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On Behalf Of: ORSPA
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure: SB1590

Good Morning Chair Golden, Vice Chair Girod and members of the committee,

My name is Heidi Hinrichs. I am a waterfront property owner in the Newberg Pool and I am a member of the Oregon Rivers Safety and Preservation Alliance. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.

In 5 sessions, Oregon lawmakers have heard over 21 hours of testimony and educational information on wake boats in the Willamette River, approximately 40% of that testimony and educational information was provided by Oregon State University's Wave Laboratory Director and professors in the areas of Marine Engineering, Fisheries & Wildlife and Biological & Environmental Engineering. All research conducted by independent research universities conclude that wake energy generated from these large boats require 500 feet just to decrease their wave characteristics to levels similar to non-wake surf boats and almost 1000 feet to completely dissipate. Even Clifford Goudy, who conducted a study sponsored by the Water Sports Industry Association, testified to the Minnesota State Legislature,

"If a shoreline has light winds or is narrow in direction of the prevailing wind it probably is a good place to consider having a no wake zone."

The Newberg Pool is narrow. On average, it is 550 feet wide. It is simply not possible to be 500 feet away from the shore. A University of Portland professor who published her "Evaluation of Wave Energy on the Willamette River" study that was conducted in the Newberg Pool in 2019, submitted written testimony in in 2021 and 2022 stating,

"Although I have heard comments from the OSMB and boating groups that there is "no proof erosion is caused by big boats", there are several published studies and reports by public agencies on many types of rivers quantifying the impact. There should be no question that these large boats are causing significant erosion as well as damage to the river banks and aquatic ecosystems."

Academic experts all conclude the same thing: the waves generated by large wake boats cause erosion, property damage and harm endangered fish species in the Newberg Pool. These conclusions have not changed since SB1589 was passed in 2022 nor was there ample time to bring expert scientists from Oregon State University back to the capitol to repeat testimony they've given to lawmakers in the past.

Because our home was in a wake zone back in 2019, I can personally attest to the conditions back then. The area was very congested. Every time a wake boat passed, our dock would violently rock up and down with such magnitude that we would fall down. Myself and others were knocked off our paddle boards and our kayaks were swamped if we did not immediately maneuver to avoid these large waves. In other words, these large boats make it difficult, if not impossible, for others to enjoy the river. Unfortunately, one thing we could not avoid was the damage to our dock and the significant erosion along the riverbank. Since SB1589, our dock has not incurred additional damage and we have not lost trees or had significant erosion. We have also seen more paddlers, swimmers, floaters and fishers and tubers behind normal sized boats. Evidence that SB 1589 is working.

SB 1589 was passed with considerable discussion based on scientific evidence that wake zones and boats over 5,500 pounds were detrimental to the Willamette River especially the narrow Newberg Pool and gave the OSMB authority to adjust weight limits based on science. This was only passed after there were 16 amendments to SB 1589 resulting in a compromised limit of 5,500 pounds.

Only 1% of boats sold are wake boats so what problem are we trying to solve with the introduction of SB 1590? What new scientific evidence is there to suggest that these large boats do not cause damage in a narrow river?

A sensible law, thoroughly debated, is currently in place. Please leave SB 1589 as is, and do not move forward with SB 1590.