

Fort Rock/Silver Lake Soil & Water Conservation District



Business Plan 2026-2030

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2026-2030 Business Plan

Executive Summary

This five-year Business Plan (2026-2030) details the Fort Rock/Silver Lake Soil and Water Conservation District services, activities, resources, staffing, finances, and plans to carry out its mission. The Business Plan also contains general information about the district and Lake County and guides the development of the district's annual work plan and budget.

This business plan provides a summary of the district's structure, identifies key natural resource issues and priorities, and provides an overview of the services, programs, and assistance available to customers. It is also used to provide information to county government, state funding agencies, and various partners that currently support conservation programs in Lake County.

Leadership, Governance & Structure

The Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD is one of 45 conservation districts in Oregon. Conservation districts are defined in Oregon law as political subdivisions of state government. Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD is not a state agency, rather it is classified as a municipal corporation, a form of local government, which is required to follow many of the same laws that govern state agencies and special districts. It is specifically governed by ORS 568.210 to 568.890 and ORS 568.900 to 568.933. See Appendix A for the specific powers and authorities granted to districts. Appendix B lists other statutes and administrative rules to which Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD is subject.

The Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) that established and govern Oregon's SWCDs (except the federal tribal Tiicham Conservation District) was significantly revised by the 2009 Legislative Assembly under House Bill 2082. The origin of the House Bill was a collaborative effort among the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, member Conservation Districts, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture. It was designed to address the evolving challenges and opportunities presented to today's SWCDs that were not envisioned when the Statute originated, and to eliminate antiquated provisions in the previous editions.

In addition to the general purpose of SWCDs under ORS 568.225 in the previous editions, the following was added: **"promote collaborative conservation efforts to protect and enhance healthy watershed functions, assist in the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency resources."**

Location & Mailing Address

The Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD office is located at 620 N. 1st Street, Fort Rock/Silver Lake, OR 97630. Staff are available upon appointment.

The mailing address is PO Box 120, Paisley, OR 97636.

The website for the district is <https://lakecountyswcd.com>.

Facilities & Equipment

The Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD shares a leased office with the Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council, Lake County Cooperative Weed Management Area, and Pheasants Forever.

The district owns a rangeland drill and a dolly that are available for rent on the district website.

Finances

Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD applies for and receives various competitive based grants throughout the year for all of its programs and activities. Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD receives base funding annually from the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to partially support the district programs.

Staff

Justin Ferrell – District Manager

Brandi St. Clair – Wildlife Biologist

Fara Brummer – Contract Biologist

Staff (continued)

Tanya Graham – Contract Fiscal Administrator

Tess Baker – Contract Office Administrator

Riane Miles – Contract Field Assistant

Meetings

Board meetings are held quarterly in March, June, September, and December on the second Thursday of the month at 11:00am, unless otherwise notified.

