

Soil & Water Conservation Commission Guidebook



As prepared by
Soil and Water Conservation District Program
635 Capitol St NE, Salem, OR 97301-2532
503.986.4704 | [Oregon.gov/ODA](https://oregon.gov/ODA)
(Established 1981 / Revised 2026)

This document is intended as guidance for the purpose, membership, and procedures of the Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) and is not meant to supersede current ORS and rules for the SWCC.

I. Soil & Water Conservation Commission

II. Establishment, Purpose, and Authority

The Oregon Soil and Water Commission was created in 1981 in order that there may be the closest contact (coordination) between the State Department of Agriculture and the various soil and water conservation districts in the state and to keep the department advised as to matters of soil and water conservation districts in the state ([ORS 561.395](#)).

It's current purpose is to advise and develop policy with the department in the administration of its duties and powers under [ORS 561.400 \(Natural Resources Division\)](#), [568.210 \(Definitions for ORS 568.210 to 568.808 and 568.900 to 568.933\)](#) to [568.808 \(Taxing district to file legal description and map\)](#) and [568.900 \(Definitions for ORS 568.900 to 568.933\)](#) to [568.933 \(Civil penalties\)](#). [1981 c.92 §2; 2005 c.24 §5]

III. Membership and Structure

- 1) The Commission shall consist of **7 members**.
- 2) As far as practicable, the Director of Agriculture shall make appointments so that geographic areas of the state are represented on the Commission.
- 3) Each member shall be a citizen of this state and a director of a soil and water conservation district at the time of appointment.
- 4) Members shall serve **4-year terms** and may be reappointed. A member shall continue to serve until a successor is appointed and qualified.
- 5) Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments. Vacancies in office shall be filled by appointment for an unexpired term.
- 6) Leadership Roles
 - a) Chair
 - i) Plans quarterly meeting times, sets agenda, runs meetings.
 - ii) Serves as ex officio voting member of the Oregon Board of Agriculture. ([ORS 561.372](#))
 - iii) May serve as a voting member on the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board if designated by The State Board of Agriculture. ([ORS 541.900](#))
 - b) Vice Chair
 - i) In the absence of the Chair plans quarterly meeting times, sets agenda, runs meetings, attend other meetings as necessary
 - c) Individual Commissioners
 - i) On a quarterly basis, or more often, regional Commission members should be in contact with their set of districts and bring any concerns around policy or duties and powers of an SWCD from their districts to Commission meetings for discussion. The Commission may determine the concern needs to be addressed by ODA or other district representation and will in turn advise as such.
- 7) Removal or Forfeiture of Office
 - a) Any member of the Commission who fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Commission, whether regular, adjourned or special, shall forfeit the office unless the

member is prevented from attending by the serious illness of the member or the member's family or for any other cause that in the judgment of the director constitutes a valid reason for failing to attend. The director shall immediately appoint a successor.

8) Governance and Operations

- a) At the first meeting after July 1 of each year the Commission shall select a chairperson.

IV. Meetings and Procedures

- 1) The Commission shall meet at least four times each year on a quarterly basis, and otherwise at the call of the chairperson or the Director of the Department of Agriculture.
- 2) Hear from other agency and partner advisors about:
 - a) Grant funding available (or changes to the requirements, amounts, or not there anymore)
 - b) Collaborations with districts on projects
 - c) Any increase or decrease in staffing at your programs and why, roles they play
 - d) New laws- sunseting laws
 - e) USDA Farm Bill concerns, updates or uses
- 3) A **quorum** shall consist of a majority of appointed members. A majority vote of the quorum at any meeting shall constitute an official act of the Commission.
- 4) Decisions shall be made by a majority vote of members present.
- 5) Meetings shall comply with applicable Oregon public meeting and public record laws.
- 6) The Commission may establish subcommittees to assist with its work.

V. Administration and Support

- 1) The Commission shall receive administrative support from the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).
- 2) The ODA shall provide staff, meeting space, and necessary resources as available.
- 3) The members shall be entitled to compensation as provided in (**ORS 292.495**) (Compensation and expenses of members of state boards and Commissions)

VI. Reporting

The Commission shall submit:

- 1) Meeting minutes with each quarterly meeting.

- 2) A quarterly newsletter published in GovDelivery.
- 3) Minutes shall be made available to the public, unless otherwise restricted by law.

VII. Legal and Ethical Compliance

Members shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations concerning ethics, conflicts of interest, and confidentiality for Oregon elected officials.

The Commission shall operate in accordance with Oregon Revised Statutes as stated in this document.

VIII. Guiding Documents

- 1) Strategic Plan
- 2) Oregon DOJ – [Public Records and Meetings Manual](#) (most current version 2024)
- 3) Oregon Department of Agriculture’s [SWCD webpage](#)
- 4) Role of SWCD as Local Management Agent for the Department of Agriculture
- 5) [Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds](#) -Summary
- 6) ORS’ that pertain to SWCDs (*see hyperlinks throughout this document*)