

Submitter: Robert Waterhouse

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

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:

My name is Robert Waterhouse. I am a resident of Lebanon Oregon and an active user of the Willamette River by canoe and kayak. I am writing today to express my strong opposition to SB 301 and its proposed amendment to remove ballast weight from vessel weight regulations in the Newberg Pool.

I am deeply concerned that this bill and its amendment would undermine the progress made under SB 1589 (2022), which has significantly improved both public safety and ecological health in this unique section of the Willamette River. The Newberg Pool is a popular space for paddlers, swimmers, anglers, and other low-impact users who rely on its calm waters. The inclusion of ballast weight in boat restrictions under SB 1589 was essential to reducing unsafe wakes and conflicts between river users. Removing this ballast weight consideration will reintroduce the same safety and enforcement challenges that plagued the area for over a decade. The Newberg Pool is also 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.

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. Please stand up for river safety, environmental stewardship, and the interests of the majority who cherish this unique waterway. I respectfully request that you vote NO on SB 301 and its proposed -1 amendment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Robert Waterhouse