

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing in strong opposition to HB 2555. As motorboat owners, our family and friends get so much enjoyment out of spending time together on the river swimming, boating, tubing and surfing. We are responsible, respectful, safe and educated boaters and enjoy the river in exactly this manner.

Over the last few years we have seen sections of the river become no longer usable for us and our recreational choices. Additionally, just this year, the Oregon State Marine Board took action to restrict towed sports from the Hawthorne Bridge to Waverly marina and restrict surfing from the Hawthorne Bridge to Willamette Falls.

The restrictions we have seen go into place are causing congestion in areas that allow towed sports making this type of recreation hazardous and unenjoyable. As polite and respectful users of this specific section of the Willamette we feel we're being singled out and that a waterway that belongs to the entire community will only be enjoyed by a select few. We do not feel this is the correct way to create a safe river nor the best way to manage our state resources.

With the introduction of HB 2555, further restrictions would be put on boaters on the Willamette basically banning all surf boats on the Upper Willamette. One of the main usages of our boat is to pull our 9 year old son and his friends on a tube. To think that would not be allowed is crushing to us and our child.

Additionally, during this global pandemic, boating is one of the only family recreation activities we have been able to do safely. Taking this safe, socially distant activity away during this time is especially hard to swallow.

Furthermore, with the -1 amendment, wake surfing would be banned from south of Portland all the way to the Yamhill river. Singling out one sport on a 30 mile stretch of public waterway is absurd. There is NO EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE that directly links erosion on the banks of the river or damage to docks to wake boats.

We're fearful if this type of overregulation continues it will put an end to a recreation that we highly value. One that was incredibly important to our children and friends during this pandemic. We're fearful it will also crater yet another sector of our local economy by destroying jobs and businesses supported by boating. Recreational boating brings 1.6 billion in annual economic impact to Oregon and supports nearly 6,000 jobs and more than 400 businesses. This year especially, we need to be focused on preserving and bolstering small business recovery, NOT destroying it.

I hope you will consider the above points and our strong opposition to these proposed new rules so our entire community can enjoy recreating on the Willamette River.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashley K. McFerron" with a small circular mark at the end.

Ashley McFerron, OD