

Submitter: Kaspar Murer

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural
Resources

Measure: SB5521

Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Testimony of Kaspar Murer, Community Liaison, Wasabi Paddling Club, Portland, in
Support of SB 5521

Dear Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham and members of the Joint Ways & Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources: I am writing in support of the recommended
budget for the Oregon State Marine

I am a dragon boat and outrigger canoe paddler, past president and currently
community liaison of Wasabi Paddling Club, an outrigger and dragon boat paddling
club in Portland with 350 members.

In 2017/18 Wasabi, other dragon boat clubs, individual human powered watercraft
and floating homes experienced dramatic increases in powerful high wakes created
by rapidly growing numbers of wake boats. This created a dangerous environment.
Big wakes flooded dragon boats with hundreds of gallons of water. The first dragon
boat capsized by powerful wakes was our Wasabi VIP team, Visually Impaired
Paddlers. 18 paddlers were tossed into the Willamette River. 2 paddlers were stuck
in an air bubble under the upturned boat. The coach, Jim Hinsvark, dove to pull them
out from that precarious situation.

I called OSMB. Director Larry Warren met with us in Portland the very next day. Thus
started a process of finding workable solutions to accommodate all river users. Over
the next two years up to ten similar accidents happened, including two high school
rowing teams in Lake Oswego. Floating home owners had tens of thousands of
dollars in damage to their homes, decks and utility lines by excessive wakes.

Thanks to a careful solution finding process by the Marine Board team, we now have
new regulations to protect all river users, while making it possible for all to enjoy their
particular water sports. There is a new part-time Portland Waterways Engagement
Coordinator. With the many users in this area, it is important to transition the Portland
Waterway Coordinator to a full-time position. Boating Safety Advocates on all Oregon
waterways observe the action, educate all on-water communities on coexisting and
safe boating. They save lives. This role is critical in reducing the need for further

regulation.

From personal experience I can say that the Marine Board is well managed. Their team members are responsive to developments on our waterways. They take action when needed, have on water safety, and the ability for all waterway users to enjoy their sports on their minds.

With these safety considerations in mind, and having experienced the effectiveness of the OSMB management and team, I support fully funding the budget recommendations in this bill provided by the Oregon State Marine Board.

Thank you for your consideration,
Kaspar Murer
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