

To Whom It May Concern

I would like to take this opportunity to voice my strong opposition against further restrictions on the Willamette River for towed water sports. I have lived in the Willamette Valley for almost my entire life. I have spent countless days on this river enjoying its waters and its banks fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding, tubing, wakeboarding, and surfing. This river serves a huge percentage of the Oregon population. It is a shared resource for all Oregonians. While I can understand frustrations that arise between different communities on the river, banning a subset of the population of river users based on their specific activity is not the answer. As with any dispute over resource management, I would implore the Oregon Marine Board to focus on finding common ground and a solution that is mutually beneficial for all parties. Just as I have spent much of my life enjoying the opportunities that this beautiful river has to offer, I hope that my children who are now ages eight and 10 will also have the same opportunities moving forward. While it seems that this is a small subset of river users that would be affected initially, what is to say that future regulations would not limit other groups of motorized watercraft such as the fishermen. In the future, what is to prevent the vocal non-motorized watercraft users from demanding a ban on the Hogline below Willamette Falls to allow them better access to this area. Earlier rules established a pass through zone on a large swath of the Willamette River that allows sailboat users and other non-motorized river participants an area to enjoy without any competition from towed water sports. This action was put forward against the recommendation of the Portland Fire Bureau who felt that it impacted water safety. Arguing that these decisions are about water safety therefore is not the real crux of the issue. In addition, there have been multiple people who have stated that towed water sports increase erosion and dock damage. For anyone like myself that has seen the recent flooding and debris that washed downstream, it is difficult to believe that a wake is more damaging than Mother Nature in this situation. Also there have been other studies in Oregon on Wild and Scenic rivers such as the Rogue River that showed that motorized boats do not increase erosion in rivers that flood. I would again ask that The Oregon Marine Board look at the data that is already available from other river systems such as the Rogue River or that they complete an environmental study on their own if this is truly an area of concern.

Finally establishing such a large pass through zone on the river below Willamette Falls would force many boat users to travel through these areas on their way to an area below the Hawthorne bridge. This would make the pass through zones even more congested as there are four major boat ramps in this area. In addition, participants of towed water sports would have their activities confined to a narrower and thus more dangerous section of the river that is also the dirtiest portion of the Willamette River. Would you want your children swimming in a Superfund site?

Thank you for taking the time to consider the arguments that I have put forth in this letter. I would ask as an Oregonian that the Oregon Marine Board bring the involved parties together and find a compromise that would allow all Oregonians to enjoy this shared resource and to build a strong partnership to protect the river for our future generations.

Respectfully,

Eric S. Reid, MD