

OREGON

Oregon ranks 22nd among the states in number of local governments, with 1,546 as of October 2007.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (36)

There are no areas in Oregon lacking county government. The county governing body is called the board of county commissioners or the county court. Home rule is an option.

SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (242)

Municipal Governments (242)

Municipal governments in Oregon are the cities and towns. There are no differences in their legal powers or status. The minimum population requirement for incorporation is 150.

Township Governments (0)

Oregon has no township governments.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (234)

School District Governments (234) ¹

The following types of school districts in Oregon are counted as separate governments for census purposes:

- Common school districts
- Joint school districts
- Union high school districts
- Community college districts
- Community college service districts

Each school district of these types has an elected board. All of the school districts may levy local school taxes. All except education service districts and community college service districts created after July 1, 1997, may issue general obligation bonds with voter approval.

All county school districts were required to become common school districts in 2003.

Education service districts are established by general law to serve specified regions. An elected board governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes and, with voter approval, issue bonds.

Dependent Public School Systems (0)

Oregon has no dependent public school systems.

Other Educational Activities

County education bond districts are created by education service districts. The board of the education service district serves as the board of the county education bond district. These districts are not counted as separate governments.

Any school district or community college district may establish and maintain a public library. A library board, appointed by the governing body of the sponsoring government, administers the library. The sponsoring government may levy ad valorem taxes and issue general obligation bonds. These libraries are not counted as separate governments.

Other Oregon agencies concerned with local school administration are not counted as governments.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (1,034)

Oregon statutes authorize the creation of a variety of special districts or authorities that are counted as governments. These are discussed in detail below.

Airport Districts

Airport districts are created by resolution of the governing body of the most populous county in the proposed district or by resolution of the governing body of any city owning an airport in the proposed district. A referendum is

required. An elected board governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes and issue revenue bonds and, upon voter approval, may issue general obligation bonds.

Municipalities may create airport advisory commissions. These commissions are not counted as separate governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Cable Regulatory Commissions

Cable regulatory commissions may be created by intergovernmental agreement. The agreement specifies the nature and composition of the board and the fiscal arrangements. Each commission is classified based on its creating agreement.

Cemetery Maintenance Districts

A cemetery maintenance district may be established in any area of at least 4,000 acres or having an assessed valuation of at least \$200,000. The districts are created by a county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of directors governs each district. The district may levy ad valorem taxes.

Domestic Water Supply Districts

Districts to provide water supply, street lighting, and fire protection may be established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of commissioners governs each district. The districts may fix rates, levy ad valorem taxes and special benefit assessments and, upon voter approval, issue general obligation and revenue bonds. Districts organized under this law are often called "water districts."

Drainage Districts

These districts are created by the county governing body on petition of landowners and after a public hearing. An elected board of supervisors governs each district. The districts may levy an acreage tax and special benefit assessments and, with voter approval, issue revenue bonds. Drainage districts organized prior to the February 14, 1921, passage of this law are subject to the same powers and provisions.

Eastern Oregon Human Services Consortium

This consortium was created by intergovernmental agreement of the counties of Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco, and Wheeler. The consortium provides services for persons with mental retardation and provides education about mental health. The consortium is governed by a board composed of the executive directors of the participating community mental health programs. The consortium receives state and local funding.

Emergency Communications Districts

These districts to provide "911" emergency telephone service are established by the county governing body upon petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. Establishment requires the approval of two-thirds of the public or private safety agencies representing two-thirds of the population in the area to be served. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board governs each district. The districts receive 911 telephone excise tax revenues. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes and, with voter approval, issue general obligation bonds.

In addition, emergency communications districts may be created by intergovernmental agreement. These districts are governed by

appointed boards that may include administrators and officials of the communities and public safety agencies served. The districts may assess fees and receive 911 telephone excise tax revenues.

Fair Districts

Fair districts may be established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing, or the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board governs each district. The districts may set taxes. As of June 2002, no districts of this type were reported in operation.

