

March 24, 2025

Cathryn E. Tortorici
7816 SE Yamhill Street, Unit A
Portland, OR 97215

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

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

My name is Cathy Tortorici, and I am a resident of Portland, OR. I am actively working on Willamette River conservation through my work with Willamette Riverkeeper. I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 301 and its proposed amendment to remove ballast weight from vessel weight regulations in the Newberg Pool. The Newberg Pool is important for paddlers, swimmers, anglers, and other low-impact users who rely on its calm waters. In addition, the Newberg Pool is 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.

The inclusion of ballast weight in boat restrictions under SB 1589 (2022) reduced unsafe wakes and conflicts between river users. Removing the ballast weight consideration reintroduces the same enforcement challenges that plagued the area for over a decade. This new bill and its amendment undermine the progress made under SB 1589, which significantly improved both public safety and ecological health in this unique section of the Willamette River. Studies—including a newly peer-reviewed report by Professor Macfarlane—show that larger wake-generating boats require significantly more buffer space from shorelines (500 feet or more), a condition the Newberg Pool simply cannot meet.

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.

I respectfully request that you vote NO on SB 301 and its proposed -1 amendment.

Sincerely,

Cathryn E. Tortorici

Board President

Willamette Riverkeeper