

Thank you for the opportunity to express my extreme opposition to Senate Bill 857.

My name is Stewart Mers and I'm the sales Director for River City Boat Sales which is located on the Upper Willamette in the heart of the Newberg Pool. I've been working and playing on the river nearly every day for the past 16 years and have seen numerous rule changes over the years but nothing as over reaching and under researched as what is proposed here.

As a boater and a marine industry professional I can tell you that the proposed weight limit is an arbitrary number and will do nothing to help with shore erosion. Weight and displacement alone are not the only contributing factors to wake size and it makes no sense to impose such a strict weight limit. It would be nearly impossible to enforce these rules as well. Law enforcement officers are stretched extremely thin as we all know and should be focusing on major issues on the water, not enforcing weight limits and kicking people off the water.

We've seen varying degrees of success with rules since they've come out but the most success we've seen is with the towed watersports endorsement and establishment of the surf zones. The extra education and making people aware of the actual surf areas has made a real difference in wake surfing activity on the river. We need more time to let the current rules play out and allow people to become thoroughly educated about wake surfing on the river – that will make the biggest difference in the Newberg Pool.

Oregon's rivers are here for all to enjoy and this bill would turn the river into one of the most restricted waterways in the country. The impacts from this are far reaching and the economic impacts cannot be ignored. Our boat sales business and ability to sell, service, and demo boats on the river would be severely limited because nearly all of our boats exceed the proposed limits. Our business directly employs 19 people and this bill puts our livelihoods at stake. We also operate and manage Boones Ferry Marina which provides slips for 105 boaters and is the only boat launch in the area. It is depended on by hundreds of local boaters and the community for access to the river and for fuel. The revenue generated by the marina, boat ramp, and fuel sales benefit the boating community through fuel taxes that are given directly to the Oregon State Marine Board. There's also the impact to home owners and property values that honestly cannot even be calculated. The majority of home owners on the river choose to live here specifically so they can boat and recreate as they'd like, not be restricted to small boat activities.

Most importantly the issue of erosion is falsely being blamed on boaters. Anyone that works or lives on the river sees the year round changes that happen with water height and current, not by wakes. We see massive swings in water levels throughout the year that continuously move silt and debris along the bank. Its visibly evident each time the water rises and falls. The areas that do the best with fluctuations in water levels- bank areas that have been properly maintained. Over and over we see bank areas where trees have been improperly trimmed or allowed to fall into the river along with clearing of the bank for a better aesthetic look. These areas continuously have the worst erosion during the winter months and its completely preventable through proper education about bank maintenance. There's zero evidence that the erosion seen and sometimes complained about is attributable to boaters. A scientific study is needed to further analyze and make recommendations for rulemaking that are based in science and not by activists.

Please consider the overwhelming opposition being voiced today about this bill along with the fact that its already been rejected by the house when making your decision. Thank you.