Geothermal Heating Districts

The districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. These districts supply geothermal heat to the inhabitants of the district. An elected board of commissioners governs each district. The districts may set rates, levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments, and, upon voter approval, issue revenue and general obligation bonds.

Health Districts

Health districts are established by the county governing body on petition of the voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if requested by petition. Health districts may provide hospitals, nursing homes, and ambulance service. An elected board of directors governs each district. The districts may fix rates and charges, levy ad valorem taxes, and, upon voter approval, issue general obligation bonds. Some districts organized under this law are named "hospital districts" or "ambulance districts."

Heritage Districts

These districts acquire, restore and maintain historic property. They are established by the county governing body after petition of voters, public hearing, and referendum. An elected board governs the district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes and, upon voter approval, issue general obligation bonds.

Additionally, two or more county governing bodies may initiate the formation of a district, giving dates for public hearing, referendum, and election of board members.

Highway Lighting Districts

These districts may be established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formations. A referendum is required only if petitioned. A board of commissioners appointed by the county governing body governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments.

Petitioners may request that the county governing body administer a district. In such a case, the district would not be counted as a separate government. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Housing Authorities

Housing authorities are created when the governing body of a city or county passes a resolution, either after petition of the voters and election or on the initiative of the city or county. A board appointed by the governing body of the establishing city or county governs each authority. The board may appoint additional members. Housing authorities may establish rents and charges and may issue revenue bonds.

Oregon laws also provide that two or more housing authorities may establish a regional housing authority with the same legal powers

as above. The governing body of a regional housing authority consists of members appointed by the participating cities and counties plus members appointed by the board of the housing authority itself.

Oregon statutes also provide that the governing body of a city or county establishing a housing authority may constitute the authority board. In such a case, a housing authority would not be counted as a separate government. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Irrigation Districts

Under general law, the county governing body may establish irrigation districts after petition of landowners, hearing, and referendum. An elected board of directors governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes and benefit assessments and fix tolls, rates, and charges. Levies of benefit assessments may require voter approval. With voter approval, districts may issue revenue bonds.

Subdistricts created by irrigation districts are governed by the irrigation district and are not counted as separate governments.

Joint Water and Sanitary Authorities

These districts may be created by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. As an alternative method, a water authority and a sanitary authority or a water authority, sanitary authority, and any combination of cities or sanitary districts may initiate a consolidation by resolution; voter approval is required. An elected board of directors governs each authority. The authorities may fix charges and rentals, levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments, and, upon voter approval, issue revenue and general obligation bonds.

Joint Water Commissions

The following joint water commissions have been formed by intergovernmental agreement:

Barney Reservoir Joint Ownership Commission
Coos Bay North Bend Water Board
Joint Water Commission of the cities of Hillsboro, Forest Grove, Beaverton, and Tigard and the Tualatin Valley Water District
North Clackamas County Water Commission
South Fork Water Board

The members of the commissions may include cities and/or special districts. The commissions are governed either by boards appointed by member governments or by elected officials serving ex officio. Operating costs are charged to the member governments per the agreement. Some joint water commissions may issue bonds.

Library Districts

The districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. Two or more counties may initiate the formation of a multi-county library district. An elected board governs each district. Library districts may levy ad valorem taxes and, upon voter approval, issue general obligation bonds.

Mass Transit Districts

Mass transit districts may be established by resolution of the governing body of the most populous city in a standard metropolitan statistical area if such a city has a public transit system. The resolution is filed with the governing body of the principal county in the area, after a public hearing. As an alternative, mass transit districts may be established by the county governing board on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. A referendum is required for all methods of formation. The Salem Area Mass Transit

District has an elected board of directors. For the other mass transit districts, a board of directors appointed by the Governor governs each district. These districts may impose ad valorem taxes, income taxes, payroll taxes, motor vehicle registration fees, business license fees, fares, and service charges. With voter approval, a district may issue revenue bonds and general obligation bonds.

