

Dear Members of the Senate

I am providing this written submission in strong opposition to SB 857.

I am a 40 year Oregon resident born and raised who enjoys the summer months with my friends and family on the river experiencing the great outdoors we have in this state. SB 857 will crush that experience for my family, friends, and so many others.

My initial reaction to the merits of the bill are that there is no supporting information to justify such a strong bill which removes a huge number of families from the river. The bill itself notes that after removing boats over 4000#'s there is a potential to look at raising that weight limit. The bill itself is backwards by the very fact that they want to remove boats then decide if there is evidence to support the ban or change it.

In addition to the lack of transparency or supporting evidence provided in the bill there are 2 specific evidentiary items I want to address.

1. Dock owners – You have already imposed restriction on waterways to limit wakes by the wealthy landowners along the River. This bill would be another step in making the river more elitist at the detriment to the average boater. It is unjust to allow only the richest people to enjoy the wonders that the Willamette River has to offer. This bill would cater to the wealthy dock owners and ignore most of the population that lives in this area
2. Erosion – The bill incorrectly implies that towing boats in particular are responsible for erosion on the water. The bill doesn't provide any clear information to comment on, so I will provide some general comments from my years on the river.
 - a. The water level in the rivers changes drastically over the winter in the Newberg area which floods fields, crosses roads, transports massive logs down the river piling up on boat docks/ramps, etc. Anyone who has spent time on the River knows the River changes during the winter and the first few outings in the spring deliver surprises. Rock bars shift and form new islands, previous sandy beaches may now be covered in rocks, etc. Mother nature changes the river each year and has for the 20 years I have enjoyed the Newberg area.
 - b. If you have had the opportunity to take a jet boat beyond the mouth of the Yamhill you would witness firsthand the greatest erosion that I have witnessed on the river in my 20 years. There is a side of the river that collapsed to the point a cabin is nearly in the water now. That was not caused by boats as only a few boats physically can even get up to this point in the river. This erosion was caused by mother nature during the winter. The amount of water that comes down this river in the Winter is incredible and does not appear to be comprehended in this bill which conveniently puts the blame on the boaters.

I attended the House hearing and there were some people who attempted to make some incorrect statements about the river which are very important.

First, the stories that the shallows are dead and there are no fish or birds or vegetation are incorrect generalizations and clearly unfounded if you actually visit the River near Newberg where I have boated for 20 years. There are fish, osprey, bald eagles, crawfish, etc. I see them myself and in large numbers.

The documentation presented supporting this bill gave a very one-sided view of wakeboarding and boaters in general which clearly showed that there is an agenda beyond concern for the River itself. As an example, my first year on the river with my own boat I towed 2 other boats (one pontoon and one fishing) to the dock along with helping a group of youths on a float without the appropriate gear. Boaters and people come in all types, so the boater stereotypes thrown out yesterday were untrue. If a few boaters are the problem then put the resources in place and stop the offenders.

The photos presented at the House Hearing describing the River as a "pool" are such a misclassification of the River. The photos all conveniently show glass water which is not the condition all the time and surely isn't in the winter. The River is not immune from wind or trees coming down the river and these photos show that.

This photo is at Newberg (Rogers Landing) on a Nice Day (left side exposed to wind, right side shielded from dock)



Here is another photo of the Newberg Boat Ramp on that same "NICE DAY" The water is about 15' higher than the summer in this photo and not even the highest it gets. You see all the logs and debris. Those travel down the river to the woman that testified during the House Bill that her dock gets beat up by wakeboats.



This is a photo from September see the water from the wind over the entire River. There are no other boats around me when I took this photo. Wind is a constant wave, one after another unlike a boat wave. The folks supporting this bill argue that the Oregon State research said it could be possible for the waves to cause some issues but did they you look at wind with Oregon State or just the fact that motion causes erosion and then say boaters are the motion only? I am an OSU graduate too so I love that school but like many people on the phone noted, you can find experts to support any argument in the right or wrong context to support your position.



I wish I had a photo above the Yamhill where nobody wakeboards or surfs and you could see a 30' to 40' section of bank that fell into the River many years ago from the winter flooding. Just like you heard from people that live on the River there is way more happening on this River than wakeboats and the proof is in the River. If this area was around wakeboats this condition too would be blamed on boaters but it isn't boaters.

The photo below is from May 1st 2021. Notice the banks showing the bank has levels of soil sluffing. The rows go up about 8' and this is May 1st which hasn't even started surfing on the water. This is the evolution of the river over a winter but if people had the opportunity, they would blame tow boats for this



Like many others I ask you to really rethink this bill and put more thought into this. If homeowners are unhappy that they are privileged enough to have a private dock on public property and complain about that maybe you should solve that problem and make public property public. They don't own this River and should share it.

This is a sport I love and cherish everything about it. I also have been a fisherman for the majority of my life and appreciate and respect nature but what I have witnessed firsthand on the river this bill goes way too far and is unreasonable

Beyond the lack of evidence, the human side of this bill it catastrophic. My kids were raised on this river from as young as 4 weeks old and have learned so much from their experience. By limiting boats to 4000# towing, you are basically outlawing all wake boats on the river (mine included). This will force everyone to either stop the sport they love, force them to one area in the river which I cannot stress enough how unsafe that is, or force them to go to other areas that can't handle the boat volume either like Hagg Lake, Foster Lake, etc. There are not a lot of options as an Oregon resident where you can boat.

I know some people could say it is just watersports but it isn't just that, the River is way more than that for families that partake in this sport. The River is a Wednesday night as the sun is setting and you're eating dinner with your family talking about school, life, beauty of Gods creation. The River is watching the smile

on a kids face when they tube or wakeboard for the first time and are proud of themselves. The River is watching someone struggle to surf or wakeboard then finally get it and realize they accomplished something they had never done. The River is the beauty of an Osprey pulling a fish from the water then struggle to get back to a tree. The River is taking another family out on your boat and giving that family an experience, they never had and talk about years later. These are memories burnt into my brain and countless numbers of other families.

Please consider the impact you are considering on the boating community along with their family and friends. For every boater you take this right away from, there are multiple additional families that you are also taking this experience away from because a good day on the River is better shared with some good friends.

I ask you to please oppose SB 857 and when you consider these bills please consider the absolute favorite thing you enjoy doing with your friends or family, and then, picture someone taking that away with as little justification as these bills have. Remember the kids when they are told that they can no longer tube on the river and you have no reason to give them other than wealthy people don't want wakes or a disingenuous argument about erosion. This bill would be invoking on our freedoms as Oregonians and setting a very unhealthy introduction to politics for our children. This bill is wrong on so many levels and I ask that you help keep Oregon waterways open to all to share.

Sincerely,

Rodney Myrick

Lifelong Oregon Resident