

DISTRICT DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

Conservation district director elections are held each year on the second Tuesday of March, as established by law (Title 27A of the Oklahoma Statutes, Section 3-3-301 (A)), a day also designated by law as Conservation District Day.

Deadlines and Requirements

The district must meet the following deadlines and requirements for elected positions on the board each year.

- **December Board Meeting:** The board must set the dates for publishing notices of filing period and election and determine the newspapers to be used. This action must be recorded in the board meeting minutes.
- **January - First Three Weeks:** All districts must publish Form OCC-3D, *Notice of Filing Period for Election of District Director*, twice, one week apart, during the first three weeks in January. The district must then certify to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission that the notice has been published on Form OCC-3E, *Affidavit of Publication of Filing Period or Election*.

NOTE: If the board of directors has sufficient information to believe that there will be an election, the board may select polling places and the Election Committee members at their February meeting.

- **February - First Two Weeks:** All who wish to file for the position of conservation district director must complete Form OCC-3F, *Notification and Declaration of Candidacy*, and Form OCC-3C, *District Director Information Material*, by the last day of the filing period. These forms are to be made available to the public at the district office. A copy of the applicant's Cooperator Agreement must be attached.
- **February - Second Two Weeks:** If only one candidate files, no election will be held, and the candidate, if qualified, will be certified as elected by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. If two or more candidates file, the district must notify the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and forward Form OCC-3F, *Notification and Declaration of Candidacy* and Form OCC-3C, *District Director Information Material*, to the Commission office by close of business on the last day of the filing period.
- The Commission will notify the district whether candidates are eligible and whether an election is to be held.
- **Friday Before Election Day:** The Friday before election day is the deadline for a candidate to withdraw from the election. If the withdrawal leaves only one candidate, notice should be posted at each polling place. If there are still two or more candidates, notice should be posted at each polling place and prior to the opening of the polling place the Precinct Committee must mark out the name on each ballot of the individual who withdrew.

When No Candidate Files for Election

If no one files for the elected position, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will declare the position vacant and will request that the board recommend two individuals for appointment. The recommendations are to be submitted on Form OCC-3B, *Recommendation for Appointment of Conservation District Director*, and signed by at least three board members. The Commission will select and approve one of the recommended appointees during a regular meeting and will send a Certificate of Appointment and other appropriate paperwork to the district office.

Board Meeting to Prepare for Election

If the district did not have knowledge of a district director election at the February board meeting, a special meeting should be called as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements. The board will need to:

1. Determine the newspapers to publish the Notice of Election (see Publication Notice of Election)
2. Designate polling places (see Polling Places)
 - Appoint a District Election Committee (see District Election Committee) to have charge of the election and determine the pay scale of the Committee members (see Compensation to District Election and Precinct Committee)

Notice of Election

The board of directors must publish in a newspaper of general circulation Form OCC-3G, *Notice of Election*, two times, one week apart, with the last notice to be published five days prior to the election. The board should determine the newspaper(s) to be used for publication. Districts must notify the Oklahoma Conservation Commission of the decision on Form OCC-3E, *Affidavit of Publication of Filing Period or Election*.

Polling Places

If prior arrangements were not made at the February board meeting, the board of directors must hold an emergency meeting to designate polling places and appoint an election committee.

Number of Polling Places is determined as follows:

- Districts with less than 10,000 population must have at least one polling place.
- Districts with 10,000 to 20,000 population must have at least two polling places.
- Districts with over 20,000 population must have at least three polling places.

The board should determine the location of the polling place(s) and forward a list of the location(s) to the Commission office immediately using the following criteria:

- One must be at the conservation district office.
- The second and third locations must be at a place that reflects the greatest election returns from the last election other than the town in which the district office is located.

Ballots

Ballots shall be printed by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and mailed to the District Election Committee Chair who will distribute them to the precinct committees within four days prior to the election.

The used ballots must be returned to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission along with completed Forms OCC-3I, OCC-3J and OCC-3K in a sealed envelope. The unused ballots will be counted, that number recorded on Form OCC-3J, and then the unused ballots will be destroyed by the District Election Committee in the presence of at least two board members. Ninety days after the newly elected director is certified by the Commission, used ballots will be destroyed. No challenge or irregularity will be accepted after that time.

District Election Committee

The board of directors shall appoint three people to the District Election Committee to supervise and conduct the election. The name of the Committee members should be sent in writing to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission immediately for approval. One person should be named Chair of the District Election Committee. The County Election Board can be very helpful in the election procedures. The board of directors, their immediate families, and district employees cannot serve on either the District Election Committee or Precinct Committee(s).

The Committee represents the Oklahoma Conservation Commission in supervising and conducting the election. The Oath of Office can be administered to the District Election Committee by any officer authorized to administer oaths. Signed copies of Form OCC-3H, *Oath of Office for Election and Precinct Committees*, are filed in the district office. Among those authorized to administer oaths within their respective counties or districts are notaries public; judges and clerks of the district, superior and county courts, and other courts of record; justices of the peace; city and town clerks; and court clerks and deputy clerks.