Board of Directors

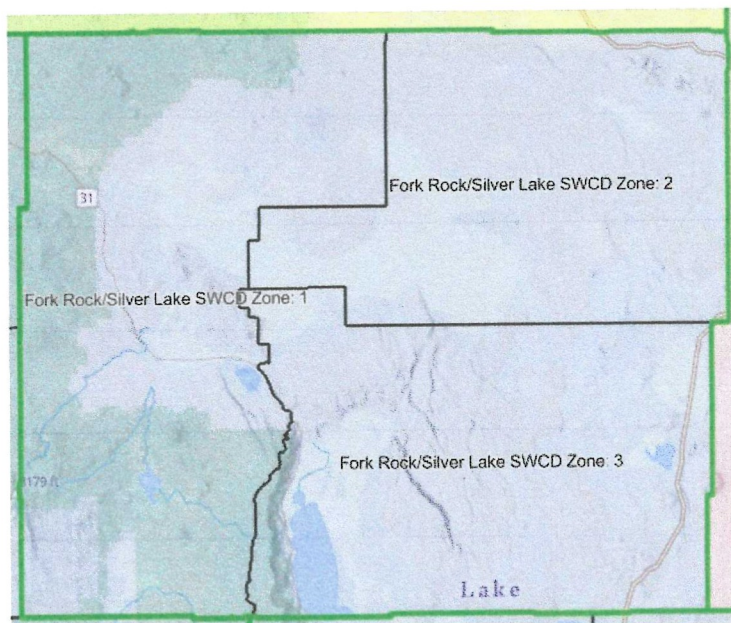
Scott Duffner (At-Large 2) – Chair

Jeremiah Thorsted (Zone 2) – Vice Chair

Conley Kittredge (Zone 1) – Secretary/Treasurer

Chaylon Shuffield (Zone 3)

Shane Forman (At-Large 1)



A board of five directors governs the District. Directors are elected by the electorate of Lake County at the November General Election, which is held during even-numbered years. Director positions are elected in staggered terms to provide continuity on the board and maintain consistent operations. The Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD Board may appoint a person to fill a board vacancy between elections for the duration of that position's term. Three of the five positions are classified as zone positions and must meet the zone requirements and terms of office as specified in ORS 568.560 as follows:

"Zone directors must own or manage 10 or more acres of land in the district, be involved in the active management of that property, reside within the boundaries of the district, and be a registered voter."

An individual may serve as a zone director in lieu of land ownership or management requirements if the individual resides within the zone that is represented, has served at least one year as a Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD Director or Associate Director and has a conservation plan approved by the Fort Rock/Silver

Lake SWCD Board. The other two positions are at-large positions. To qualify for an at-large position, a person must reside in Lake County and be a registered voter. No land ownership or management requirements are needed for an at-large position, which is also governed by ORS 568.560.

An individual director has power only when acting as a part of the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD Board. Individual board members may be delegated authority or power to act on behalf of the Board in specific, limited tasks. This authority or power is granted through board action (resolution, motion, policy, etc.) and must be recorded in the meeting minutes.

The Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD Board works cooperatively as a unit to plan and oversee implementing Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD programs. As a representative of the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD Board, opinions expressed publicly by individual board members should be consistent with established board policy, not the individual's personal agenda or opinions.

ORS 568.560 requires all SWCDs to select a Chair and Secretary from among its directors. Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD may elect other officers as desired.

The **Chair** is granted the responsibility to represent the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD with other districts, agencies, associations, partners, organizations, legislators, and property owners consistent with the policies, plans, and interests of Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD. The chair will also conduct regular and special meetings of the Board.

A **Vice-Chair** has been given the authority to act as the Chair in case of the absence or unavailability of the Chair.

The **Secretary/Treasurer** is the custodian of all Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD records, minutes, contracts, and other official documents.

Committees are an effective way for Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD to plan and implement the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD functions. They can be comprised of board members, associate directors, and Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD advisors, representatives of cooperating agencies and associations, or interested citizens. Currently the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD does not have any standing committees.

The Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD does not have various **ad hoc committees**, which are charged with specific tasks over a specific time period. Ad hoc committees are then disbanded after the assigned task and/or timeframe is completed.

History, Geography & Economy

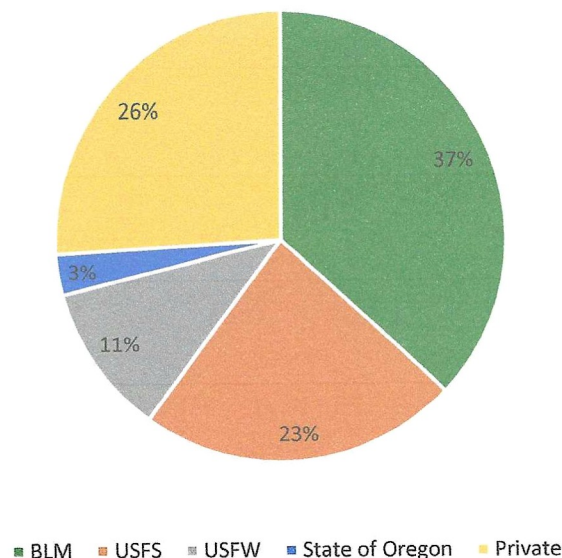
The Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD was established March 1953 to direct agricultural producers to technical assistance resources, such as our partners the NRCS. Since 1953, NRCS and the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD have partnered to plan and implement conservation practices on private lands in the basin.

