

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
RE: Opposition to SB 301

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

My name is Kaspar Murer. I am a resident of Portland and Community Liaison for Wasabi Paddling Club, dragon boat and outrigger canoe paddlers. Wasabi is one of three partners in The Portland Paddling Coalition, which includes DragonSports USA and the Rose Festival Dragon Boat Race.

Thank you for your work, time and effort in the face of over 3,300 bills introduced this year.

I am writing to express strong opposition to SB 301 and its proposed amendment to remove ballast weight from vessel weight regulations in the Newberg Pool. We in the Portland Willamette River area, are very concerned about the impact of SB 301 on safety for all river users, expensive damage to floating structures, destructive impact on river environment and the life forms, fish, insects, birds who depend on the river environment for their survival. It took years to arrive at the current wake regulations for the upper and lower Willamette river. There is no good evidence that would justify loosening these rules. I admire the athletic skills of wake surfers, but wake/surf boats can generate wakes that are 10-25 times more powerful than wakes from boats operated on a plane.

Just this last year, on Saturday July 20, 2024, one wake boat towing a wake surfer swamped three Wasabi dragon boats. Two of the boats capsized, throwing 44 people into the river. One dragon boat and a six-person outrigger canoe managed to stay afloat. The wake boat didn't even stop, indicating that they did not have an observer who should have noticed the accident, or, worse, didn't care to help.

A photograph at the bottom of this letter shows the rescue and recovery operation.

One week later in the Holgate Channel, another wake boat capsized a Wasabi dragon boat, again throwing all paddlers into the river. Some folks that were in the previous Saturday's event, were in this as well!
Apparently the wake boat waved as they passed. Very close proximity and towing a surfer ... no time to react. So frustrating !!!

These are very traumatizing events. Even though there were no serious physical injuries, the long term mental and emotional injuries, the fear of going on the river again is enormous.

It is because of numerous incidents like this, and many thousands and thousands of dollars damage inflicted on numerous floating structures, that in 2018 the Calm Water Coalition was formed. Working with the wake boat community, the Oregon State Marine Board, the Oregon State House and Senate, consulting with scientists from several places in the US and as far away as National Centre for Maritime Engineering & Hydrodynamics, Australian Maritime College, University of Tasmania, Launceston, Australia, the current regulations were proposed, adopted and implemented in 2020. They have been unsuccessfully challenged since then. There is no new evidence that would support loosening these rules or increasing ballast weights. If anything the evidence points to the current safety distances being too short for the existing weight limitations.

SB1589 is working to the extent that if all boats followed the current rules and assisted other boats that are in trouble, serious accidents as described above will rarely happen. No more valuable legislative time should be spent on the already carefully vetted and agreed upon safety programs, both in the Newberg Pool and in the Portland area.

Please stand up for river safety and the interests of the majority of all Willamette River users. Vote NO on SB 301 and its proposed -1 amendment. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kaspar Murer, Community Liaison,
Wasabi Paddling Club