The District Election Committee shall:

- Appoint a precinct committee for each polling place. Each precinct committee shall consist of an Inspector, a Judge, and a Clerk. The District Election Committee shall furnish to the Commission a list of polling places with the names of the precinct committee members for each of the polling places. The members of the District Election Committee may also serve on a precinct committee, but an individual serving on both committees may receive only one wage per hour. If only one polling place is authorized, it will not be necessary to appoint a precinct committee. In such cases, the board of directors shall appoint the members of the District Election Committee as inspector, judge, and clerk.
- Make every effort to conduct the election to enable the largest number of registered voters to participate in the election.
- Determine the hours the polls are to be open (at least six consecutive hours between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.), and ensure that those times are stated on the Form OCC-3G, *Notice of Election*.

- Provide each precinct committee with needed supplies for each polling place. All materials will be provided by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission for use by the District Election Committee with the exception of ballot boxes. Ballot boxes may be obtained locally from the County Election Board or constructed by the district. The Commission will print the ballots and forward them to the District Election Committee chairperson. The number of printed ballots will be based on the number of polling places.
- Accept from the precinct committee(s) a completed Form OCC-3I, *Letter of Transmittal*, immediately following the election. The District Election Committee will then tabulate the results from the form and complete Form OCC-3J, *Report of Official Returns*. The District Election Committee must then mail all of the following to the Conservation Commission:
 - Form OCC-3I, *Letter of Transmittal*
 - Form OCC-3J, *Report of Official Returns*
 - Form OCC-3K, *Affidavit of Registered Voter*
 - All used ballots
- After entering the number of unused ballots on Form OCC-3J, destroy the unused ballots in the presence of at least two members of the board of directors.
- In the event of a challenge of the election results, determine whether a voter is a registered voter, meeting the following requirements:
 - A citizen of the United States
 - A resident of the State of Oklahoma
 - A resident of the conservation district in which the election is occurring
 - Over 18 years of age
 - Has never been convicted of a felony for which a period of time equal to the original judgment and sentence has not expired or for which he/she has not been pardoned
 - Is not currently adjudicated as mentally or legally incompetent by an appropriate district court and is not a mentally incapacitated or mentally ill person, as defined by Section 1-103 of Title 43A of the Oklahoma Statutes

Precinct Committee(s)

The members of a precinct committee(s) as named by the District Election Committee shall:

- Take and sign Form OCC-3H, *Oath of Office for Election and Precinct Committees*, administered by any officer authorized to administer oaths.
- Keep the polls open during the hours as designated by the District Election Committee.
- Allow all registered voters to vote at any polling place within the district that is most convenient.
- Permit no loitering within 50 feet of any election box or the place where such election is being held. Each candidate may have a watcher, authorized in writing by the candidate, at each polling place.

- Require that each voter appear in person (no absentee votes shall be accepted) and sign Form OCC-3K, *Affidavit of Registered Voter*, before voting.
- Provide assistance to any registered voter in casting the ballot only upon request by the voter.
- Provide that ballots are marked with indelible pencil or ink.
- In the event of the withdrawal of a candidate, post notice at the polling place. If there are still two or more candidates prior to the opening of the polling place, mark out the name on each ballot of the individual who withdrew. If only one candidate is left, post notice at each polling place stating that a candidate withdrew; therefore, no election will be held.
- Immediately upon the closing of the polls, tabulate votes cast at the polling place and complete Form OCC-3I, *Letter of Transmittal*. The Form OCC-3I, all voting ballots used and unused, and Form OCC-3K, *Affidavit of Registered Voter*, shall be placed and sealed in an envelope and delivered to the District Election Committee.
- Make the results of the election at the particular polling place public by posting in a conspicuous place at the polling place a copy of Form OCC-3I, *Letter of Transmittal*.
- Require that any challenge involving a voter who allegedly is not registered be made as a written affidavit and immediately seal the challenged ballot in an envelope. The sealed envelope will then be transmitted to the District Election Committee who will determine whether the voter is registered. If it is found that the challenged voter is registered, the ballot shall be counted.

Compensation to District Election and Precinct Committee

District Election Committee and Precinct Committee members will be compensated for the time spent in conducting the election at the prevailing minimum wage rate or the rate normally paid by the County Election Board. Committee members must submit Form OCC-3L, *Claim Form - Special Assistance for District Director Election*, to the district prior to payment. One member per polling place may receive the prevailing mileage rate for securing and delivering election supplies. Any individual filling two functions can receive only one wage per hour.

Certification of Elected Director

The Conservation Commission must receive election results not later than four days after the election. The Conservation Commission must, by official action, certify each individual receiving the majority of votes as duly elected. The Conservation Commission will then forward a Certificate of Election, Oath of Office and Loyalty Oath to the conservation district. The Conservation Commission will also send a news release to the local newspaper(s) regarding the results of the election.

District Election Expenses

All election expenses incurred by the district are reimbursable. The district must submit an OSF-3 Form, with back-up documents, to claim for reimbursement. Election expenses will not be deducted from the district's allocation.