



March 22, 2025

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Director

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Opposition to SB 301 – Protect Public Safety and Habitat in the Newberg Pool and the greater Willamette River

Dear Chair, Senator Sollman ; Vice-Chair, Senator Findley ; Member, Senator Golden ; Member, Senator Hayden ; Member, Senator Lieber:

I am submitting my testimony on behalf of the Urban Greenspaces Institute to express our opposition to SB 301 and the amendment to remove ballast weight from vessel weight regulations in the Newberg Pool. We feel strongly that the amendment would undermine the progress made under the 2022 SB 1589 which improved both public safety and ecological health in this reach of the Willamette River.

The inclusion of ballast weight in boat restrictions under SB 1589 reduced unsafe wakes and conflicts between river users. Removing this ballast weight consideration will reintroduce the same enforcement challenges that plagued the area for over a decade.

In addition to safety concerns removing ballast waste consideration will be ecologically damaging to critical habitat for federally protected Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead. Larger wakes from heavily ballasted boats accelerate shoreline erosion, degrade spawning habitat, and threaten already at-risk fish populations.

This amendment would benefit a small number of large wake boat operators at the expense of the wider community and the health of the river. SB 1589 is working. It has restored balance to the Newberg Pool, created safer conditions, and reduced habitat degradation. SB 301 and its amendment represent a step backward that I urge you to reject. We request that you vote NO on SB 301 and its proposed -1 amendment.

Respectfully,

Mike Houck, Director

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P.O. Box 6903 | Portland, OR 97228-6903 | 503.319.7155 | www.urbangreenspaces.org