

From: Aj Myers <aj@peak7.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2017 5:28 PM
Subject: Oregon Helmet Senate Bill - 643

Hello Gentleman

My name is AJ Myers and I run the Oregon branch of Peak 7 Adventures. We are a non-profit serving youth especially disadvantaged youth all over the state of Oregon. We are a licensed outfitter with permits on the Deschutes, McKenzie, and Grande Ronde Rivers. Rafting is the primary adventure activity that youth participate with us on in Oregon.

As an outfitter serving youth, we take safety seriously and our standards exceed the state minimums including our current helmet policy. I have many concerns about the Senate and House proposed bills. Our current policy for our outfitter is we require all our participants to wear helmets on class III and up rapids only which is abnormal for all rivers we run on but is a standard we have adopted across the board in all areas we work in the Pacific Northwest

Requiring helmets, as house bill 2716 states, on class II or higher rapids for youth under the age of 12 and 'provided' with whatever that means a helmet by an outfitter. We have class II rapids on the Deschutes that kids under the age of 12 routinely swim in a deep and wave train with really no danger in the water for head injuries. Or the Senate's bill of class III and up rapids, neither of these bills will necessarily prevent injuries

Also, the bill allows OSMB to put restrictions on the type of helmets. While this is easy to do with our PFDs as UCG has class ratings and whitewater specific approved PFDs the same standards, however, are not the case for helmets.

Issues

-Constant wearing of helmets, especially on rivers like the Deschutes with 100+ degree days, on universally agreed upon sections of river by profession and seasoned private boats alike will increase, among my participants especially, the danger of dehydration and heat-related illnesses.

-Requiring helmets will increase the costs to participant in whitewater sports as many outfitters and private boats will have to purchase helmets to accommodate state laws on rivers where played many years without consequences.

-Also depending on the specs current utilized helmets may not longer be sufficient. Which could require us as a non-profit outfitter to have to purchase 80 to 100 helmets in order to continue serving our larger groups.

-You are taking river specific risk management decisions out of the hands of outfitters and into the hands of lawmakers with little to no experience and making large cookie cutter decisions.

-On the rivers we run we see little to no injuries that would have been prevented had this rule been implemented and enforced.

-A class III helmet rule, because the PFD rule already exists, could be more enforceable but I don't know how you are going to define a class II rapid and can you have a class I rapid or are all rapids class II including the ones people inner tube on?

In the end, I don't think this law will help prevent injuries especially to youth, it will be one more law to try to enforce and then depending how the law reads and is interpreted it could cause more damage than good through issues related to the heat which will happen during Oregon's primary rafting season.

Thank you guys for your time and service on this committee, to the people of Oregon and especially for your interest in trying to protect Oregon's youth but in the end, I don't think this bill will help the public and outfitters better protect our youth.

AJ Myers
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