

March 24, 2025

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

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

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Smith, and Committee Members:

My name is Karen Harrington, writing to you as a resident of Clackamas County to express my strong opposition to SB 301 and the -1 Amendment.

I am a member of the Willamette Riverkeepers, the Tualatin Riverkeepers, and the Climate Reality Project, Portland Chapter and am deeply concerned about how we treat the beautiful natural environment we are blessed to call home. My river passion is kayaking. A day on the river enjoying the river in my quiet and unobtrusive boat is a day of joy. While I am happy sharing our river with multiple vessels (I grew up water skiing), the wake boats favored by proponents of SB 301-1 are a menace to other boaters and threaten the Newberg Pool area of the Willamette River's ecosystem we all enjoy.

It is particularly onerous when a small segment of our community will not accept and follow our laws. This legislation benefits boaters who refuse to access other areas of the river more able to tolerate the size and weight and wake of boats designed to produce ocean size waves. Narrow portions of the Willamette River including the Newberg Pool, are ill equipped to handle these types of boats.

The Newberg Pool is a narrow section of the Willamette River that has become safer and more accessible for paddlers, swimmers, anglers, and families since SB 1589 was enacted in 2022. The law has helped reduce dangerous wakes caused by heavily ballasted wake boats, which have historically caused significant erosion and habitat degradation.

SB 301 -1 will:

**Endanger Public Safety**

Reintroduce large wakes in a narrow river corridor, creating dangerous conditions for paddlers, anglers, swimmers, and other small craft users.

**Harm Critical Habitat**

Threaten ESA-listed Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead by degrading key migration and spawning habitat in the Newberg Pool.

**Accelerate Shoreline Erosion**

Large, artificial wakes destabilize banks and destroy riparian vegetation.

**Undermine Enforcement**

Return Oregon to a failed "ballast-only ban" that enforcement officials and the Oregon State Marine Board have long said is unenforceable.

I urge the Committee to reject SB 301 -1 to ensure that Oregon continues to protect this vital section of the Willamette River for both ecological health and community safety.

Please uphold the public interest—not corporate or industry influence—and help us keep the Newberg Pool a safe and balanced space for all.

Thank you for your service and for your consideration. I urge you to reject SB 301-1.

Respectfully,

Karen Harrington