



**SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

Preparing children for an ever changing world

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Monday, October 24, 2022

Governor Brown:

On behalf of the Neah-Kah-Nie School District, we are writing you to express our opposition to the draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) prepared by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) for western State Forests. The draft HCP would result in a reduction in timber harvest and revenue derived from state forests which would negatively impact our schools, faculty, students and their families. We ask that you intervene in this process to ensure a better outcome for school districts affected by this flawed plan.

The Neah-Kah-Nie School District is a PreK-12 public school system located on the North Oregon coast, encompassing the communities of Bay City, Garibaldi, Rockaway Beach, Wheeler, Nehalem, and Manzanita. The attendance zone is 400 square miles from Bay City to Clatsop County line. We employ 125 faculty members at six schools and with approximately 780 students, Neah-Kah-Nie School District is recognized for strong academic programs, a high graduation rate, and innovative initiatives like our Student Health & Wellness Center.

Since Neah-Kah-Nie School District does not receive Basic School Support and relies almost exclusively on state timber and local property taxes, the draft HCP would have a severe impact on our budget. Last year, we received approximately \$4.1M in revenue from state timber sales. This year, timber revenue will be reduced to \$3.1M and next year to \$1.3-\$2.2M. A projected three million dollar funding reduction in three years will severely affect the services provided to our students through well-maintained facilities, engaging curriculums, high quality professional development, and up-to-date technology for our students and staff.

It is incredibly frustrating that the counties and local taxing districts that will be directly impacted by this HCP were excluded from the development process and that our concerns have gone ignored for years. We have written letters and testified before the Board of Forestry but have yet to see any changes made to the draft HCP that would address our needs so that we can continue to serve our students and communities. It seems the Board has yet to consider the downstream economic impacts this plan will have over the next 70 years. Not only will a reduction in harvest directly hurt our budget, the negative ripple effects will be felt across the region.

Economic and environmental benefits from state forests are not mutually exclusive but this HCP assumes one cannot exist with the other and leaves our students and faculty out to dry. This imbalance can and must be corrected. We hope you will use your leadership to ensure that school districts like Neah-Kah-Nie are not forgotten during this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Paul Erlebach".

Paul Erlebach, Superintendent

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Sandy Tyler".

Sandy Tyler, School Board Chair

CC:

Cal Mukumoto, Oregon State Forester
Jason Miner, Office of Governor Kate Brown