

Submitter: Penelope and Richard Ellson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

I was deeply disappointed to read Senate Bill 301 and its -1 Amendment sponsored by Senator Meek. Please vote NO on SB301 and its -1 Amendment and rally your colleagues to oppose this misleading Bill.

On the face of it, the Bill looked like something good, asking the State Marine Board to study boat safety and to make a report on the results of the study. However, after reading more deeply, I understand that the amendment will remove ballast weight from how wake boat limits are studied and enforced. Ballast weight is what causes the safety and environmental impacts of these boats.

A yes vote would legislate dishonest science. The amendment would eliminate from the study, ballast, a known key factor that is critical to understanding how wake boats, in particular, affect the narrow river environment. Misleading findings based on bad data could then be used to remove wake boat restrictions SB1589 (2022) that currently protect Willamette River shoreline ecosystems and property as well as safety for more vulnerable recreational human water users. This is not good legislation. At best, it is disingenuous. At worst, it could be viewed as legislating scientific fraud, and it should not be supported. Senate Bill 301 with its -1 Amendment is the kind of Trojan Horse legislation that undermines trust in government.

As a frequent user of the Willamette River, mostly paddle boarding and kayaking, swimming, and occasionally motoring for waterskiing, we find wake boats to be a problem. These boats affect water safety for all users, shoreline habitats, and shore stability and property. The Willamette is narrow, so massive wakes generated by these boats smash into the shore, bouncing back and forth powerfully for much longer time, increasing turbidity of the water, knocking people off paddle boards and swamping swimmers. This is dangerous, not only for natural ecosystems and property, but for people of all ages and abilities who are swimming or using watercraft that are vulnerable to the massive wakes. This is why so many citizens and cities on the Willamette advocated for the current restrictions on wake boats in vulnerable sections of the river.

Please VOTE NO on Senate Bill 301 and its -1 Amendment. Please do not allow Senator Meek and wake boat industry lobbyists to use your vote to undermine thoughtful, hard-won protections of the Willamette River from wake boats.

Thank you for your public service and for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Penelope & Richard Ellson  
Milwaukie, OR