Lake County is settled in the heart of south-central high desert region of Oregon, known as the Oregon Outback, on the northwestern edge of the Great Basin. The county is generally divided between the communities around Fort Rock/Silver Lake, Plush, Adel, and Paisley to the south and the communities around Summer Lake, Silver Lake, Christmas Valley, and Fort Rock to the north.

is 8,300 square miles or 5,350,352 acres with a population of 8,293 (2023). It is considered a high desert farming, ranching and timber community. In south Lake County approximately 73% of land is managed by government agencies. Ownership is as follows:

Private Ownership.....	656,808 acres
BLM.....	949,352 acres
US Forest Service.....	575,542 acres
US Fish & Wildlife.....	278,750 acres
State of Oregon.....	71,566 acres

Land Ownership



Its economy consists largely of agriculture and natural resource management. It is home to many large cattle ranches, hay farms, and timber holdings (both public and private), as well as several frontier towns and early 20th-century homesteads. Although lumber was once a primary economic driver in Lake County, today only one mill remains in Fort Rock/Silver Lake. In the 1980's and early 1990's, 4 of the 5 lumber mills closed, wiping out more than 800 jobs.

Early settlers to the region took advantage of the many natural marshes, including lands north of Goose Lake, in the southern part of Warner Valley, at Paulina Marsh, and along the Chewaucan River to produce forage for sheep and cattle grazing. In the late 1800s and early 1900s they developed drainage and irrigation infrastructure to be able to better control flood irrigation in these areas to increase hay yields and improve pasture. Cattle and hay production is still the principal agricultural activity in the basin.

Lumber, government, and agriculture form the economic base for Lake County, which makes up over 90% of the Goose and Summer Lakes Basin.

Strategic Direction

Mission

To provide technical assistance to individuals, groups, and other agencies for the purpose of managing and enhancing our natural resources, environment, and economy.

Vision

Our vision is to initiate and/or coordinate with local landowners and agencies, through educational, technical, and financial assistance, providing for conservation and enhancement of water and soils and encouraging sustainable agricultural practices benefiting rural communities and abundant wildlife.

Values

As an entity that represents the local public, the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD operates under the following values:

- Be accessible to the general public for technical assistance and advice in planning conservation projects.
- Accomplish projects in a timely manner and benefit landowners' objective.
- Be accountable in all their endeavors.
- Strive for accuracy in all financial activities and fiscal responsibility with public funds.
- Achieve the highest quality of work standards it can.
- Comply with the Goose and Summer Lakes Water Quality Plan and Rules and partner with other agencies and entities for expertise and financial resources.
- Continue conservation efforts in Lake County as a part of our daily operation.
- Educate local young people concerning Lake County resources, resource concerns, good stewardship, soil and water conservation, and water quality/quantity issues etc.
- Be effective in developing good relationships with landowners.
- Be helpful, courteous, and have prompt customer service.
- Employ well-trained staff committed to leadership and professionalism.
- Take a voluntary, collaborative, local, non-regulatory approach to solving problems.
- Respect property rights, confidentiality, decisions, and experience of all landowners.

Objective

The Fort Rock/Silver Lake Soil and Water Conservation District takes the lead in soil and water conservation throughout Lake County by working with rural property owners, operators, Public Officials, various state and federal agencies, and private organizations. This District believes in the protection, conservation, and improvement of soil and water through our directors' and employees' abilities to plan, assist, and educate. It is our belief that concerns about water quality, water quantity, wetlands, soil erosion, and weed management can be addressed while simultaneously respecting the private property rights of owners and operators. These concerns are addressed through the adoption of this Plan and by maintaining agreements with the various agencies that work with this District.

