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**Diversity**

**of**

**Oregon**

**Counties**

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# COUNTY STRUCTURES

HOME RULE COUNTIES										
Date	County	Three Members	Five Members	Full Time		At Large	Non Partisan	Elected Chair	# of Districts	Administrator
				Chair	Commish					
1972	Benton	X		X	X	X				Appointed
1988	Clatsop		X				X		5	Appointed
1964	Hood River		X			Chair	X	X	4	Appointed
1978	Jackson	X		X	X	X				Appointed
1980	Josephine	X		X	X	X	X			None
1962	Lane		X	X	X		X		5	Appointed
1967	Multnomah		X	X	X	Chair	X	X	4	Chair
1993	Umatilla	X		X	X	X	X			None
1962	Washington		X	X		Chair	X	X	4	Appointed

GENERAL LAW - COUNTY COURTS Judge + 2 Commissioners (part time)						
County	Judge as Chair/Administrator	Non-Partisan		Probate Jurisdiction	Juvenile Jurisdiction	
		Judge	Commissioners			
Crook	X	X	X			
Gilliam	X	X		X	X	
Grant	X	X	X	X		
Harney	X	X	X	X		
Malheur	X	X		X		
Sherman	X	X		X	X	
Wheeler	X	X		X	X	

**GENERAL LAW - COUNTY COMMISSION**

County	Three Members	Five Members	Full Time		At Large	Non Partisan	Elected Chair	Administrator
			Chair	Commish				
Baker	X		X		X	X	X	Chair
Clackamas		X	X	X	X	X	X	Appointed
Columbia	X		X	X	X	X		None
Coos	X		X	X	X	X		None
Curry	X		X	X	X	X		None
Deschutes	X		X	X	X			Appointed
Douglas	X		X	X	X	X		None
Jefferson	X				X	X		Appointed
Klamath	X		X	X	X	X		None
Lake	X		X	X	X			Appointed

**GENERAL LAW - COUNTY COMMISSION**

County	Three Members	Five Members	Full Time		At Large	Non Partisan	Elected Chair	Administrator
			Chair	Commish				
Lincoln	X		X	X	X	X		None
Linn	X		X	X	X			Appointed
Marion	X		X	X	X			Appointed
Morrow	X		X	X	X	X		Appointed
Polk	X		X	X	X	X		Appointed
Tillamook	X		X	X	X	X		None
Union	X		X	X	X	X		Appointed
Wallowa	X		X		X	X	X	Chair
Wasco	X		X	X	X	X		Appointed
Yamhill	X		X	X	X	X		Appointed

**County Demographics**

	Population	Square Miles	Population/ Square Mile
Baker	16,510	3,089	5.34
Benton	91,320	679	134.49
Clackamas	404,980	1,879	215.53
Clatsop	38,225	843	45.34
Columbia	50,795	687	73.94
Coos	63,190	1,629	38.79
Crook	21,580	2,991	7.21
Curry	22,600	1,648	13.71
Deschutes	176,635	3,055	57.82
Douglas	110,395	5,071	21.77
Gilliam	1,980	1,223	1.62
Grant	7,410	4,528	1.64
Harney	7,320	10,228	0.72
Hood River	24,735	533	46.41
Jackson	213,765	2,801	76.32
Jefferson	22,790	1,791	12.72
Josephine	84,675	1,641	51.60
Klamath	67,410	6,135	10.99
Lake	8,015	8,359	0.96
Lane	365,940	4,620	79.21
Lincoln	47,735	992	48.12
Linn	122,315	2,297	53.25
Malheur	31,705	9,926	3.19
Marion	333,950	1,194	279.69
Morrow	11,745	2,049	5.73
Multnomah	790,670	465	1,700.37
Polk	79,730	745	107.02
Sherman	1,795	831	2.16
Tillamook	25,920	1,125	23.04
Umatilla	79,880	3,231	24.72
Union	26,745	2,038	13.12
Wallowa	7,140	3,153	2.26
Wasco	26,700	2,396	11.14
Washington	583,595	727	802.74
Wheeler	1,465	1,713	0.86
Yamhill	104,990	718	146.23

**County Demographics**

Permanent Property Tax Rate Authority	Road Miles	Percent State/Fed- eral Ownership
3.7286	904	52.3
2.2052	460	20.4
2.9766	1,416	45.2
1.5338	230	11.9
1.3956	539	7.2
1.0799	543	61.2
3.8702	522	51.2
0.5996	230	67
1.2783	992	78.9
1.1124	1,130	50.5
3.8450	402	3.7
2.8819	495	60.7
4.5016	814	77.6
1.4171	210	71.8
2.0099	948	46.9
3.5662	604	18.8
0.5867	580	62.4
1.7326	867	55.8
3.7619	705	78.0
1.2793	1,441	55.4
2.8202	346	36.3
1.2736	1,115	39.2
2.5823	1,732	75.6
3.0252	1,115	33.5
4.1347	962	14.7
4.3434	350	28.8
1.7160	501	11.3
8.7141	458	9.6
1.4986	335	64.2
2.8487	1,672	17.7
2.8515	595	48.1
2.5366	680	57.6
4.2523	674	14.8
2.2484	1,386	13.5
8.5266	260	23.6
2.5775	670	15.4

## HISTORY OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The word county is from the French word “conte.” Meaning “the domain of a count.” However, the American county, as defined by Webster, is “the largest territorial division for local government within a state...” That definition is based on the Anglo-Saxon county of England dating back to about the time of the Norman Conquest. Counties were brought to America by the colonists and were later established in the central and western parts of the nation by the pioneers as they moved westward.

Counties used to function almost exclusively as agents of the state government. Their every activity had to be either authorized or mandated by state law. A 1958 constitutional amendment authorized Oregon counties to adopt “home rule” charters. A 1973 state law granted all counties power to exercise broad home rule authority, with or without a charter. As a result, the National Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations identified county government in Oregon as having the highest degree of local discretionary authority of any state in the nation.

Currently, Oregon has three forms of county government:

### ***Home Rule Counties***

Home rule counties write their own charter, and may do whatever their charter allows. Nine Oregon counties have adopted home rule charters. That means voters have the power to adopt and amend their own county government organization. Home rule counties operate under a three- to five-member board of commissioners.

### ***General Law Counties***

General law counties have the ability to write ordinances on any subject not preempted by the state. General law counties operate under a three- to five- member board of commissioners.

### ***County Court***

Years ago, the state authorized some counties to run the juvenile justice and probate courts in their counties. Some of these counties have returned that authority to the state. Three counties maintain the juvenile justice court function, six retain probate (three of these counties retain both). County courts operate with a judge and two commissioners.

### ***When Was Your County Established?***

1843*	Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Yamhill
1844*	Clatsop
1845*	Polk
1847*	Benton, Linn
1851*	Lane
1852*	Douglas, Jackson
1853*	Coos , Tillamook
1854*	Columbia, Multnomah, Wasco
1855*	Curry
1856*	Josephine
1862	Baker, Umatilla
1864	Grant, Union
1874	Lake
1882	Crook, Klamath
1885	Gilliam, Morrow
1887	Malheur, Wallowa
1889	Harney, Sherman
1893	Lincoln
1899	Wheeler
1908	Hood River
1914	Jefferson
1916	Deschutes

\*Establishment of 18 Oregon counties precedes statehood.