Metro

This district is authorized to provide sewerage or solid waste disposal services; public transportation and transit facilities; cultural, convention, and sports facilities; parks and recreation facilities; metropolitan zoo facilities; regional planning; and other public services. It was formed under a general law with special application to the Portland metropolitan area (Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties) by petition or resolution of the largest city in the district to the county governing body of the largest county in the district, after local referendum. An elected council governs the district. The district may set vehicle registration fees; levy excise taxes; fix and collect service or user charges; levy special assessments; and issue revenue bonds. With voter approval, the district may levy ad valorem taxes and income taxes and issue general obligation bonds.

Park and Recreation Districts

These districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes and, upon voter approval, issue revenue and general obligation bonds.

Park Commissions in Cities of 3,000 or More

Oregon law authorizes park commissions in cities with a population of 3,000 or more. The

city governing body submits the question of formation for referendum. The board of park commissioners consists of the mayor, the city engineer or city auditor, and five citizens appointed by the circuit court. The commissions may set ad valorem taxes. They also may set special taxes with voter approval.

Peoples' Utility Districts

Districts to provide water, water power, and electric energy are established after petition by the voters to the county governing body, after public hearing and referendum. As an alternative, the governing body of a county or city may initiate formation by a resolution. An elected board of directors governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem bonds; fix rates, fees, and charges; and upon voter approval, issue revenue bonds and general obligation bonds.

Joint operating agencies for electric power created by three or more cities or peoples' utility districts under general law are classified for census purposes as dependent activities of the participating peoples' utility districts and cities and are not counted as separate governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Pesticide Control Districts

Agricultural chemical protection areas for the application of herbicides are established by the state department of agriculture upon petition of landowners, after a hearing. A committee of five members governs each district; three members are elected and two appointed by the state department of agriculture with the approval of the elected members. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes.

Ports

Municipal corporations designated as ports are counted as special district governments for census purposes. They may be incorporated

in certain counties upon petition of the voters or landowners to the county governing body, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. These corporations may provide hospitals, industrial parks, and airport facilities as well as seaports. A port may also acquire, construct, maintain, or operate sports, convention, and trade show facilities. With the exceptions listed below, a board of port commissioners is initially appointed by the Governor but thereafter elected. Ports may levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments and fix rates for facilities and services. The port commissioners may issue general obligation bonds, but bonds over specified amounts require voter approval. Ports created prior to April 17, 1920, by special law have the same powers except the power to issue bonds.

The Port of Portland and the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay were established by special acts. Each is governed by a board of commissioners appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the senate. The financial powers of these ports are similar to those provided for ports under general law described above.

Export trading corporations formed by ports are governed by members selected by the port commissioners. They are classified for census purposes as dependent activities of the port and are not counted as separate governments.

Regional Information Network Consortium

This consortium was formed by intergovernmental agreement in 1975 to serve law enforcement agencies in four counties. The consortium provides an emergency telephone system. The board is appointed by the participating agencies. The entity receives fees for services.

Road Assessment Districts

These districts, which must have an area of

more than 20,000 acres or an assessed valuation of \$1,000,000 or more, may be established in counties of at least 19,000 and not more than 25,000 in population. These districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of directors administers each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes.

Rural Fire Protection Districts

These districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of directors governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes, issue revenue bonds for fire safety systems, and, with voter approval, issue general obligation bonds. Districts within a 10-mile radius of a city of more than 100,000 in population may also provide street lighting. Special taxes, in addition to baseline taxes, for street lighting require voter approval.

