

Testimony for hearing on SB 857 before Senate Rules Committee- In favor of SB 857
June 1, 2021

Dear Committee Members:

I am a farmer of land that borders the Willamette River within the Newberg Pool. I have observed the river, in particular this section, for over 50 years. Since taking over primary responsibility for our farm in the last 10 years, I have paid closer attention to the situation of erosion of the banks, sedimentation of the water and user conflict. In recent years I have seen the rise in popularity of wake boats, and the marked increase in wake sizes.

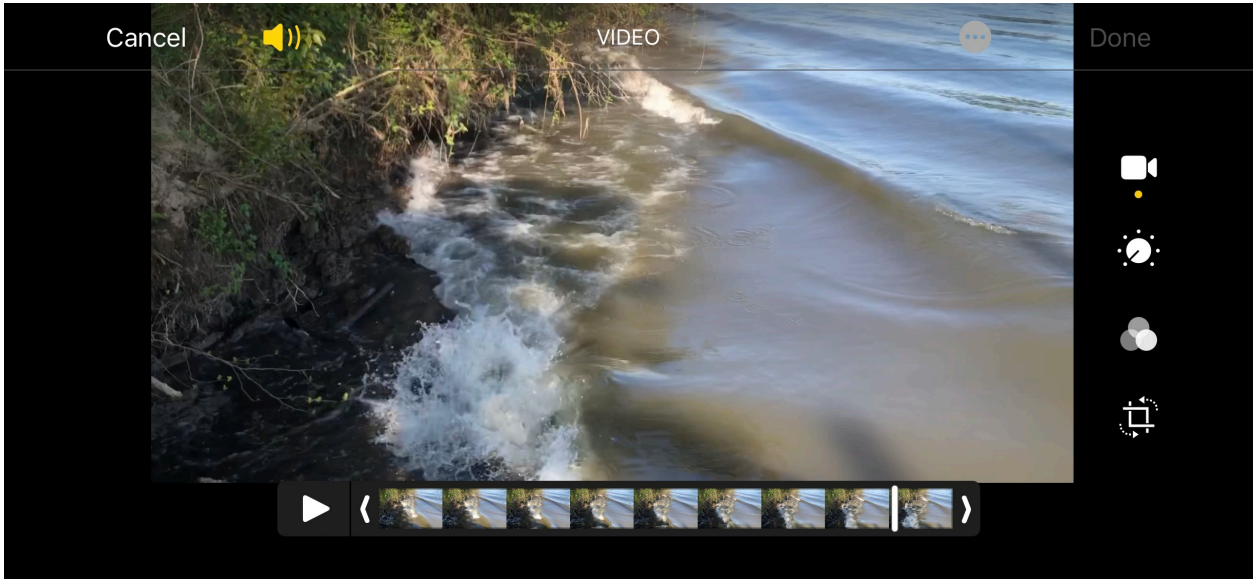
I do not dispute that wake surfing or wake boarding is fun for people or that towed watersports should be allowed in appropriate places. The bill before you only sets a reasonable limit on loading weight for boats engaged in these activities. **Wake surfing and wake boarding would still be allowed** for boats with loading weights at 4,000 pounds or less. This is a large percentage of boats. Studies by experts in the field have established that boat weight (displacement) directly effects wave energy. Wakes from 4,000 pound boats will still cause damage, but not to the extent of the 10,000 pound boats currently being allowed under Marine Board rules. Also, any size boat would still be able to operate in the Newberg Pool. The bill only limits weight **while conducting towed watersports**. The reason for this is that when doing towed watersports, the wake boats operate at plowing speeds (approx. 10-12 mph) and are often ballasted with extra weight. This generates enormous wakes for surfing- up to 3-4 feet high. These are the damaging wakes this bill hopes to limit.

There are many great places to do large scale towed watersports- the lower Willamette, the Columbia River, as well as numerous lakes and reservoirs. The narrow, 600 foot wide, soft- banked Willamette of the Newberg Pool is not an appropriate place. Two weeks ago I was in Portland walking along the waterfront just downstream from the Hawthorne Bridge. I saw people wake surfing there, having a great time. The wakes from their boats just bounced off the seawall- no one was negatively affected and there was no environmental impact.

The desired outcome of this bill, backed by scientific studies, is to reduce wake energy which causes environmental damage in the form of bank erosion, water quality (sedimentation) and compromised fish and wildlife habitat. The reality is this bill may not go far enough in terms of reducing damage. It is a compromise.

Below are some photos taken from our shoreline which shows undercutting of the banks due to wake activity, how soil from bank erosion becomes sediment in the nearshore water and the action of a wake hitting the shoreline.





In 2019, the Oregon Legislature overwhelmingly passed HB2351, which required the Marine Board to promulgate rules to limit damage from boats to the Willamette Greenway, in which the Newberg Pool resides. The response was shocking. Contrary to the mandate of the law, the Board created a rule which allowed boats weighing 10,000 pounds to conduct towed watersports in the Newberg Pool. This weight is double the current average wake boat size. These are the largest wake boats on the market. SB 857 will go a long way in specifically directing the Marine Board to enact rules it was supposed to two years ago, in compliance with Oregon law.

Thank you, Maria Hall, Willamette Farms, Newberg.