

Submitter: Renee Morgan

On Behalf
Of: Calm Water Coalition

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

Measure: SB5521

Dear Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham and members of the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources,

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Calm Water Coalition in support of SB5521.

Calm Water Coalition (CWC) is a Portland-based volunteer organization of about 1,200 Willamette River user groups, including Portland's dragon boat paddling teams, university and student rowing teams, kayakers, stand-up paddlers, sailing clubs, distance and recreational swimmers, canoers, and floating home residents. Since 2018, CWC has worked with the Oregon State Marine Board to find workable solutions to escalating safety issues and accidents created by increasing high energy wake.

Kaspar Murer, in his testimony for SB5521, has described in more detail the wake-caused capsizings of paddling and rowing teams of 8-21 people. As the reports and observations of non-motorized users being forced to stop, move away from, or get off the river when wake boats were in the area, and rising wake damage to docks, decks and homes, CWC turned to the OSMB for help.

Despite the fact that the agency manages waterways for the entire state, Director Larry Warren, Environment and Policy Program Mgr. Josh Mulhollem, Boating Safety Manager Brian Paulson, Board member Laura Jackson, as well as OSMB staff responded to our concerns. They made trips to Portland held local meetings, took observations of the river, had countless Board discussions, and in efforts to find collaborative solutions, formed Citizen Committees and invited Public Comment. In my experience, it is very unusual for volunteer organizations to have the level of access, communication, joint problem-solving, and solution-finding that we have experienced with OSMB over the past 4 years.

Still, during those 4 years, this local conflict took more than its share of the agency's time stretching OSMB resources and taken time from other state waterway needs. The new part-time Portland Waterways Engagement Coordinator position helped a lot. Serving as an educator and safety advocate in the high-use Portland area, he built a rapport with the Lower Willamette community. We appreciated the support, but could see there is a need for a full-time coordinator.

The Marine Board is an efficient agency – no question. Its good work deserves to be supported and fully funded as proposed in SB5521. Thank you.

Reneé Morgan
Portland Rowing Club,