



Staff Report

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Kim Fritz-Ogren, Field Services Division Administrator
Jake Johnstone, Field Services Division Deputy Administrator

DATE: June 11, 2026

SUBJECT: Agenda Item F

FIELD SERVICES DIVISION ACTIVITIES UPDATE

I. Introduction

Staff will provide an overview of activities undertaken by the Field Services Division (FSD) during 2025 as well as an update on current activities in 2026. *This is an informational report.*

II. Integrated Water Resources Strategy Recommended Action

- 1.A - Improve Water Resource Data Collection and Monitoring
- 1.B - Conduct Additional Groundwater Basin Investigations
- 7.C - Support Dam and Levee Safety
- 8.C - Promote Community Education and Outreach
- 10.E - Provide an Adequate Field Presence

III. Background

The staff of FSD manage and distribute water across Oregon. They work daily with water users to achieve compliance with water rights and respond to complaints. FSD staff also collect surface water and groundwater data, inspect dams and wells, educate the public, and provide customer service. FSD staff are key to identifying and working with local partners to implement solutions to local water management issues. More specifically the division is responsible for:

- Distributing and managing water by measuring and monitoring where water is, interpreting water rights to understand where it is allocated, and communicating where it should go.
- Working with water users to enforce Oregon water law and protect against illegal use and water waste. We seek voluntary compliance but take regulatory action when necessary.
- Measuring streamflow and groundwater levels across Oregon to inform decisions.
- Inspecting low hazard dams for proper construction and maintenance.
- Inspecting newly constructed wells and reviewing water and monitoring well reports.

- Providing input on water right transactions and grant applications based on local water management and water availability knowledge and expertise.
- Providing information on wells, water rights, and dams to people across Oregon.
- Engaging in community conversations to address water challenges and working with local partners to navigate region-specific issues.

FSD is the largest division within the Oregon Water Resources Department, making up roughly a third of the agency personnel. The division consists of six regions further divided into 23 watermaster districts, an Enforcement Section, and an Administrator and Deputy Administrator. See Attachment 1 for a map of the regions, districts, and their associated offices.

Each region has a region manager, a watermaster for each district, two or more assistant watermasters, and a well inspector. In some regions a hydrologic technician is also employed, and counties may employ assistant watermasters or administrative support staff who work with OWRD staff or provide funding for state-supervised positions. There are also a few positions dedicated to specific contract work. The number of county-funded positions has decreased significantly over the past decades.

IV. 2025 Field Services Division Activities

Attachment 2 provides information on FSD’s work “by the numbers” to demonstrate the scope of our responsibilities and activities in 2025. During the Commission meeting, staff will highlight a few projects completed or initiated in 2025: backflow prevention device inspections in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, instream water right monitoring in the Southwest Region, static water level measurement and reporting compliance, and two types of watermaster reviews (Confined Animal Feeding Operations Water Supply Plans and Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission Water Use Forms).

V. Current and Future Actions

FSD staff continue to carry out core operational work and anticipate increased regulation in 2026 due to drought conditions. Major efforts launching in 2026 are updates to rules governing water distribution, enforcement, and exempt uses, and an update to the Field Operations Manual, which houses important policies and procedures for field staff work. More information on the rulemaking is covered in Agenda Item H. Field staff also play an important role in leading or supporting region-specific projects across the state.

VI. Conclusion

Each year FSD conducts many actions in support of the agency’s mission. This includes core operational work along with region-specific and statewide projects.

Attachments:

1. Map of Regions and Watermaster Districts
2. Field Services Division 2025 Snapshot

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Kim Fritz-Ogren

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Jake Johnstone

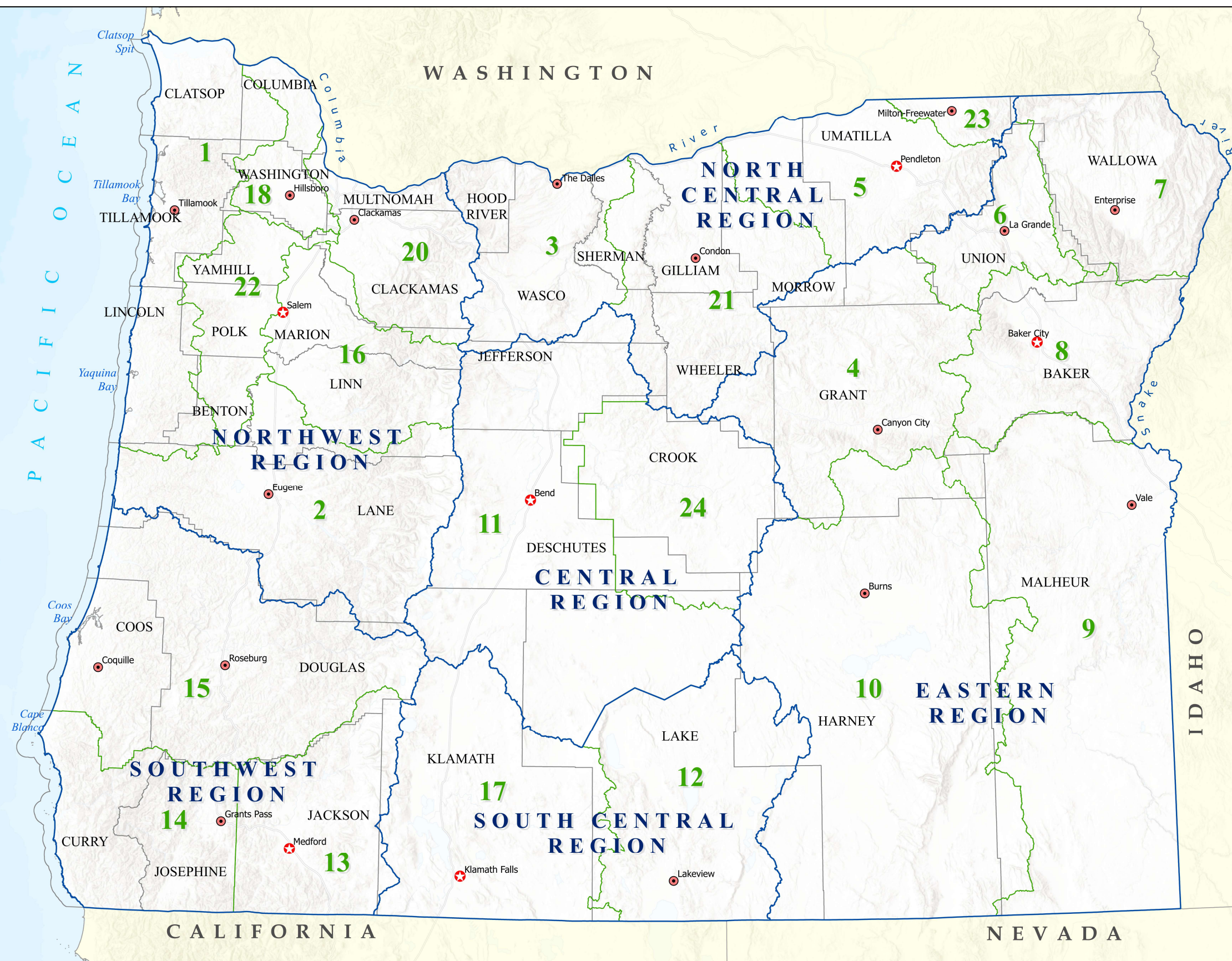
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Regions and Watermaster Districts 2025

