

Submitter: Debra Davis Strand

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

Dear Chair, Senator Sollman; Vice-Chair, Senator Findley; Member, Senator Golden; Member, Senator Hayden; Member, Senator Lieber:

My name is Debra Davis Strand, and I am a riverfront homeowner in Aurora in the Newberg Pool zone and an active user of the Willamette River. I am writing today to express my strong opposition to SB 301 and its proposed amendment to remove ballast weight from vessel weight regulations in the Newberg Pool. I am very concerned that this bill and its amendment would undermine the progress made under SB 1589 (2022), which has significantly improved both public safety and ecological health in this unique section of the Willamette River.

Prior to SB 1589, unrestricted use of large ballast boats caused significant dock and ecological damage along the Newberg Pool zone. In 2019, our family's dock had a wake surfing boat drive <100 feet from our dock and we watched helplessly as the wake force caused one of our newer (<5yo) dock hoops (holds the dock to the piling) to shear off, costing us \$3,000 for just one hoop repair. Neighbors had similar dock damage issues with the large ballast boats repeatedly not following the rules of where they could wake surf, and not following the rules on maintaining lawful distances from docks to avoid damaging homeowner docks with their very large wakes. The inclusion of ballast weight in boat restrictions under SB 1589 was essential to reducing unsafe wakes and reducing significant dock and shoreline damage that is caused by large ballast boats being used in an area of the river that is too small to allow for large ballast boat wake dissipation.

The Newberg Pool has become a vital space for paddlers, swimmers, anglers, kayakers, canoers, and other low-impact users who rely on its calm waters. The inclusion of ballast weight in boat restrictions under SB 1589 was essential to also reducing unsafe wakes that caused potential safety issues and conflict between river users. Removing this ballast weight consideration will reintroduce the same enforcement challenges that plagued the river for over a decade prior to SB 1589.

Additionally, this change would have serious ecological consequences. The Newberg Pool is critical habitat for federally protected Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead. Larger wakes from heavily ballasted boats accelerate shoreline erosion, degrade spawning habitat, and threaten already at-risk fish populations.

I also question the rationale for this amendment, which seems to benefit only a small number of large wake boat operators at the expense of the wider community and the

health of this section of the river; there are other local Willamette River and Columbia River areas that these large ballast/large wakes boats can safely use. Studies -- including a newly peer-reviewed report by Professor Macfarlane -- show that larger wake-generating boats require significantly more buffer space from shorelines (500 feet or more), a condition the Newberg Pool zone simply cannot meet.

SB 1589 is working. It has restored balance to the Newberg Pool, created safer conditions, reduced homeowner dock damage, and reduced habitat degradation. SB 301 and its amendment represent a step backward that I urge you to reject.

Please stand up for river safety, environmental stewardship, homeowner dock integrity, and the interests of the majority who cherish this unique waterway. I respectfully request that you vote NO on SB 301 and its proposed -1 amendment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Debra Davis Strand