

I am writing you to oppose SB 857, the newly proposed rule changes pertaining to boating and towed water sports on the Willamette River. This legislation is born out of special interest agendas and is not representative of the community at large. I am a home owner with a dock on the upper Willamette River. I purchased my home very specifically to have access to the water so I could raise my family boating and enjoying water sports. I very intentionally did not move to Lake Oswego because I wanted to avoid the excessive rules and stuffy atmosphere of the privatized lake. These new rules being proposed will nearly shut down a public waterway to 1000's of people that currently use it responsibly for recreation. In doing so it will also directly effect the local businesses and economy that benefit from these people visiting our area. Recreational boating helps support 5,993 Oregon jobs and 419 businesses. Regulations like these will decimate yet another small business sector critical to our local economy. Not to mention the drastic effects it will have on property values along the river.

I am asking you to put a stop to the madness. The excessive changes that the Oregon State Marine Board has made to the rules on this public waterway over the past three years makes it nearly impossible for boaters or law enforcement to keep up with current laws.

The Willamette River belongs to the entire community. It is not just for a few select groups that continue trying to make it exclusive to them. The current proposed regulations will just continue to discriminate and segregate against the majority of people that use this River. From a safety stand point. The proposed regulations will increase congestion and exacerbate any existing safety hazards on other parts of the Willamette River.

As with anything else in life, there has to be compromise. As an avid boater and someone who lives on the river, I have been going through these back and forth fights for several years. I feel we have been willing to work with the non-boaters and paddle groups, yet they just continue to grasp for more and more regulation. Education and enforcement, not exclusion and overregulation, is the right way to create a safe river for all. We can all safely and respectfully share the river.

Please help us to stop the over-reaching and discrimination against boaters and towed sports on this public waterway. This bill will make our waterways less safe and negatively impact Oregon families and small businesses. The House already extensively debated this bill and did not move forward. I respectfully urge you to do the same. Oregon needs our senators focused on COVID, economic recovery and getting our kids back in school. Please do not waste time on this unnecessary legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you for your time,
Zak Nichols