Sanitary Authorities and Districts

Oregon statutes authorize the following types of sanitary authorities and districts:

Sanitary authorities. These districts may be established in any portion of one or more counties. The districts are established by the governing body of a county on petition of voters or landowners after a public hearing. If an authority is located in a single county, the county board may initiate formation by its own motion, or, if located in two or more counties, these county boards may initiate formation. Also, the governing bodies of two or more cities, two or more sanitary or drainage districts, or one or more cities with one or more districts may initiate the formation of a sanitary authority by resolution. A referendum is

required only if petitioned. An elected board governs each authority. The authorities may fix charges and rentals, levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments, and, upon voter approval, issue revenue and general obligation bonds.

Sanitary districts. These districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of directors governs each district. Financing powers are similar to those for sanitary authorities above.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

These districts are formed by petition of landowners to the state department of agriculture, after a hearing and referendum. The initial board for each district is appointed by the state department of agriculture but is thereafter elected. The districts may levy special assessments; issue special assessment improvement bonds; and, with voter approval, levy property taxes and issue general obligation bonds.

Special Road Districts

These districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. A board of three commissioners, either elected or appointed by the county governing body, governs each district. The district may levy ad valorem taxes.

Translator Districts

These districts provide educational television, radio, and distance learning to public schools. These districts may be created by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district

is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board governs each district. The districts may impose service charges and issue revenue bonds.

Transportation Districts

These districts may be created by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. As an alternative, a district may be formed by resolution of the most populous city in the proposed district, after referendum. An elected board governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem, income, and payroll taxes; impose motor vehicle registration fees and business license fees; and set service charges. In addition, transportation districts may issue revenue and general obligation bonds upon voter approval.

Water Authorities

Any portion of one or more counties may be formed into a water authority. These districts may be created by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. Also, the governing bodies of two or more cities, two or more water districts, or one or more cities with one or more water districts may initiate the formation of a water authority by resolution. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of directors governs each authority. The authorities may fix charges and rentals, levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments, and, upon voter approval, issue revenue and general obligation bonds.

Water Control Districts

These districts provide for drainage, irrigation, and flood and surface water control. The

districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of directors governs each district. The districts may levy either special benefit assessments or property taxes. The districts may set water charges and rates, and, upon voter approval, issue revenue and general obligation bonds.

The county governing body may serve as the governing body. Districts governed by the county governing body are not counted as separate governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Subdistricts may be created within water control districts on petition of landowners for the purpose of providing water control improvements to the lands within the subdistricts. The subdistricts are administered by the water control district board and are not counted as separate governments.

Water Improvement Districts

Water improvement districts may be created in areas of 1,000 acres or more to provide drainage, irrigation, flood and surface water control, domestic water supply, and water-related recreation. These districts are established by the county governing body on petition of voters or landowners, after a public hearing. If a district is located in a single county, the county board may initiate the formation. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of directors governs each district. The districts may fix and collect charges, levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments, issue improvement bonds, and, upon voter approval, issue general obligation bonds.

Subdistricts for watershed improvement may be organized within water improvement districts on petition of landowners. The subdistricts are administered by the water improvement district board and are not

counted as separate governments.

Weather Modification Districts

These districts to provide cloud-seeding services may be established within one or more counties bordering on the Columbia River and having fewer than 21,000 inhabitants, on the petition of voters or landowners to the county governing body and after a public hearing. The county board may initiate the formation if the district is located in a single county. A referendum is required only if petitioned. An elected board of commissioners governs each district. The districts may levy ad valorem taxes. As of October 2007, no districts of this type were reported in operation.

Western Generation Agency

This agency was created by intergovernmental agreement of the Clatskanie People's Utility District and the Eugene Water and Electric Board. The agency owns and operates an electric generation plant. The agency is governed by a board composed of three appointed members for each participating entity. The agency may issue bonds and set rates for the sale of electricity.

SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

Shown below are various governmental designations in Oregon that have certain characteristics of governmental units but that are classified in census statistics as subordinate agencies of the state or local governments and are not counted as separate governments. Legal provisions for some of the larger of these are discussed below (see "Public School Systems," above, regarding educational agencies of this nature).

