

INTRODUCTION

The *Oregon Soil and Water Conservation District Guidebook – A Guide to Operations and Management* provides information and directions to assist soil and water conservation district directors, associate directors, directors emeritus, and employees to carry out the district's statutory responsibilities. Every conservation district director and employee should have a working knowledge of the Guidebook's contents. A suggested strategy for districts is to review portions of this Guidebook at each monthly board meeting. This will establish a routine under which districts can review and discuss information relating to district operations and management. This Guidebook is provided to conservation district partners so they will understand the opportunities, authorities, limitations, and constraints of conservation districts.

Other publications that complement and serve as a reference to the Guidebook include the following:

Oregon Soil & Water Conservation District Laws This publication is available through the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Division.

Attorney General's Public Records and Meetings Manual This publication may be purchased from the Department of Justice, 100 Justice Building, 1162 Court Street, N.E., Salem, Oregon 97301-4096. For a current price please call: (503) 378-2992. ext. 325.

This Guidebook was developed as a collaborative effort of the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). It replaces the 1992 version of the Director's Handbook in total.

Guidebook contents are organized into 10 major sections. Obviously, every issue or question has not been addressed. Therefore, a BULLETIN section was added to accommodate additional information not available at the time of this publication. BULLETINS will be prepared as needed and distributed along with an updated BULLETIN Table of Contents by the ODA and OACD. Every 3-5 years the Guidebook will be updated to address changes in statutes, rules, policies, and programs and to incorporate the information provided in BULLETINS. It will then be distributed to all districts and partners. This Guidebook is a dynamic document and will continue to be a "work in progress". Comments and suggestions on its contents are welcome and may be directed to ODA.

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The ability of conservation districts to fully utilize the powers and authorities assigned in Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 568.210-890 and 900-933 relies heavily on four essential administrative and organizational functions:

1. Recruit, train, and retain high-quality directors, associate directors, and directors emeritus who demonstrate leadership skills and have organizational skills to address natural resource concerns and manage the conservation district;
2. Hire, train, and retain skilled, knowledgeable employees and volunteers;
3. Create and maintain an organizational system that operates legally, meets all the rules and mandates associated with being a public body, and carries out all explicit and implied business functions; and
4. Establish and maintain effective collaborative relationships with partners; other local, state, and federal agencies and organizations; cooperators and customers; and the public.

These four functions have been addressed in this Guidebook under 10 essential “desirable conditions” listed below. Contents of this Guidebook, additional BULLETINS, individual consultation with districts, and training programs will focus on helping conservation districts achieve these desirable conditions. Future capacity building efforts of ODA, OACD, and partners will focus heavily on these functions.

Desirable Components of Effective Districts

1. Dedicated, Effective Directors and District Leadership
2. Skilled and Knowledgeable Employees
3. Clear Sense of Direction and Purposes
4. Defined Ways to do Business
5. Processes to Monitor and Evaluate Operations – Internal Performance Audits
6. Effective Collaborative Partnerships
7. Informed and Involved Publics
8. Stable Resources and Financial Base
9. Effective Involvement in Political Processes
10. Adaptability – Recognize, Accept, and Internalize Purposeful Change

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