

# Neah-Kah-Nie School District 56

504 North Third Avenue • PO Box 28, Rockaway Beach, OR 97136  
(503) 355-2222 • Fax (503) 355-3434

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Oregon Board of Forestry  
Oregon Department of Forestry  
Salem Headquarters  
2600 State Street  
Salem, Oregon 97310

Members of the Board of Forestry:

As the Neah-Kah-Nie School District Superintendent, I appreciate the time you serve on the board and I value the opportunity to talk with you today. I understand the Oregon Board of Forestry's decisions have a direct impact on the level of education Neah-Kah-Nie School District can provide its students. I would like the Board to have the same understanding. In my brief presentation, I would like to share with you the unique history, and dependency on timber revenue, my school district has with the Tillamook State Forest.

Neah-Kah-Nie School District serves over 840 students from Bay City to Manzanita. The school district is recognized for its outstanding schools: US News and World Report recognized Neah-Kah-Nie High School and Neah-Kah-Nie Middle School as two of the top twenty-five schools in Oregon. The Portland Business Journal rated Neah-Kah-Nie School District as one of the top 30 school districts in Oregon. Last year, Neah-Kah-Nie High School had a 94% graduation rate. Currently, 100% of freshman are on track to graduate. The school district also has well-maintained facilities, engaging curriculums, high quality professional development, and up-to-date technology. Neah-Kah-Nie is a fantastic school district that is greatly dependent on timber revenue.

Like many school districts in Forest Trust counties, Neah-Kah-Nie School District is reliant upon monies derived from timber sales on Forrest Trust Lands. In fact, we are more dependent on timber revenue than the vast majority of 197 Oregon public school districts. Neah-Kah-Nie School District is one of four Oregon public school districts that does not receive State School Support. Neah-Kah-Nie School District receives its revenue from local funding including property taxes and timber revenue. Approximately 25% of our district's funding is sourced from timber sales on the Tillamook State Forest. Neah-Kah-Nie School District, 125 staff strong, is proof that local school funding works, we are excellent stewards of timber revenue.

The school district relies on timber funding to enhance educational opportunities for our students. While schools throughout the state are struggling with overcrowded classrooms and program cuts, our students enjoy manageable class sizes where they receive more personalized instruction.

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AGENDA ITEM A

We have been able to build this strong foundation in large part due to funding from timber source lands. Quite frankly, timber revenue enhances student performance and improves the social/emotional health of our students. Neah-Kah-Nie High School is proud of the large increase in students interested in the natural resource field. In the near future, a team from Neah-Kah-Nie High School will compete in the Oregon Envirothon competition to promote conservation education of our natural resources. These high school students recognize their education is influenced by the harvest of forest crops. They also prioritize the need for efficient environmental protections. Students understand a balanced approach to forest management is essential.

However, each year, with under-utilized timber lands and an uncertainty about funding levels, it is difficult for Neah-Kah-Nie school administrators, school board, and budget committee, to budget and plan long term for our students. When there is a consistent and sustainable timber harvest, the school district can budget accordingly. However, the high fluctuation of timber harvest makes it very difficult for long term planning, staff hiring, and developing and maintaining a sustained budget plan.

Essentially, for Neah-Kah-Nie School District to provide a top tier education, we rely on a stable source of timber revenue. For the school district, a management plan that focuses on optimal revenue production, while also providing targeted and efficient environmental protections, is critical.

Under the current Forest Management Plan, in my opinion, the Oregon Department of Forestry is not maximizing timber harvest on Trust Lands, and that has been the case for more than twenty years, or since I have been a school administrator. Every year, excess volume is added to the growing standing inventory, at the expense of counties, communities, special districts, and school districts that are reliant on an equitable harvest rate and corresponding timber sales to fund critical services. I can only imagine the type of PreK-12 world class education I could offer students, if the Oregon Department of Forestry would reverse itself and increase timber harvest to optimal revenue production. Neah-Kah-Nie School District is not alone. Besides the 125 Neah-Kah-Nie School District employees and their families, entire communities throughout the state are in a similar situation: We look to this Board for action.

I strongly encourage the Board of Forestry to take steps to ensure an equitable management plan that will meet the social/financial needs of small, Oregon communities while also employing effective and efficient environmental protections. In doing so, this Board will help school districts like mine to continue to do its best for our students in the classroom while also ensuring that these students have beautiful, healthy forests in which to explore.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul Erlebach, Superintendent  
Neah-Kah-Nie School District