



Roles and Responsibilities of Benton Soil and Water Conservation District Directors and Boards

Oregon Revised Statute (RS) 568.550 outlines the general statutory powers granted to conservation district boards (see Chapter 2 of Oregon Soil and Water Conservation District Guidebook). Individual directors do not have individual powers and authorities under statute, unless granted by the conservation district board. Individual directors may be given authority or power to act on behalf of the board for specific limited tasks. This authority or power is granted through board action (resolution, motion, policy) and must be recorded in the conservation district board meeting minutes. Conservation district boards may choose to limit or grant authorities to individual directors relating to different actions, such as:

- Staff supervision.
- Obligating conservation district funds.
- Serving as a conservation district spokesperson for public presentations, media.
- Managing projects.
- Obligating or committing conservation district staff time or other conservation district resources.
- Signing documents.

Conservation District Directors

Effective boards work cooperatively as a unit to plan and oversee the implementation of their conservation district's programs. As a representative of the conservation district board, opinions expressed publicly by individual directors should be consistent with established board policy, regardless of the individual's personal agenda or opinions.

Director Position Descriptions and Policy

Although conservation district directors do not have individual powers and authorities under statute, unless granted by the conservation district board, it is in the best interest of the conservation district to identify the duties and responsibilities expected of individual directors. This can be accomplished by establishing conservation district director position descriptions or conservation district policy. Some customary duties and responsibilities of individual directors include:

- Attend and actively participate in all board meetings.
- Come to meetings prepared.
- Carry out committee responsibilities.
- Stay abreast of local conservation issues.

- Attend area and state meetings of the various state associations and other conservation partners.
- Participate in training opportunities.
- Promote the conservation district's work to local landowners.
- Promote the conservation district's work to its constituency.
- Promote the conservation district's work to agencies and organizations.
- Promote the conservation district's work to legislators and other decision makers regarding the conservation district's funding.

Board Responsibilities

In order to effectively exercise the powers and authorities as stated in ORS 568, conservation district boards should:

- Identify local conservation needs, programs, and services.
- Keep its conservation district's mission ("reason for being") in focus.
- Work effectively with conservation district staff, cooperating agencies, and partners.
- Implement conservation district programs effectively.
- Be knowledgeable about laws that govern board operations, such as budget, audit, public meetings, and contracting.
- Develop and implement a long-range plan and an annual work plan.

Conservation District Directors

- Report to the public on conservation district programs and accomplishments.
- Inform legislators and local government officials of conservation district accomplishments.
- Recruit, train, and utilize volunteers and associate directors.
- Participate with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) in a periodic review of conservation district operations.
- Recruit new conservation district directors and associate directors.
- Seek new partners in conservation efforts.

Director Positions and Eligibility

ORS 568.560(2) and (3) describes the eligibility requirements for a person to become a conservation district director. ORS 568.560(1) requires that conservation district boards shall have either five or seven directors, who are elected at the November General Election in even-numbered years. Each conservation district is certified by ODA as having a five-director board or a seven-director board. A board must follow the processes described in ORS 568.565 to change its number of positions. See the section below on Changing the Number of Directors for more information.

District Zoning

To ensure proper representation in a conservation district, each conservation district is divided into legally-defined zones. A five-member board must have three zone

The Benton SWCD's mission is to engage Benton County residents in the conservation and stewardship of natural resources for current and future generations.

director positions and two at-large director positions. By statute, a seven-member board must have five zone director positions and two at-large director positions. The term of office of each position is four years.

Zone Director Eligibility

To become a zone director, two options are available. All requirements listed under each option must be met to be eligible.

Option #1:

An individual may qualify for a zone position if the land ownership or land management requirements are met. For Option #1, a zone director must:

Own or manage 10 or more acres of land in the district. Zone directors may either:

- Reside within the zone that is represented, and own or manage 10 or more acres in the conservation district boundaries.

—or—

- Reside within the conservation district boundaries, and own or manage 10 or more acres within the zone that is being represented.
- Be involved in the active management of the property.
- Be a registered voter.

Option #2:

An individual may qualify for a zone position in lieu of the land ownership or management requirements in Option #1. For Option #2, a zone director must:

- Reside within the zone that is represented.
- Have served at least one year as a director or associate director of a conservation district.
- Have a conservation plan approved by the conservation district.
- Be a registered voter.

At-Large Director Eligibility

There are no land ownership or management requirements for at-large positions. At-Large Directors must:

- Reside within the boundaries of the conservation district.
- Be a registered voter.