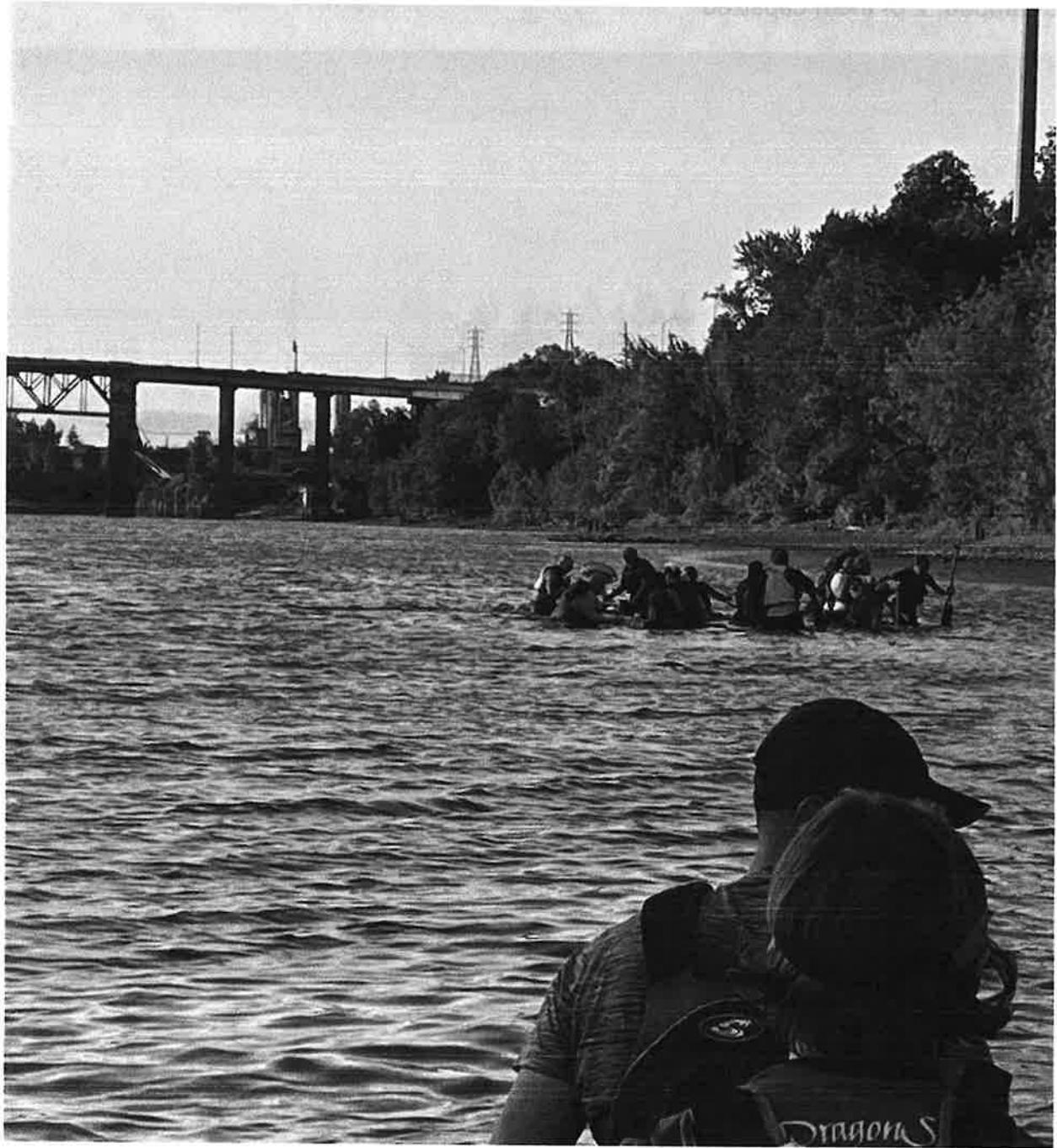
Portland

Saturday, July 20, 2024: Poets Beach by the Marquam Bridge. 3 Wasabi dragon boats swamped, 2 of them capsized



Thursday July 25, 2024: in the Holgate Channel. 1 Wasabi dragon boat capsized

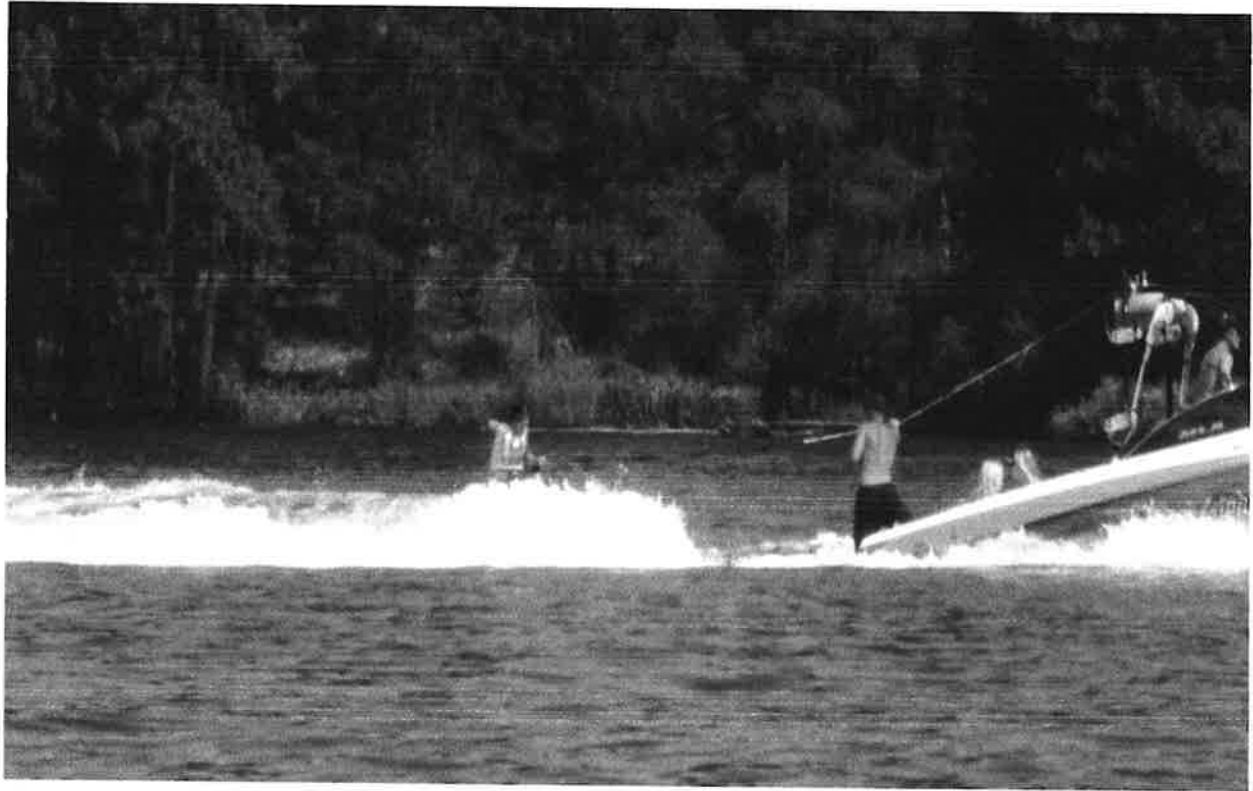
Thursday July 25, 2024: in the Holgate Channel. 1 Wasabi dragon boat capsized



Excessive wakes on Spokane River (Aug 2019). Numerous wave crests lasting at least 40 seconds.



Wake energy/power is directly related to wake height and goes up exponentially. Wake/surf boats can generate wakes that are 10-25 times more powerful than wakes from boats operated on a plane.





The results of scientific studies and recommendations from numerous sources and jurisdictions generally point to a distance of 500 feet or more from shore to reduce safety and erosion risks from wake/surf boats. Distances of 200-250 feet are clearly not effective.

