

February 9, 2022

In Support of SB 1589

We are writing in support of SB 1589 that limits boat weights to 5000lbs or less in the Newberg Pool and we believe this legislation will help to further protect the Willamette River for future generations.

We have lived on the Willamette River (upriver from the Hwy. 291 bridge) in the Newberg Pool for 17 years and have observed in horror the consistent and ever greater erosion of the shoreline, particularly after the Marine Board prohibited wake-enhancing devices downriver from the Hwy. 219 bridge. Prior to that ruling, the shoreline had minor erosion from winter/spring flooding, but nothing of any significance.

After that ruling, wake surf boats dominated this narrow stretch of river, caused irreversible damage to the shorelines and made it hazardous to try to even stand on the dock on weekends. Thank goodness for the tireless work of many individuals and conservation groups that convinced the Marine Board to change those wake surf rules which leads us to where we are now – specific surf zones. This has relieved the shoreline erosion and recreational challenges in some portions of the river, but even in zones where there is no wake surfing allowed, the heavily weighted boats (over 5000lbs) still drive by and leave destruction in their wake (pun intended).

We listened to the testimonies to the Senate committee, and many opposed to the bill stated that there are no studies proving that wakes caused by surf boats create erosion. I have personally read at least two and I believe those have already been provided to you as well. Those studies should be used as the scientific reason to limit the weight of boats in the Newberg Pool in order to protect sensitive shoreline, fish and wildlife habitats from the destructive wake energy of heavier boats.

It is our understanding that research demonstrates that the capacity of the shoreline to withstand the energy levels being produced by more and bigger boats along portions of the Greenway was exceeded quite some time ago and that damage is increasing at a rate commensurate with increasing wave energy levels. This research jibes with our personal observations.

In summary, over the past few years, increased boat traffic combined with larger and heavier boats being used primarily for wake surfing have created a dangerous and destructive environment on the Willamette River, particularly in the Newberg Pool. This is something that cannot be sustained.

Please do the right thing to protect river banks, water quality, safety for motorized and non-motorized recreation and wildlife on the Willamette.

We urge you to support SB 1589. Surely, further studies are not necessary since that data is already in print. We appreciate the opportunity to submit our testimony.

Best regards,

Chris and Linda Pepler
lindeebeans@comcast.net

Riverbank April 2008

Arrows indicate land that no longer exists



Riverbank Comparison Spring 2011 vs 2017



This land (30 feet) has now almost completely eroded. In prior years, this land would flood during winter/spring, but there was no riverbank erosion as illustrated in the next slide. Gangway had to be lowered 3 feet & additional ramp had to be added to gangway for access.

Bank erosion 2016



This is where the dog is laying in the 2011 photo. 30 feet of land gone and still falling.