Goals & Objectives

Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD's goals provide a broad, long-term visioning platform to develop Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD objectives. Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD objectives provide more detailed, current and future-looking statements to guide our annual work plans and staff managed programs.

Goal 1: Minimize water pollution and erosion from agricultural activities, achieving applicable water quality standards when possible.

Objectives:

- Soil health and water quality moisture retention.
- Juniper reduction on uplands to improve wildlife habitat, decrease soil erosion and improve perennial plant health.
- Stay informed and involved with emerging trends involved in soil retention farming and methods.
- Utilization of waste areas by planting perennial forage, such as crested wheat grass and forage kocio on pivot corners will be examined.

Goal 2: To improve Sage Grouse habitat while contributing to the economic sustainability of landowners in an effort to maintain the agricultural way of life in Lake County.

Objectives:

- Enroll interested landowners in CCAA if desired.
- Work with landowners to promote good land stewardship.
- Identify threats to sage grouse.
- Describe specific conservation practices to be practiced that will be implemented on enrolled lands to maintain, rehabilitate or enhance habitat for sage grouse.
- Remove or reduce any unfavorable impacts to sage grouse.

Goal 3: Use the media and other education methods to increase awareness of agriculture's efforts to improve water quality.

Objectives:

- Create an awareness and understanding of water quality among the agricultural community through technical assistance.
- Showcase successful projects in newsletter articles, local newspaper, and conduct tours of project sites.
- Host an annual speech contest for local seventh and eighth graders, featuring a topic related to soil and water conservation.

Goal 4: Focus on education, not regulation.

Objectives:

- Inform landowners of the Goose and Summer Lakes Area Plan and Rules.
- Offer and provide site evaluations on any lands within the Management Area to assess conditions that may affect water quality.

Goal 5: Control and maintain upland erosion, invasive species and perform other post-fire rehabilitation measures in an effort to restore lands in the district impacted by wildfire.

Objectives:

- Work with landowners and agencies to procure funding to restore lands impacted by wildfire.
- Assess completed post-fire rehabilitation efforts for effectiveness and re-treatment, when necessary.
- Look for future post-fire rehabilitation measures that would benefit the landscape.

Partners & Programs

Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD staff managed programs and partners are the foundation and source of all services provided to Fort Rock/Silver Lake County.

Landowners, Producers & Public

The General Public utilizes the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD as its primary point of contact for all District programs as well as those of the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service. Landowners and agricultural producers work with the district on technical assistance with natural resource concerns and assistance in securing grant or loan funding for an array of natural resource conservation projects.

Lake County Cooperative Weed Management Area (LCCwMA)

The District maintains a working relationship with the Lake County Cooperative weed Management Area to address issues of invasive plants in Lake County.

Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

The Local Advisory Committee is made up of landowners, agricultural producers, and an environmental representative whose charge was to develop an Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan. The Plan is used to meet the requirements of Senate Bill 1010 while placing the absolute minimum regulatory and economic burden on the landowner. The committee made it clear what part of the process is mandated by state law and the plan is based on voluntary compliance with a high degree of flexibility in how a landowner could approach the process. This voluntary program will achieve area plan goals, while maintaining a viable agriculture community.

Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council (LCUWC)

The SWCD works with the Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council assisting in technical assistance and monitoring of projects and partners in field day educational events. Councils under this umbrella include Goose Lake, Upper Sycan, Upper Chewaucan, Silver Lake, and Warner Valley.

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)

The Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Natural Resources Division provides administrative oversight, administrative and technical support funding, and direction of work focus to the SWCD. The SWCD submits quarterly reports of work progress, Annual Reports of accomplishments, Annual Work Plans, and Financial Status Reports for review and approval.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)

OWEB provides financial resources through grants for habitat restoration and water quality improvement projects.

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

DEQ assists Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD with technical assistance in stream restoration, water quality data, and collaborates in project development and management.

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)

ODF assists Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD with technical assistance in issues related to timber on private lands, including project development and management.

