

On behalf of the Willamette River Community Coalition and our more than 1000 members and their families I ask for your support of SB 1590. I co-founded the Willamette River Community Coalition to bring all users groups together to safely share the river. We had arrived at a compromise on the upper river (Newberg Pool) several years ago, after years of work between all stakeholders including the Head of ORSPA at the time, the towed sports community and homeowners. And while it placed many restrictions on towed sports it was a compromise that made sense because it balanced input from all stakeholders and river users.

The OSMB then held additional work meetings and adjusted the zones, further restricting towed sports access. But still it at least allowed families who have done towed sports for generations on the river to continue and it protected basic public access and recreation on the river.

SB 1590 only asks that we go back to this compromise, which includes the Towed Water Sports Education program and the carefully planned out zones.

For our members and our families, towed sports are a really valuable outdoor activity that means so much to us and that helps us bring multiple generations together. Wake surfing is much safer and easier on the body than any other water sports and allows us to take out people in their 70's who can no longer waterski. Their faces light up like young kids when they get to enjoy water sports again. It means so much to us that we can do this with all of our kids together and that grandparents have a sport they can actually do with grandkids. Likewise it's the only towed sport that serves those who are handicapped. We lost the only local adaptive wake surf program when the current full ban went into place, preventing that access to the water for disabled veterans and others.

We have also seen how these bans are pushing more and more boaters into other areas like the lower river, Hagg Lake, Billy Chinook, and causing increased congestion for all motorized and non-motorized users. The Marine Board has reported from Sheriffs throughout Oregon they continue to hear about what a problem this has become. By going back to the previous plan they had put in place after years of work with all of the stakeholders, you could help alleviate that problem.

Finally let me share what has happened to our river community as a result of SB 1589 which now prevents so many of our families from being able to enjoy the river, or which has criminalized them when they do. The conflict on the river has never been greater, and there are neighbors video taping other neighbors and calling the police on them, simply for being out tubing or doing other towed sports with their families. Unfairly singling out and banning an entire group of users from the river has created so much division and is truly undermining the sense of community. It's been really sad watching this happen.

I must also point out that so many inaccurate claims continue to be made in an attempt to ban groups of users from the river. But one of the most illogical ones is this. If boat wakes really caused the issues they are claiming, such as violating the Endangered Species Act, wouldn't they be addressing and restricting all boat wakes? As we know and as many river homeowners

have testified to there are many types of boats that make similar and larger wakes and that have not been restricted at all. And in fact any of the banned boats can still go out and make the same wake they made before, you just can't pull your kids behind the boat or do any towed sports.

What we know and what we hope will eventually be clear to you is that this is a very biased attack on towed sports and the people who do them. Not an objective scientifically studied need to limit all boat wakes on the river. Understanding this may help you understand why so many people are upset at being unfairly banned from recreating with their families on the river. And why it's so frustrating as they watch as many types of boats making wakes still go up and down the river with no limitations, just because no one is being towed behind them. They know the basis on which their favorite family activities were banned is not based in fact.

We saw another example of this attempt to unfairly single out towed sports yesterday. An incident was brought up regarding a group of paddlers who were swamped on the lower river, and we know this was a scary incident for them and had reached out several years ago to work with that group and hear their concerns. We worked with Portland Fire and Rescue and others to making a video to increase boater education. But during testimony they left a really key fact out which was, that incident was not caused by anyone doing any towed sport. It was not even a wake boat at all. It was caused by a Bayliner. Likewise the last time a crew boat had been broken on the river it was an incident with a cabin cruiser. We are only going to make the river safer for all users if we do it based on the facts and on increasing safe behavior by all river users.

It has unfortunately become convenient to single out and blame towed sports for anything. But as Portland Fire and Rescue repeatedly testified, the safety claims that were being made about towed sports were not at all accurate. In fact they were so bothered by these oft repeated inaccurate claims they requested a call with the mayors office, the planning bureau and others and had invited me as well. They clearly stated to all parties that these untrue safety claims about towed sports needed to stop and were not supported by the facts.

We have worked so hard to try to protect access for all Oregonians and to bring all user groups together to find fair compromises to safely share the river. And the Marine Board had a plan in place on the upper river to do this, and it was just starting to work as everyone learned the rules. But instead a small group of private homeowners including a then Oregon Senator, decided they should have the right to determine who can and cannot access and recreate on our public waterways, and so we find ourselves here now with so many families unable to recreate on the river. And it's wrong. We as a river community and as Oregonians believe in working together and making river recreation inclusive to all user groups. Public access to our waterways has been a core tenet since our state's founding and we will continue to fight for this right for all Oregonians.