March 24, 2025

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 Smith ; Member, Senator Golden ; Member, Senator Pham ; Member, Senator Robinson,

I am a resident of Portland and a regular user of the Willamette River. I write to express my strong opposition to SB 301 and its -1 Amendment.

This legislation directly threatens public safety, water quality, and critical fish and wildlife habitat in the Newberg Pool section of the Willamette River. The proposed amendment would eliminate ballast weight from how vessel compliance is determined under existing law (SB 1589, passed in 2022), which will undo the progress made to protect this highly sensitive stretch of river.

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

Removing ballast weight from the weight calculation is a loophole that will allow oversized wake boats to re-enter this fragile area despite their fully loaded operational weight far exceeding the current 5,500-pound cap. This is not a minor adjustment—it's a full-scale rollback of hard-won protections supported by peer-reviewed science, law enforcement, and thousands of river users.

SB 301 and the -1 Amendment endangers public safety, harms fish habitat, erodes shoreline and undermines enforcement.

Please uphold the public interest by rejecting SB 301 and the -1 Amendment to ensure that Oregon continues to protect this vital section of the Willamette River for both ecological health and community safety for all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Stephen Kurtz
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Portland OR