

This bill is an over-reach of legislative authority as it would result in a complete ban of all wake boats in the Upper Willamette. Oregon waterways belong to the Oregon public - not to a few landowners along the shore who want to prevent the public from enjoying the river. The very purpose of Oregon Statewide Planning Goal 15, the Willamette River Greenway, is, according to the Department of Land Conservation and Development "to increase public access and enjoyment of the river." This bill not only violates the stated purpose of Goal 15, but runs afoul of the legislation proposed by Governor Tom McCall in 1967. His goals were similar to those that resulted in the protection of Oregon beaches for public use. Just as private property owners on the beachfront tried to keep the Oregon public off the beaches, so these private property owners on the riverfront are trying to prevent the Oregon public from enjoying the river.

Proponents may attempt to justify the inequitable and exclusionist nature of this bill by claiming wake boats cause bank erosion or dock damage, but there is actually no empirical evidence that directly links river bank erosion or dock damage to wake boats. Proponents are making these claims as a mere ploy to keep the public from enjoying the river.

This bill would prevent many families from enjoying the water in a safe manner. Boats used for wake-surfing travel relatively slowly, typically between 10 and 12 miles per hour, so they are an ideal way for kids to experience Oregon waterways with their parents. Banning wake boats from the Upper Willamette not only destroys boating opportunities for Oregonian families, but it will add to congestion and safety issues in other bodies of water. The Upper Willamette should be open and accessible to all - especially those boaters who travel at a safe and cautious speed.

I urge you, decision-makers, do not let unsubstantiated claims supersede the rights of all Oregonians to slowly and safely enjoy the river.