

June 1, 2021

SB 857

Hello , My name is Chris Mitchell

Esteemed Senators,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I am a boater, paddleboarder, & Willamette Riverfront Property Home owner

I am also the chair of the West Linn Riverfront Association an organization representing some 450 plus Willamette Riverfront Homeowners.

I am respectfully firmly opposed to SB 857.

This is yet another part of the concerted effort by the special interest groups such as the Willamette riverkeeper and the Calm Water coalition pushing for the complete ban of surf boats - under the guise of unproven erosion claims and fish safety – it appears they will use any and all reasons to ban a sport they do not like – very reminiscent of the groups who opposed snowboarding , and skateboarding in there early days.

5000lbs is absolutely arbitrary, after all the talk of waterskiing wakes being ok , My tournament rated waterski boat will not be allowed on the river if you pass this ruling .

I would like to point out that it would appear that most of the people opposing this bill are either of an age group where they have finished with their own towed watersports adventures or have chosen a different path to enjoying our waterways so have no interest in sharing the water way with a group who they see as being detrimental to their enjoyment.

During the very heavily biased public hearing on this matter it was stated by the proponents of this bill that 10000 people are against wake surfing boats full stop let alone on this stretch of the Willamette, this VS the 50000 plus boat owners and families and friends who are being hurt by this bill .This is pretty easy democratic math ..

To the address the CAVES erosion on the foreshore mentioned at length in the same hearing-- – Over the last 8 years I have experience the same issue in front of my home for years, almost mirroring the photos supplied today ,But unlike the locations of the pictures used as evidence of said erosion , my house is positioned on the river where there are absolutely zero wake boat wakes or wakes of any sort, as wakes are not achievable in front of my house thus demonstrating that the erosion in question is actually not caused by wake surfing boats at all.

There are multiple studies which show that it is home owners lack of stewardship of their foreshore & the annual flooding that occurs creates property line erosion rather than the boat wakes.

Respectfully ,after sitting through the Public hearing and repeatedly hearing the RT Honorably Rep Kemmerer using the word BOGUS to describe the opinions of those opposing this bill – I would like to adopt this word to use in regarding his presentation and apply it to the so call evidence provided to support this bill.

I would firstly like to draw attention to the factually cherry picked presentation & re show casing of the provided material from the special interest groups such as the Willamette riverkeeper and the Calm Water coalition, who are pushing for these rules, Most of this information is easily rebuked –including the silt pictures stirred up by boats which are actually

boats stirring up farm land wash off ,rather than the actual shoreline .and pictures of turbidity that could just as easily been taken after a paddle is whisked around on the shore line .

The heavily touted letter from NOAA has not been properly authenticated and is in my question of NOAA ,was apparently solicited from a junior employee at NOAA who was instructed to have it signed off on and in conversation admitted that boats were not the issue the manner in which they are driving is .. He was also instructed not to answer any more questions on the letter and NOAA representatives have since has not returned phone calls asking to discuss

The Fisheries Presentation although excellent has no merit with regards to the weight limit on boats as there is no evidence that this law would directly help the Fish issue . And Oregon rivers have experienced huge growth in numbers in Salmon over the last 10 years , which coincides with the use of these boats in the area in question .

A version of this bill was debated and found to be without merit or support in the House committee and this seems to be yet another attack on the same issue spearheaded by privileged waterfront homeowners in conjunction with a small, but well organized group of self motivated extremists wishing to gain exclusive use for their own group, under the cover of unproven opinions backed up by nothing more than other opinions of like-minded within their communities.

There is NO evidence that the boat class being affected by this ruling is an issue apart from the derisive views of those who just plain do not like them or the culture they associate with the users of said boats.

Actual real long-term studies should be conducted to determine if there is an issue that this bill would seek to address and then and only then, a plan to keep the river and its users, safe and healthy implemented. I personally find it concerning that the Newberg Pool is already one of the most regulated bodies of water in Oregon, and it begs the question how special interest groups have been able to create a false narrative that tries to hold towed sports accountable for things like erosion, which has many causes, currently, wake surfing is only allowed in two small zones with no adjacent homes, but somehow although there is no actual evidence that these boats cause any of the erosion being touted as a problem these are still too much river for the entitled few .

This bill will make our waterways less safe and negatively impact Oregon families and small businesses. Setting an arbitrary boat weight limit that effects two out of three boats on the upper being active is simply unjust. 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.

Willamette River enthusiasts have long enjoyed various forms of towed sports, and something my family certainly enjoys along with paddling and swimming. During this time where, as a state we've struggled with many natural disasters and a nationwide pandemic, it seems ill fitting to focus policy on taking away equity and enjoyment on our river. At the very least, bills should be grounded in solid research and favor the general public, not select waterfront homeowners and paddlers looking to eliminate motorized boating for their own personal gain.

Thank you for your consideration,
Chris Mitchell