



MAY 13 1998  
Governor Atiyeh

May 11, 1998

Mr. Victor Atiyeh  
7690 SW Fairmoor Street  
Portland, OR 97225

Dear Vic:

I know you are well acquainted with the story of how the Tillamook Burn became the Tillamook State Forest; and how Oregonians had the vision and momentum to transform 400 square-miles of wildfire-charred landscape into a sea of green.

The story of destruction and recovery played out across the landscape of the Tillamook serves as an ideal teaching and learning opportunity about how human and natural forces combine to change and shape our environment. In recent years, with the help of the Oregon Legislature and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, we have crafted a vision of how to share these learning opportunities through an interpretation and education center located in the heart of the forest.

We have spent the last two years in a careful homework and design process to bring that vision to life and we are preparing now to enter a fundraising process. As a veteran of other fundraising work, as a person with a connection to the Tillamook, and as a leader, I'm hoping that you can join us in making the vision a reality by helping us shape and implement our fundraising strategies.

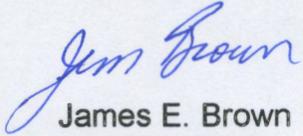
Specifically, I am asking you to consider joining a small, experienced team of recognized leaders to advise us with our capital campaign and to help seek funding partners in the private sector and in the foundation community.

I would like to visit with you in more detail about our project, but more importantly, about my request for your time and involvement on this



important committee. Consider these ideas over the next couple of days and peruse the enclosed information that describes our project. I'll be calling within the week to check on your interest and to schedule a brief visit to consider the possibilities.

Sincerely,



James E. Brown  
State Forester

Enclosures

JEB:DD:CB

## **Background:**

### *Envisioning Forest Learning and Discovery at the Tillamook Forest Interpretive Center*

---

One spark on a hot August afternoon in 1933 changed the lives, the landscape and the future of what is known today as the Tillamook State Forest. A series of devastating wildfires transformed the original forest into a virtual wasteland. But one of the world's largest reforestation projects has returned the area to a sea of green.

The story of destruction and recovery played out across the landscape of the Tillamook State Forest serves as an ideal teaching and learning opportunity about how human and natural forces combine to change and shape our environment.

Working at the direction of the Oregon Legislature and with the technical assistance of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the Oregon Department of Forestry is planning to make this story—these many stories—available to Oregonians and visitors.

Planned for opening in 2003, the new Tillamook Forest Interpretive Center will serve as a hub of visitor experience and provide a gateway to a network of other interpretive waysides, trails and sites around the forest that are outposts for learning, enjoyment and discovery.

The department views interpretation and education as critical to helping Oregonians understand the unique context of the Tillamook State Forest; to understand why the lands are managed the way they are and what that management philosophy looks like in action; to rebuild a personal connection with and understanding about our forests.

Situated in the heart of the forest alongside a picturesque narrow gorge of the Wilson River, the interpretive center site provides a host of natural opportunities for education and interpretation. From historic settlement patterns and use by indigenous cultures to forest ecosystems, river hydrology and habitat, and evidence of the story of fires and rehabilitation, the location provides a perfect complement to the key themes of the interpretive program.

The interpretive experience will begin well before visitors turn off the highway to the center site. Interpretive waysides and signage elsewhere in the Wilson River corridor begin the experience by introducing the key stories linked to specific locations in the forest. When visitors arrive at the interpretive center site, the goal is to get them out of their cars and into the forest, with the interpretive center serving as the physical and conceptual thread that links them to the site and the forest beyond.

Preliminary planning was completed this spring for the 16,000-square-foot center located at Jones Creek on the Wilson River Highway. The preliminary planning process allowed the department to validate the marketability of the facility and project annual attendance (about 100,000 visitors per year); establish the facility design and function; provide specific exhibit designs; analyze operations and maintenance costs and staffing needs; and provide specific construction costs and fundraising targets.

Strategic planning is underway for a capital campaign to help fund the eventual design and construction of this facility and an endowment to help defray long-term operations and maintenance costs. The department's commitment of \$3 million serves as a "downpayment" to seek matching and other funding from private donors, foundations and other agencies and organizations to meet the \$12.5 million total cost. No taxpayer dollars will be used to fund this project.

Other important interpretation and education work is underway as well:

- Design work is complete on a network of roadside pullouts, featuring interpretive signs that show and tell some of the many stories of the Tillamook. Construction on one of the major roadside pullouts along the Wilson River Highway is planned for this summer. An interpretive kiosk and trail were constructed last year at the Sunset Rest Area on Highway 26.
- Weekly programs during the summer are reaching out to forest visitors. 18 programs were conducted during the summer of 1997, involving hundreds of forest visitors and campers in learning the story of the Tillamook. Specific topics included current forest management activities and future plans, forest history and plant and animal species identification. Similar programs are planned for summer 1998.
- Lesson plans for all age groups of students have been tailored specifically to the Tillamook State Forest and a major effort is underway to invite young people from throughout the region to visit the Tillamook. 1,200 students visited during the spring of 1997 and more are expected this year.

*For more information about the Tillamook Forest Interpretive Center, contact Doug Decker, Tillamook State Forest Interpretation and Education Program Director, at 503-359-7439.*