

April 23, 2019

To: Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources
Re: Hearing on HB 2351, May 2, 2019
From: Maria Hall, Willamette Farms, Newberg
Sent via email to senr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice- Chair Olsen and members of the committee:

I own a farm outside of Newberg Oregon with frontage along the Willamette River. It has been in our family since 1959. We have observed activities on our stretch of the Willamette during this time, and we have boated on the river.

In recent years, the use of wake boats producing high energy wakes for wake boarding and wake surfing has exploded in the Newberg Pool, which is within the Willamette Greenway. Up until this time, there was always boat traffic and waterskiing, especially on summer weekends. However, wake boats are now dominant and the effect of the larger wakes is very apparent, with much greater impact than in the past. I won't go into the safety and property damage aspects of this as I believe the focus of HB 2351 is on the environment effects of these high energy wakes. I can say from first hand observation that the large wakes are causing erosion of the banks along our stretch of the river. Some of these wakes appear to be 2-3 feet high when they smack against the banks. We are in a flood plain region. Our bottomland is used for farming, not houses. Our banks are not shielded by a line of docks and boat houses. The banks are steep and composed of soft sediment soils. When the high energy wakes continuously hit the banks, they erode and start undercutting. The banks and vegetation eventually collapse. The river is brown from silting on the weekends from the wave action. The land, vegetation and marine life is detrimentally affected by the wakes.

I have heard and given testimony to the Marine Board regarding the effects of the high energy wakes. I have heard and reviewed testimony from neighbors and other river residents and users about these wakes. I have heard the Board say many times that it does not have the authority to regulate the environmental/erosional impacts from wakes. This has caused immense frustration. I have tried bringing the matter to the attention of other agencies- Soil Conservation Service, DEQ, Division of State Lands and so on. I have also contacted Jason Miner, the Governor's Natural Resources Policy Manager.

Basically no one is taking this problem on. The Marine Board, aside from it's contention that it cannot regulate the environmental impacts of wakes, really has no incentive to do so without a legal mandate such as that provided through HB 2351. The Board is made up of boaters, It's supported by boater fees. It keeps friendly company with the boat dealer's association and is heavily lobbied by the water sports industry lobbyists.

It adopts regulations creating wake surfing zones and allowing boat ballasting in front of areas like ours, which will exacerbate the erosion problem. It is critical that HB 2351 is passed to irrefutably provide the authority and mandate that the Marine Board address the issue of boats on the environment along the Willamette Greenway.

This issue is a concern in other states and countries. As an example, please see the attached article from Scott Brown of Michigan Lake and Stream Association. This was written in 2016. The technology of wake boats to create larger wakes has advanced since then.

There is a stated minimal fiscal impact to this bill. One would hope supporting this bill would be straightforward.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely, Maria Hall, Willamette Farms, Newberg