

Submitter: Michael Sampson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

Dear Senate Committee on Energy and Environment,

My name is Michael Sampson, and I am a regular user of the Willamette River. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 301. The towed water sports community is simply asking to be treated the same as all other boaters in the deep waters of the Newberg Pool.

Currently, many boaters with ballast-capable boats are unfairly restricted from activities like tubing, wakeboarding, and water skiing in the Newberg Pool. This is because their boats' unused ballast weight is counted toward the overall weight limit, even if it's not in use. For example, a fishing or pontoon boat with a dry weight of 5,500 pounds can tow a tuber, but a smaller recreational boat with ballast capability cannot, even if it weighs less.

This bill would simplify rules for boaters and make it easier for the Oregon State Marine Board to manage towed water sports regulations. There is no national standard for registering ballast capacity, making compliance confusing and inconsistent. Additionally, some families who specifically purchased boats under the 5,500-pound limit have been denied permits simply because another model in their boat's lineup has a larger ballast capacity.

I don't believe the goal of current regulations was to exclude more than 90% of new recreational boats from the river. These restrictions hurt local small businesses and make it difficult for families like mine to participate in activities we love. We simply want a fair chance to enjoy the river safely and responsibly.

Even with this change, the Newberg Pool would remain one of Oregon's most strictly regulated waterways. Boaters would still need to meet weight limits, take an online safety course, apply for a towed watersports decal, and pay additional fees.

Please support local families and small businesses by passing this bill. It's a small adjustment that makes a big difference.

Respectfully,
Michael Sampson