

FACT SHEET: *What it means to be a Soil & Water Conservation District Director*

➤ **Background**

Not too long ago, being a district director seemed simple: it was perceived as a voluntary position, didn't take too long, and oversight of district operations was relatively easy. Now, however, the work has become complicated: districts deal with many more dollars, more public scrutiny, and more responsibility. The director's role has shifted from being a volunteer to that of a public official. As times change, districts and their directors must also change to remain effective.

➤ **Regular Time Commitment**

- 1 Monthly Board Meeting (2-3 hours each)
- Basin Meetings Spring or Fall (1 day each)
- OACD Convention in November (3 days)
- Committee Meetings (2-3 hours/month)
- Special Meetings (2-4/year)
- Community Contact
- Preparation Time (2-3 hours/month)
- Continuing Education

➤ **Responsibilities and Obligations**

Conservation district directors, as elected or appointed officials of a local government, have an obligation to uphold the law and fulfill the public trust, **using taxpayer dollars as effectively as possible**. Volunteer status does not make district director obligations any different than those for other elected officials like county commissioners.

Many responsibilities and requirements of district directors in how they conduct district business are outlined in the Conservation Districts Law (ORS 568). However, the concept of the public trust is broader. It encompasses the public's expectation of a responsive, just, and equitable district government accountable to its citizenry. Providing such a government is your primary challenge as a district director.

The attached **Checklist** describes steps you should take to fulfill your district's mission, your responsibilities under the Conservation Districts Law, and your general obligations to the public. The citizens of your district will hold you accountable to the standards outlined in the **Checklist**.

CHECKLIST: *What it means to be a District Director*

Two major responsibilities...

1. Envision a complete program to conserve the renewable natural resources in your conservation district

- ✓ Communicate with the citizens in your district, cooperating public and private agencies, local governments, stakeholders, and other partners to:
 - Identify critical resource conservation needs in your district
 - Seek feedback about your district's conservation program
- ✓ Develop a business plan and annual work plans for your district based on critical needs and constituent feedback
- ✓ Provide technical, financial, and educational assistance to resource users in your district to address priority conservation needs

2. Hold everyone involved in your conservation program accountable for its success

- ✓ Uphold all applicable federal, state, and local laws and your district's own policies and procedures. Give a special focus to:
 - **Civil Rights/Equal Opportunity**
 - **Employment/Personnel Management**
 - **Municipal Ethics**
 - **Open Public Meetings**
 - **Public Records Disclosure**
 - **Whistleblower Rights**
- ✓ Oversee your district's finances, record keeping, & cooperative agreements
- ✓ Supervise your staff and provide for adequate training

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