

May 7, 2013

Public Testimony in Favor of SB 602
Bans use of motors on Waldo Lake
House Committee on Energy and Environment

Chair Bailey, Members of the Committee:

My name is Bruce Johnson. I am a fifth generation Oregonian currently living in Bend, a retired member of the Oregon State Police, and great-grandson of John Breckenridge Waldo after whom Waldo Lake was named. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to you in support of Senate Bill 602, banning the use of internal combustion motors on Waldo Lake.

From the 1870s until his death in 1907, John Waldo, an Oregon legislator and Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court, spent nearly every summer of his adult life camping and exploring the Cascades of Oregon. He recognized, even then, that without intervention, the land would soon be divided by private interests and forever altered, and that future generations would lose the right to experience the wilderness escape that he so cherished. In his successful effort to establish a forest reserve along the Cascade Range from border to border, he argued,

"Why should not Americans, with a continent on their hands to fashion as they would, have provided for all the wants of men that can be provided by human institutions. Not only fields to toil in, but mountains and wilderness to camp in, to hunt and fish in, and where, in communion with untrammelled nature and free air, the narrowing tendencies of an artificial and petty existence might be perceived and corrected and the spirit enlarged.

What was true then is even more true today. Today's easy access for motorized recreation has brought the distractions, bustle and stress of city life to all but the most remote wilderness areas of the Cascades. Why would we not set aside one large lake for non-motorized recreation and still have the many other large lakes for boats and planes, just as we have beaches for families to play on, and beaches for dune buggies, and trails for hikers and skiers and trails for off-road vehicles and snowmobiles.

Fortunately, there is one large lake, Waldo Lake, that remains relatively unchanged. Because of the remarkable purity of the water, fish populations have not thrived there, which in turn has made the lake less desirable for motor boaters. Those same qualities, combined with thoughtful management of the forests around the lake, have made Waldo Lake a haven for canoeists, kayakers, sailboat operators, and hikers who seek the same spiritually refreshing sense of connection to nature that my great-grandfather strove to preserve for them.

The US Forest Service, in an effort to provide a diversity of recreational opportunities on public lands, found that the best use of Waldo Lake was to exclude seaplanes and boats with internal combustion motors from Waldo Lake. The Oregon State Marine Board, Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation, two Oregon governors, two US Representatives, the editorial staffs of the Oregonian, Register Guard and Bend Bulletin, and the vast majority of public respondents have all agreed. Keep Waldo Wild.

I urge you to pass forward that same opportunity for our great-grandchildren to enjoy this incredible lake in its natural state. Please keep Waldo Lake as a peaceful, pure, sanctuary for near-wilderness recreation and pass Senate Bill 602.

Thank-you,

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