

Written Testimony to Oppose HB1589.  
2/8/2022

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 1589. I am asking that keep an open mind as you read this letter and understand how many thousands of people you would be affecting if this bill gets passed...Not only monetarily with lost jobs and wages due to this crushing blow to the boating and related industries, but also with the family memories that would be destroyed by limiting such a wonderful activity that thousands of people enjoy.

As a family of 6 that range from 15 to 10 it can be hard to find activities that we can all do together and enjoy. Boating is one of those! It truly has been the highlight of our last two summers and will continue to create amazing family memories for years to come. We have spent many thousands of dollars locally on supplies, repairs in West Linn and Oregon City, not to mention the too numerous times to count we go out to eat after a day on the river. These are direct dollars flowing through our local economy.

As motorboat owners, our family and friends get so much enjoyment out of spending time together on the river swimming, boating, tubing and surfing. We are responsible, respectful, safe and educated boaters and enjoy the river in exactly this manner. We have followed the rules and applied for all of the necessary education programs and licenses.

As a resident of Sherwood who lives about 10 minutes from the Boones Ferry Marina and about 20 minutes from the Hebb Park boat ramp, it is very convenient to take my kids and their friends out on the water for a couple hours of fun and fellowship. I also feel that the West Linn and surrounding areas don't really have access to adequate waterways as certain reps have stated in the past. Hagg Lake is a 1 hour one way drive from Wilsonville while Detroit Lake is roughly 2 hours one way. If we are concerned about the environment, then why would I burn an additional hundreds of gallons of gas just to pull my boat for hours and hours to get to a lake when the Willamette is a few minutes away?!

The Willamette river is a resource meant to be for all Oregonians, not just a privileged few. This bill seeks to take that away and create a private sanctuary for a select few of wealthy homeowners on the river. Those in favor of this bill will claim, erosion, environmental hazards, the fish are in trouble, the banks of the river are falling in, whatever excuse they can come up with, all caused by Boat Wakes, to help make their case to create a private Willamette River.

For more than a decade they have made these claims. So I ask, where is the evidence? If these "boat wakes" are the death river there should be ample factual data to support their claims. Where are the OSU studies? Where are the marine board studies? Where are the army corps of engineers studies? They're not there b/c they don't exist. The "evidence" you will most likely be presented are iPhone photos taken from the busiest section of the river on probably the busiest Saturday of the river. Is this really fact based or anecdotal evidence to fit a narrative. Senators and Congressman, do you not agree that a period of longer than a decade would be ample time to collect real scientific data to support these claims? Shouldn't that data be required before even considering a bill like this?

Rather than spend the last decade working on compromises those in favor of this bill have worked seedily behind the scenes day and night to close the river to families like mine, like my friends, so they don't have to look at boats on THEIR river. Do boat wakes cause erosion, it's possible. But what does a river do? We all learned in school it erodes. It's path changes, it get's bigger. That's what rivers do. Again, to say that the majority of erosion on the river is caused by boat wakes is far fetched at best and should be supported by over a decade of scientific data. Where is the data? The current proposed law would state that any boat over 5,000 pounds would not be legal. Again, where is the evidence to show 5001 pounds causes massive harm? Why is it not 5500 lbs or 7000 pounds?

As polite and respectful users of this specific section of the Willamette we feel we're being singled out and that a waterway that belongs to the entire community will only be enjoyed by a select few. We do not feel this is the correct way to create a safe river nor the best way to manage our state resources. With the introduction of SB 1589, further restrictions would be put on boaters on the Willamette basically banning all larger boats on the Upper Willamette.

This type of overregulation will put an end to a recreation that we highly value. And no, we can't just drive 1-2 hours to a nearby lake for a day trip. It is not feasible when a beautiful river runs right through our town. I'm fearful it will also crater yet another sector of our local economy by destroying jobs and businesses supported by boating. Recreational boating brings 1.6 billion in annual economic impact to Oregon and supports nearly 6,000 jobs and more than 400 businesses. These times especially, we need to be focused on preserving and bolstering small business recovery, NOT destroying it.

We ask you to listen to the voice of the majority in response to this bill. Oregonians, taxpayers, boat owners and the majority of river home owners are all joining in once voice to ask you to represent us and keep access open to the Willamette for all and vote no on SB1589.

