

Submitter: Suzanne Thorson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

I am a bird and nature watcher, a kayaker, a canoeist, and a stand up paddle boarder. I have negative experience on Hagg Lake due to speed boats either not knowing or ignoring the no wake rules for part of the lake. It is dangerous and disrupting to my lake experience. In this case of Newberg Pool, it is a “no brainer” the necessity to keep out 5,500 lb wake boats.

Public Safety: Since SB 1589 passed, we've seen a significant increase in paddlers, swimmers, anglers, and small craft users returning to the Newberg Pool. These calm waters are a haven for low-impact recreation. Allowing 5,500+ pound wake boats—operating with undisclosed ballast weight—will bring back dangerous conditions that put families and all users at risk.

Environmental Harm: The Newberg Pool is critical habitat for federally protected Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead. These species rely on this section of the river for migration and spawning. Large, artificial wakes from ballast-laden boats erode shorelines, damage riparian vegetation, and degrade fish habitat.

Enforcement Nightmare: Senator Meek is banking on legislators forgetting the reason ballast weight was included in SB 1589. A decade of failed enforcement on the old "no ballast" rule taught us that without ballast weight considered, compliance collapses. Law enforcement and marine officials testified repeatedly that the existing ballast ban was ignored and unenforceable.

Corporate Influence Over Common Sense: Meek's proposal prioritizes the profits of out-of-state corporate boat manufacturers and a small minority of wake boat users over the thousands who rely on the Newberg Pool for safe, sustainable recreation.

The Facts: The average loading weight of most boats using this section is well under 4,000 lbs.

There are ample alternative locations on the Willamette River where large wake-generating boats can safely operate. Peer-reviewed studies—including the newly published work by Professor Macfarlane—recommend a minimum 500-foot buffer for wake boats to protect shorelines, well beyond what the Newberg Pool can accommodate.