

Submitter: Aaron Choate

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire

Measure: SB1590

Dear Chair Golden and Committee Members,

Please oppose SB 1590, introduced by Senator Mark Meek.

Please consider the following before taking any action in your Committee on SB 1589.

This bill undermines critical protections that guard against artificial waves on the Willamette River. Wake boats are built to generate artificial waves on inland waters. These artificial waves impact the river's fragile ecology in the nearshore areas of the river. Eliminating the 5,500 lb weight restriction will cause significant negative impacts for these nearshore areas.

One need only look at the websites of the various wake boat manufacturers to see them boasting about wave size and height - all so that those who purchase these expensive machines can "surf" on inland waters, instead of surfing at a natural beach.

The nearshore areas are, in essence, the nurseries of the river. This is where the juvenile Spring Chinook salmon of spring and summer, so beloved by the late great Governor Tom McCall, utilize the very areas where these artificial waves have their biggest impact. A range of other species utilize the nearshore habitat, and can be significantly affected by artificial waves from wake boats.

This issue is brought on by an industry that has decided it should have no accountability, and is therefore fighting Oregon's common sense law that limits the weight of towed water sports boats. Wake boats are a problem in not only Oregon, but across the country.

Oregon demonstrated real leadership when it passed a law to institute the weight limit and related certification program in Oregon. It should not be allowed to flip back now!

Contrary to what the wake boat industry says on this issue, their oversized, exceedingly expensive craft affect everyone else on the river when they are used. Their 4ft waves slam into kayakers, swimmers, the shoreline, the fragile nearshore habitat, private docks, other power boats and more. Such waves are absolutely not natural to the Willamette River.

Since the common sense law was passed, there have been far more SUPs, canoes, kayaks, swimmers, and water skiers on the Newberg Pool stretch of the Willamette. Removing wake boats has made the river much more attractive, and has enabled a far higher number of people to safely recreation. That has indeed democratized, and increased access to the river!

Please reject the industry arguments opposing wake boat restrictions. Oregon has every right to set rules for rivers owned by the State of Oregon on behalf of the people.

Some machines just don't make sense in some places. Let's keep Oregon's pioneering program in place, and encourage the wake boat industry to be more accountable to other river users, private property owners - and most importantly the Willamette River's health.

Let's not advance this anti-Willamette River legislation. Please vote down SB 1590!

-Aaron Choate-
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