USDA Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCS)

The District maintains a Cooperative Working Agreement with the NRCS to provide assistance with conservation planning and conservation practice implementation activities in Lake County. The NRCS provides technical assistance to the District and directly to County landowners and producers.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFW)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service collaborates with the SWCD on wildlife habitat and restoration projects by providing financial resources through grants. The SWCD is now collaborating with the USF&W on the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for Sage Grouse. The CCAA is a formal agreement between U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and one or more parties to voluntarily address the conservation needs of proposed or candidate species before they become listed as endangered or threatened. The Service provides assurances that it will not assert additional restrictions or require additional actions above those that the landowner voluntarily committed to in the CCAA.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD works with BLM resource staff on many natural resource issues on private and public land in Lake County including invasive plant management and habitat restoration, particularly through the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA).

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)

The Bureau of Reclamation provides funding and technical assistance to the district, particularly in stream rehabilitation projects.

United States Forest Service (USFS)

The USFS is a partner and provides technical assistance to the district, particularly as it relates to post-fire rehabilitation projects.

Adoption

The Fort Rock/Silver Lake Soil and Water Conservation District board of directors reviewed the 2026-2030 Business Plan and approved the plan at the June 10, 2025 board meeting.



Signature

June 10, 2025
Date

Appendix A: General Powers of the SWCD Directors

ORS 568.550(1). The board of directors of a soil and water conservation district has the following powers: [*Letters correspond to actual statute format.*]

- a. To secure surveys and investigations and do research relating to:
 - The character of soil erosion
 - The character of floodwater and sediment damage
 - All phases of the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water
 - The preventive measures, control measures and improvements needed
- b. To conduct demonstrational projects on lands within the district upon obtaining the consent of the owner and occupier of such lands.
- c. To carry out preventive and control measures on lands within the district upon obtaining the consent of the owner and occupier of such lands.
- d. To enter into written agreements (*see specifics in 568.330[(d)][A]&[(B)]*)
- e. To obtain options upon and to acquire by purchase, exchange, lease, gift, grant, bequest or devise any property, real or personal or rights therein, (*see specifics in 568.330[e]*)
- f. To borrow money and to mortgage personal property of the district as security (*see specifics in ORS 568.330[f]*)
- g. To issue general obligation bonds of the district as provided in ORS 568.803
- h. To make available, on such terms as the directors shall prescribe, to landowners or occupiers within the district, agricultural and engineering machinery and equipment, fertilizer, seeds and seedlings and other material or equipment.
- i. To construct, operate and maintain such structures as may be necessary or convenient for performance of any of the operations authorized in ORS 568.210 to 568.880 and 568.900 to ORS 568.933.
- j. To develop comprehensive plans and specifications for the conservation of soil resources and for the continued control of soil erosion within the district, and to publish such plans, specifications and information and bring them to the attention of owners and occupiers of the lands within the district.
- k. To take over, by purchase, lease or otherwise, and to administer, any soil conservation, erosion control or erosion prevention project, or combination thereof, located within district boundaries undertaken by the United States or any of its agencies, or by this state or any of its agencies.
- l. To manage, as agent of the United States or any of its agencies, or of this state or any of its agencies, any soil conservation, erosion control or erosion prevention project, or combination thereof, within district boundaries.
- m. To act as agent for the United States or any of its agencies, in connection with the acquisition, construction, operation or administration of any soil conservation, erosion control or erosion control project, or combination thereof, within district boundaries.
- n. To accept donations, gifts and contributions in money, services, materials, or otherwise from the United States or any of its agencies, or from this state or any of its agencies, and to use or expend such moneys, services, materials or other contributions in carrying on its operations.

