

House Representative
Please stop SB 857!

The Oregon Recreational Boaters United was formed by home owners. Not the boating industry. In which I am President.

I alone permitted the largest Bank Stabilization Project in 2020. I have more first-hand knowledge than any one person on this subject.

The number one cause is home owners. If this bill passes the real issue will not be addressed.

The majority of the home owners are moving forward with our legislation Which includes:

Home owner education on proper River Bank care

Removing the invasive species like black berry and ivy.
The planting of the native Red Twig Dogwood and Willow.

A better permitting process for Banks that are in jeopardy.

Below is an article I wrote that was published.

Please call me to discuss this further.
President of Oregon Recreational Boaters United
Tom Jones

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Health of Willamette riverbanks needs careful review

When my wife and I purchased our home on the Willamette River in Wilsonville in 2017, we were immediately alarmed by the erosion of the riverbank on the property.

The previous owner hadn't taken steps to prevent invasive species from killing off the native dogwood. There's a significant management problem up and down the river as property owners don't understand the importance of a healthy riverbank and either defer important maintenance or take actions that spur further erosion.

While my background is in commercial contracting and real estate development, restoring my portion of the riverbank became a passion of mine. I spent months learning the importance a healthy riverbank plays in the river's ecosystem and have invested ample time and money in making sure my property is having a positive impact on the river.

To address my erosion concerns, I had to go through a complicated permitting process that took more than nine months. I started by working with a slew of agencies: the Division of State Lands, the Army Corps of Engineers, DEQ, the National Marine Fisheries Services (NOAA), the City of Wilsonville and ODFW. Then I needed to hire a surveyor, a geotechnical engineer, a wetland ecologist, civil engineers, and an arborist.

The experts all agreed — the lack of native vegetation and mismanagement of native trees caused the majority of the bank erosion. Kerry Rappold with the City of Wilsonville gave us an emergency tree removal permit and advised us to employ experts to save the rest of the trees and bank. We put more than \$50,000 into the restoration, and now have a much healthier riverbank.

From this process, I learned that the three biggest causes of riverbank erosion are clearing the bank of natural vegetation, mismanagement of existing trees and plants on the bank, and improper draining of property. Naturally, much of the erosion occurs from rapid fluctuations of water levels. When water recedes too fast, the weight of the saturated riverbank soil is unsupported, which is why it is essential to maintain the native vegetation.

On my property, the previous owners had allowed invasive ivy and blackberry to grow and kill off the native red twig dogwood plants, exposing the roots of the trees on the riverbank. As a result, the trees had broken loose and in the following two winters of high waters we lost 15 feet of riverbank.

However, during the boating season we did not lose any riverbank. While we can all understand a river ecosystem is a network of interconnected parts that play a role in overall health, pointing to boating as a significant cause of erosion is unproven at best, simply false at worst.

Nevertheless, there is current legislation attempting to blame recreational boating for the aforementioned riverbank decline. House bill 857 is presented without scientific merit and is detrimental to families who enjoy safe recreation on the Willamette River.

Instead of rushing to legislation that will likely have no tangible impact on riverbank health, I'm encouraging lawmakers to commission a thorough study of the problem to find solutions that work. Then we can create a more streamlined regulatory process that empowers property owners to learn about their portion of the riverbanks and have the tools to maintain and strengthen them.

We should all be invested in protecting and sharing the Willamette River, one of Oregon's treasures. Its health is up to us"