

Submitter: Mark F. Sauer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire

Measure: SB1590 February 9, 2024

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfires

Chair Senator Jeff Golden

Vice-Chair Senator Fred Girod

Senator Floyd Prozanski

Senator David Brock Smith

Senator Kathleen Taylor

Re: Opposition to SB1590

Dear Chair Golden and Committee Members, I am writing in opposition to SB1590. I am the President of the Portland Water Spectacular, a waterski show team and the only such team on the west coast. Our show ski team was founded in 1986 and is home-based in the Newberg pool near mile marker 28 between Bernert Landing and the Oregon City Falls.

Our team of about 42 residents of the Portland Metro area practices 2-3 times a week in the waters above the falls. We maintain two floating docks and a waterski jump on the Willamette, all permitted by the State of Oregon.

During our practices, we frequently perform acts such as building pyramids or double and triple acts where people are in close contact with, frequently standing or riding on the shoulders of skiers. Our rated boat drivers frequently will pull 10-15 skiers behind a single boat, and we frequently operate multiple boats simultaneously with skiers hard connected to the boat through a harness.

Of the 15+ hours each week (April – October) I personally spend towing skiers as the lead boat driver for the team, I can attest to the fact that many wake surfing boat operators have blatant disregard for common sense safe operations. Nearly all wake surf boats are aware of the towed water sport requirement, but decline to register or take the education. Many wake surf boats lack even the required boat registration required by the State.



We routinely observe wake surf boats passing our docks and ski jump at distances less than 100 feet, causing substantial damage to our equipment. We have had numerous incidents where ballasted wake boats pass by or cross our boats while pulling skiers in pyramid formations. While our skiers often ride through the wake of ski boats, the monstrous wakes of a ballasted wake surfing boats will cause our base skiers to fall and can physically injure our skiers and performers falling from a pyramid.

Wake surf boats often operate in packs on the upper Willamette because the wakes of other wake surf boats are so large that wake surfers from other boats have trouble staying on surf. So, they generally operate together heading in the same direction, one after the other. The huge wakes of so many boats effectively exclude skiers, paddle boarders and kayakers from using the river, while the surf from wake boats, particularly operating close to our floating dock frequently washes over the top of our dock and damages the frame of our ski jump.

Simply put, ballasted wake surf boats are incompatible with every other form of water-based recreation in the Newberg Pool, and I strongly oppose SB 1590.

Sincerely,

Mark F. Sauer
President, Portland Water Spectacular
West Linn, Oregon