summer 2016.

Support opportunities for residents to capitalize on meaningful career opportunities within the Buckeye Hills region.

Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will participate in a minimum of one (1) professional pathway outreach activity with a local educational institution per year, for each of the five years in the CEDS update cycle. A minimum of five (5) activities will be completed by April 2020.

Status: **On Target/ In Process**

To date, Buckeye Hills staff has made **4** professional pathway outreach visits with local students. Staff conducted 2 visits with 3rd grade students at Washington Elementary School (Marietta), and 2 visits with 6th grade students at Belpre Middle School (Belpre). During these visits Buckeye Hills staff discusses career opportunities in local communities and organizations, while also sharing personal stories of how they came to be interested and employed in their current endeavor.

Serve as a resource and a facilitator to local communities addressing quality of life challenges for residents.

Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will prepare and publish one (1) public data compendium containing regionally important data for use by local communities as they research solutions to pertinent issues. The first edition of this compendium will be released by winter 2015.

Status: **Missed/ In Process**

Challenges encountered with the web content delivery system previously utilized by Buckeye Hills caused the winter 2015 target of delivery for this product to be missed. Buckeye Hills has migrated all agency web content over to an improved system, and this product continues to be in development with a late spring 2016 expected delivery date.

Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will annually fulfill a minimum of 100 data requests fielded from local officials, community representatives, stakeholders, and local citizens, free of charge.

Status: **Achieved**

During the most recent reporting period of July 2015 to June 2015, Buckeye Hills filled **115** data requests for parties across the region. These requests came most frequently from government entities, with GIS maps and other data being the most frequently requested items. The next tabulation of data requests will be completed in early June 2016.

CEDS Evaluation Framework

CEDS Evaluation Framework				
Indicators of Regional Progress				
	Achieved	On-Target	Missed	In Process
Decrease Regional Unemployment by 2% by 2020.		■		
Increase Regional Employment 2% by 2020.				■
Increase Regional Broadband Adoption 2% Annually by 2020.				■
10% of BH Region has Bachelor Degree by 2020.		■		
Action Plan Evaluation Framework				
Workforce	Achieved	On-Target	Missed	In Process
Complete 5 Educational Outreach Activities in 5 Years.		■		■
Complete 3 Multi Modal Analyses by June 2017.		■		■
Collaborate with Workforce Organizations 6 Times Annually.		■		■
Infrastructure	Achieved	On-Target	Missed	In Process
Complete 1 LGIF Study by Winter 2016.		■		■
Complete 1 TIP Listing by June 2017		■		■
Hold 1 Funding Information Session per County Annually.	■			
Diversification	Achieved	On-Target	Missed	In Process
Complete 1 Shale Gas Analysis Study by Winter 2016.		■		■
Career	Achieved	On-Target	Missed	In Process
Complete 5 Career Pathway Activities by April 2020.		■		■
Community	Achieved	On-Target	Missed	In Process
Publish 1 Data Compendium by Winter 2015.			■	■
Complete 100 Data Requests Annually.	■			■

The Evaluation Framework table (above) has been updated to provide a quick snapshot of progress toward the stated goals and objectives from the CEDS Action Plan. As of April 2016, **two objectives had been achieved, nine were on target, two were in process, and one was missed.**