

Submitter: Kaspar Murer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3314

March 4, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice Chair McDonald, and members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of House Bill 3314 with the "- 1" amendment, to fund design and permitting for a solution to mitigate the harmful cyanobacteria bloom in Ross Island Lagoon.

I have been a dragon boat and outrigger canoe paddler with Wasabi Paddling Club for over 20 years. Human powered watersports on the Willamette River have greatly benefitted from the Big Pipe project, which reduced sewer overflows to almost zero. Working with the Calm Water Coalition, the Oregon Legislature and Oregon State Marine Board, we have achieved safety regulations that are effectively reducing wake-related accidents and damage. These two projects have led to a dramatic increase in human powered watersports on the Willamette River, which also allows for visually impaired paddlers, folks with other disabilities, cancer survivors, etc., to participate safely in wholesome team sports

In the past few years, however, we are experiencing a new and alarming threat – blue-green algae, or Cyanobacteria bloom, which can cause human and canine illness and harm our fish and wildlife populations. The blooms have seasonally invaded the Ross Island Lagoon, moved into the Holgate Channel, drifted downriver, around the island, and into the main channel near the Ross Island Bridge.

If an algae bloom travels downstream toward the race area in the Tom McCall Bowl, during the Portland Rose Festival Dragon Boat Races, they could be threatened by cancellation. Cancellation would affect hundreds of race team participants, our Sister City, Taiwan, and hundreds of tourists, as well as sponsoring organizations, hotels, restaurants, and other tourism activities.

Last year blue-green algae bloom caused official warnings to stay out of the river, cancellation of many team practices, and almost caused the cancellation of our second yearly big race event, the Portland Dragon Boat Festival in early September.

Oregon State University professors and Willie Levenson of the Human Access Project and River Hugger Swim Team are working on a solution for the blue-green algae bloom in the Ross Island Lagoon. A report concludes that blooms of toxic

cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, are a poorly monitored and underappreciated risk. Please help save our river, fish, wildlife, and recreational opportunities by supporting HB 3314.

Thank you,
Kaspar Murer, Community Liaison
Wasabi Paddling Club
Portland