



Oklahoma Conservation Commission

District Directors' Responsibilities:

A 10-Minute Guide Series

This is one in a continuing series of informational/discussion topics designed to help conservation district directors become more informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities. It is suggested that board members review these guides before a board meeting and then have a ten minute discussion on them at a meeting.

Guide No. 21 - Duties of a Conservation District Public Official

The information presented in this guide is designed to help district directors better understand their role as a public official and assist them to be more effective in the development and implementation of conservation district programs.

Volunteer vs. Public Official

It does a disservice to district directors to call them volunteers. Conservation district directors are non-paid elected and appointed public officials charged with the responsibility to govern the activities of a conservation district.

Responsibilities as a district director can be as limited or expansive as directors wish to make them. However, the fate and future of the conservation district is tied directly to the degree of the directors' involvement, courage, and passion.

The success or failure of a conservation district is dependent on the actions each director takes as the elected/appointed public official vested with the governance of the district.

What a Director Needs to Know First

As directors gain experience on the district board, they continue to learn facts, statistics, history, procedures, and a thousand others things. But first things first:

◆ **Get to know the other folks who serve on the district board** – not just their names, but who they really are. Where do they live? What are their occupations? What are their real interests and concerns? What motivates them to serve on the board?

◆ **Get to know the district staff** – There must be a high level of trust between those who govern and the people they have chosen to manage.

◆ **Learn where to go for answers to questions** – The best defense against being totally lost at the early stage of a director's term is to know the people and resources to give answers to the tough questions quickly.

◆ **Learn to learn** – Learning the job of boardsmanship is a never ending task. Attend national, state and area conferences, take part in workshops and read pertinent literature. Learn that this job deserves a director's very best effort.

Planning

Planning is a high priority for district directors, although some directors would like to focus more on implementing the plan.

District directors are the visionaries with an eye constantly on the future; framing the decisions made today to reach the goals of the district in the future.

Directors serve as the district's compass keeping it on track toward meaningful and successful programs.

Director Duties and Responsibilities

A conservation district is a political subdivision of state government with statutory powers and responsibilities to carry out a program of soil and water conservation and encourage wise land management.

As locally elected/appointed public officials, district directors are responsible for the operation and management of the conservation district.

District directors develop policy, which is carried out by employees and resource personnel available to the district. An effective board uses all the resources available to it to carry on effective programs.

Listed below are basic duties performed by conservation district directors.

1. Attend and participate in all board meetings and functions.
2. Cooperate with fellow board members in establishing district policies.
3. Participate in setting district priorities in providing technical assistance to land users.
4. Participate in developing annual plans of work.
5. Participate in developing, publishing, and distributing annual reports.
6. Keep informed of legislation and policies of local, state, and federal government, pertaining to conservation issues. This includes maintaining contacts with local, state and national public officials to keep them informed of the district's activities and natural resource concerns.
7. Encourage land users and public entities to become aware of and utilize the services of the district.
8. Cooperate with fellow board members to secure adequate operating funds for the district. Examples: county appropriations; state appropriations; tree seedling and grass seed sales; and so on.

9. Cooperate with fellow board members in establishing sound business practices required for adequate accounting and financial management of the district's fiscal affairs to be in accordance with state law.
10. Cooperate with fellow board members in publishing information articles, newsletters, etc.
11. Know the functions of other agencies that operate in the district.
12. Represent the people in the district in conservation matters, which requires staying informed of their conservation needs and taking action to meet those needs.

Training and Assistance is Available to Directors

District directors can receive assistance and training from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

The District Services Division of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission exists to provide direct assistance and training to directors and employees to help them carry out district operations. Training and/or assistance can be provided at board meetings, special training sessions or by phone or email.

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