Among the subordinate agencies and areas listed below, some represent "special taxing areas" within the territory of an established government. This method of financing additional services in limited areas by property taxation, while also used by some municipal

and township governments in a few states, is more widely utilized by county governments. In the listing below of authorized county-related agencies, a bullet (*) appears for each entity of this kind--i.e., any that may individually serve a portion rather than all of a county and for which a tax may be levied against the assessed value of property in the area served.

Joint operating agencies for electric power (municipal and special district). These agencies are established by order of the state department of energy upon adoption of an ordinance and filing of an application by the legislative bodies of three or more peoples' utilities districts or cities (or a combination thereof), after referendum. A board of directors appointed by the legislative bodies of the member cities and districts governs each joint operating agency. The agency may set and collect rates and charges and issue revenue bonds. These agencies are classified as dependent activities of the participating peoples' utility districts and cities.

Linn Regional Fueling Facility Board (county jointly with other public entities). This entity was created by intergovernmental agreement of Linn County, the city of Albany, Greater Albany Public School District, Linn Benton Community College, and Linn Benton Education Service District. The board is composed of one representative from each participating government. The board may establish surcharges and fees.

Tillamook Light Wave Intergovernmental Agency (county jointly with other public entities). This agency was created by intergovernmental agreement of Tillamook County, the Port of Tillamook Bay, and the Tillamook People's Utility District. The agency will construct and maintain a fiber optic network. The agency is governed by a board of directors consisting of one member appointed by each participating government. The agency may issue bonds with the approval of all participating governments.

Other examples include:

State

- Commodities commissions
- Fire patrol districts, Zone 1
- Forest protection districts
- Mid-Valley Behavioral Care Network
- Oregon Economic and Community Development Commission
- Oregon Facilities Authority
- Oregon Mass Transportation Financing Authority
- Oregon Wireless Instructional Network
- Oregon Youth Authority
- State Accident Insurance Fund Corporation (previously listed as State Industrial Accident Fund Corporation)
- Trust for Cultural Development Board (Oregon Cultural Trust)
- Oregon Student Assistance Commission

County

- Community Forest Authorities
- Community Services Consortium
- County fair boards
- County livestock districts
- *County road districts
- *County service districts (law enforcement, sewerage, drainage, street lighting, parks and recreation, diking, flood control, water supply, solid waste disposal, transportation, agricultural education extension services, emergency medical services, libraries, roads, emergency communications, cemetery maintenance, and, in some counties, fire protection, hospital and ambulance services, vector control, and weather modification)
- *Diking districts
- Dog control districts
- *Fire patrol districts, Zone 2
- Highway lighting districts administered by county governing body
- Hospital facility authorities
- Housing authorities administered by county governing body
- Local commissions on children and families
- Public libraries (county and regional)
- Regional air quality control authorities
- Road improvement areas
- Sports and convention facilities commissions

Unified Sewerage Agency of Washington
County (organized under county service
special law)
*Vector control districts (mosquito control)
Water control districts governed by the county
governing body
Weed control districts
Wind erosion districts

Municipal

Airport commissions
Ashland Community Healthcare Services
Board
Community Forest Authorities
Economic improvement districts
Hospital facility authorities
Housing authorities administered by city
governing body
Medford Water Commission
Public libraries
Regional air quality control authorities
Regional Arts and Culture Council
Urban renewal and redevelopment agencies
(also called development commissions)
Utility boards

Joint City-County

Metropolitan Wastewater Management
Commission
QualityLife Intergovernmental Agency

Private associations

Corporations for irrigation, drainage, water
supply, or flood control, known as district
improvement corporations or improvement
districts, are not counted as governments.
Drainage districts and diking districts may
dissolve and reorganize as district
improvement corporations until December 31,
2004. Drainage districts and irrigation districts
may assume the obligations of existing district
improvement corporations

Oregon laws also provide for various types of
local areas for election purposes and
administration of justice.

1. Legislation authorizing county unit districts was repealed in
2003.