- ✦ Region office
- District office
- District boundary
- Region boundary

District Offices

- 1 Tillamook
- 2 Eugene
- 3 The Dalles
- 4 Canyon City
- 5 Pendleton
- 6 La Grande
- 7 Enterprise
- 8 Baker City
- 9 Vale
- 10 Burns
- 11 Bend
- 12 Lakeview
- 13 Medford
- 14 Grants Pass
- 15 Roseburg
- 16 Salem
- 17 Klamath Falls
- 18 Hillsboro
- 20 Clackamas
- 21 Condon
- 22 Salem
- 23 Milton-Freewater
- 24 Bend





Field Services Division 2025 Snapshot

Staff in the Field Services Division (FSD) at the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) are responsible for several tasks that support water management statewide. This work is often done in partnership with others at OWRD as well as with other federal and state agencies. Below are snapshots of some of FSD's work in 2025.

Data Collection

We measure streamflow and groundwater levels to inform OWRD and local decisions. In 2025, FSD:

- Collected **over 2,000 streamflow measurements** to support over 260 stream gages used to distribute and regulate water rights, support agency models and studies, and to inform other agency and local decisions.
- Collected **over 1,100 water level measurements** in support of Oregon's observation well network.
- Monitored and/or regulated for **669 unique instream water rights**, a significant increase from 497 in 2024.



Streamflow measurement in Klamath Basin

Regulation and Distribution

We distribute and manage water by measuring and monitoring where water is, interpreting water rights to understand where it has been allocated, and communicating where it should go. In 2025 FSD:

- Completed **6,721 regulatory actions to protect senior water rights**, 66% of which were actions to protect senior instream water rights.
- Conducted **over 32,000 compliance checks**, to ensure water users were operating within the terms of their water right.
- Followed up on **265 community-based complaints** and initiated over **1900 investigations**.

Enforcement

We work with water users to enforce Oregon water law and protect against illegal use and water waste. We seek voluntary compliance but take regulatory action when necessary. Enforcement actions in 2025:

- Issued **605 Notices of Violation (NOVs)**, including 500 NOVs for failure to report any static water level measurements in 2025 as required as a permit or water right condition.
- Issued **29 Measurement Device Notices** requiring installation of a measurement device under ORS 540.045(1)(a).
- Issued **17 Notices of Assessment** totaling nearly \$104K in assessed civil penalties¹.

¹ Civil penalties may be waived through a settlement agreement that addresses the violation to the satisfaction of the agency. Any civil penalties paid go to the General Fund and are not kept by the agency.

2025 Snapshot – FSD Activities

Public Health and Safety

We protect public health and safety through inspections of dams and well construction. This year we:

- Inspected **42% of new wells** for proper construction, with a **total of over 2400 well inspections**.
- Reviewed **approximately 3900 well log reports**².
- Inspected **78 low hazard dams**³ for proper construction and maintenance and attempted an additional 25 inspections but access was denied by the landowner.
- Conducted **over 750 wellhead inspections** in Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, leading to 99% backflow prevention compliance by September 2025.



Well inspection in Northwest Region

Reviews

We provide input on water right transactions and grant applications based on local water management and water availability knowledge and expertise. There are roughly twenty-five different types of reviews watermasters and other staff complete in support of OWRD, other state/federal agency, and county decisions. To highlight a couple in 2025, we:

- Reviewed **144 Confined Animal Feeding Operation Water Supply Plans** as a new part of field staff workloads.
- Reviewed **184 Water Use Forms** required by the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission for cannabis grows.



Community event in Tillamook



Measurement on the Applegate River

² Inspections and well log reviews are primarily completed by FSD Well Inspectors, but some inspections are completed by staff in the Well Construction Section which is in Technical Services Division.

³ Dam Safety staff inspect Significant and High Hazard Dams.