

Submitter: Steven Brown  
On Behalf Of: Willamette River Property owner  
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

March 24, 2025

Dear Senate Committee Members

I am writing this letter to express my strong opposition to the removal of boating weight restrictions in the Newberg Pool as is being proposed by the authors of SB 301. I have been a homeowner along the banks of the Newberg Pool for the last 17 years. This is a truly beautiful area of the Willamette River which has provided enjoyment to many, many people in the form of boating (both motorized and non-motorized), paddlers, bird watching, fishing, etc. A few years ago, when wake surfing began to become popular, the enjoyment of the river by very diverse groups became threatened. The river was now dominated by heavy wake boats. The use of the river by non-motorized watercraft significantly diminished and birds of certain species became less abundant.

Also, during the invasion by the wake boaters, I began to notice increasing erosion along my riverfront property. The erosion could be visible from week-to-week depending upon how heavily the river was being utilized. When a wake boater passed through my area, the color of the water at once changed from a khaki green to a chocolate brown. During certain holiday periods, the erosion could be measured on a daily basis. When SB 1589 was enacted, the erosion and intimidation of non-motorized watercraft, swimmers and anglers was substantially reduced. Blue herons became more plentiful again and there was a general "peace" among those using the river.

There is very simple reason why wake boaters are generally unaware of the destruction that is being caused by their boats. Depending on the speed of the boat, the wake surfer/boater may be dozens of yards away from a point of reference by the time that their wake hits the shoreline. They remain blissfully unaware of the damage that they have caused. This fact was illustrated when a wake boat overturned a dragon boat in the Portland area. The wake boaters were totally unaware of what they had done. It is, in my opinion, totally unsafe for wake boaters to try coexisting with non-motorized watercraft on such a narrow river.

There is a very good reason why racecars are not allowed on public roads. The objective of a racecar driver and a normal commuter are simply incompatible. It is basically unsafe for the two types of automobiles to try to coexist on the same roadway. The same is true of wake boaters and other water enthusiasts.

It is my firm opinion as a homeowner, with a dock, that SB 301 cannot be allowed to threaten the banks of this majestic river. The desires of the many cannot be overshadowed by the desires of the few.

Sincerely,

Steven D. Brown, Ph.D.