- o. To sue and be sued in the name of the district, to have a seal, which shall be judicially noticed, to have perpetual succession unless terminated as provided by law, to make and execute contracts and other instruments necessary or convenient to the exercise of its powers, and to make, and from time to time amend or repeal, rules not consistent with ORS 568.210 to 568.808 and 568.900 to 568.933 to carry into effect its purposes and powers.
- p. To purchase liability or indemnity insurance, in such amounts and containing such terms and conditions as the board believes necessary for the protection of directors, officers and employees of the district against claims incurred in the performance of their duties.
- q. To place liens on real and personal property.
- r. To enter into written agreements with, coordinate activities with and provide assistance to landowners, managers and residents within the districts and federal, state and local governments, relating to natural resource issues, including but not limited to issues of:
 - Agriculture and forestry
 - Economic development based upon natural resources
 - Watershed management and ecosystem health
 - Invasive species
 - Alternate and renewable energy
 - Air Quality
 - Animal waste and nutrient management
 - Carbon sequestration
 - Access to market-based services and certification
 - Fuel reduction and wildfire planning and management
 - Preservation of agricultural, forestry and other lands
- s. To conduct outreach and conservation education activities.
- t. To provide financial assistance, including but not limited to loans and grants to implement activities and projects authorized under ORS 271.715 to 271.795, 569.210 to 568.808 or 568.900 to 568.933.
- u. To hold patents, trademarks and copyrights.
- v. To hold conservation easements under ORS 271.715 to 271.795.

ORS 568.550(2). As a condition to the extending of any benefits under ORS 568.210 to 568.808 or 568.900 to 568.933 to lands or the performance of work upon lands, the directors may require contributions in money, services, materials or otherwise to any operations conferring such benefits, and may require landowners or occupiers to enter into and perform such agreements or covenants as to the permanent use of such lands as will tend to prevent or control erosion thereon.

ORS 568.550(3). In order to avoid duplication of activities under subsection (1)(a) of this section, the department may call upon other state and federal agencies for assistance and cooperation in their fields in accordance with memoranda of understanding to be signed by all cooperating agencies.

ORS 568.550(4). A district may not adopt land use regulations under ORS chapter 197, 215 or 227. A district has the standing of an affected landowner to participate in the public process involving administrative rules, regulations, goals, guidelines, plans or other public body actions that may affect one or more properties within the district.

Appendix B: Statutes & Administrative Rules

The Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD is specifically governed by Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 568.210 through 568.890. In addition, the Fort Rock/Silver Lake SWCD is subject, but not limited to, the conditions of several statutes and administrative rules as follows:

- ORS 568.900 through 568.933 (Agricultural Water Quality Management)
- ORS 561.395 (Soil and Water Conservation Commission)
- ORS 561.400 (Natural Resources Division)
- ORS 44.320 (Oath of Office)
- Oregon Constitution, Article XV, Section 3 (Oath of Office)
- ORS 190.003 through 190.110 (Intergovernmental Cooperation)
- ORS 192.001 (Public Records Policy)
- ORS 192.005 through 192.190 (Custody and Maintenance Records)
- ORS 192.310 (Records and Reports)
- ORS 192.410 (Inspection of Public Records)
- ORS 192.610 through 192.710 (Public Meetings)
- ORS 198.010 through 198.955 (Special Districts)
- ORS 198.330 through 198.365 (Dissolution of Inactive Districts)
- ORS 198.410 through 198.440 (Recall)
- ORS 240.379 through 240.394 (Employment of Persons with Severe Disabilities)
- Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Equal Opportunity Employment/Sexual Harassment/Discrimination) (Federal)
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Hiring Persons with Disabilities) (Federal)
- ORS 244.010 through 244.4000 (Conflict of Interest)
- ORS 247.035 (Residency)
- ORS 294.305 through 294.565 (Local Budget) (required of districts with a tax levy)
- ORS 297.005 through 297.712 (Contracting)
- ORS 297.405 through 297.485 (Municipal Audits)
- ORS 542.750 (watershed Protection and Flood Prevention)
- ORS 659.010 through 659.990 (Employment Practices)
- ORS 659.405 (State Policy/Employment of Disabled Persons)
- OAR 839-07-550 through 839-07-656 (Sexual Harassment Prevention)