

3/1/2017

To the House Committee On Transportation Policy:

I am an Oregon resident and avid non-motorized boater. I sit on the board of the Oregon Whitewater Association and am a member of the American Whitewater association. I spend on average 50 days using Oregon waterways per year in non-motorized boats. I have been following the non-motorized boating program and HB2320 with great interest. When it was first discussed I was excited about the possibilities it offered to boaters of providing funds to help improve access and safety education. However, as the proposal evolved, it has become clear to me that it is not structured appropriately, that there are major concerns with the implementation and use models and seems to unfairly tax private boaters.

First and foremost, I believe that with 35% of respondents being strongly opposed to the establishment of a fee-based Non-Motorized Boating program and only with 7% strongly supporting that there is a major disconnect between the premise presented by the Marine board and the Oregon people. A major concern, even among those who were supportive of a user fee, was the lack of confidence in the ability of the Marine Board to represent paddlesports: **0% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that "the Marine Board effectively represents paddlesports" while 26% strongly disagreed**, and 0% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that "the Marine Board understands the needs of the paddlesports community," while 29% strongly disagreed.

These responses tell me that while some of the Oregon paddling community is open to use fees, we want to see them used and managed by an organization that understands the needs of non-motorized boaters. We see this exact model working successfully in Oregon already. The Deschutes River charges a daily fee for use of the river for both commercial and private boaters. It is very clear to all users where those funds go as there are great facilities for put-ins, take outs, photo pull-offs and river access only campgrounds with nice bathrooms. This type of pay per use model that benefits the body of water being used will be easy to convince the Oregon people of its value, this program does not do that.

Looking at the way commercial companies are charged this model is grossly unfair to private boaters. So much so that I as a private boater will likely register as a commercial user. If we take a raft company that has 50 rafts and assume a conservative 10-week season, with 10 rentals per week and 5 people in the raft each time. That gives 25,000 user days on the river from one company, that equates to less than 1 cent per user paid into this fund. While the best a private boater can do is about 3 cents a day assuming he paddles every day for 2 years straight. Yet commercial companies are considerably harder on boat launches, restrooms on the river, and other amenities provided.

There are a number of issues into the pure implementation. I have a raft that can hold 8 people, all paddling. Do I need to have all 8 people pay for their own boater pass? That seems unduly burdensome, especially as I regularly invite different groups of friends to go boating with. If I go out camping with a large group and I bring a canoe, will the passes be transferable so we only need two for a canoe or will each person who wants to use the canoe have to buy their own pass? The bill as proposed does not give any guidance into these types of situations. These are the types of things that would likely get me to register as a commercial user, even though I am just a private citizen.

Most of the rivers and lakes I paddle on today in Oregon I already pay a use fee for. Admission into the park or landing area is fairly standard. Requiring a Forest Service pass, Oregon Parks pass or a County park fee. These funds are already going to maintain the facilities from these fees and we see them put to good use. A simpler pay per day/launch option like is found at all national forests for parking at trails and Oregon waterways like Deschutes seems like a more reasonable option, though those funds should be used directly to improve, maintain and advocate for the associated bodies of water. However, this will likely be a hard sell in places like parks that already charge an admission fee. If, this is the only option would argue this should be sufficiently low in cost (\$2 or so per craft, not person) to allow a family with multiple crafts to afford to play in the water. Ultimately this does not seem like an item that the state government should need to or want to manage, other than in Oregon State parks. With the current plan the cheapest a family of 5 can get on the water with their pool toys or boats is \$25 (with one week permits and fees charged by the reseller), plus in most cases they will already be paying a park entrance fee. This seems like a high barrier of entry for many Oregon families seeking to escape the heat in the summer.

Groups like the Oregon Whitewater Association and others are already providing many of the services proposed to the Oregon public. We offer significantly reduced cost whitewater safety classes and wilderness first aid training annually. This is paid for by generous commercial sponsors all over Oregon who see 100% of the funds being put toward safety training and volunteers like myself who dedicate their time to help teach new boaters how to be safe on the water.

There does not seem to be a strong value proposition here for the boater purchasing yet another license that discourages new, casual and out of state users from enjoying our waterways in a very low impact activity. I believe that the proposed structure is not truly feasible and will become a law enforcement nightmare for both users and enforcement officers. For the people who float on hot summer days on simple 'watercraft' they buy from Bi-mart or Walmart, they will not be aware of this legislation nor be inclined to spend the same cost on a permit as they have on their 'watercraft.' This will lead to fines and tickets for users leading to frustration, increased costs and no value added to either side (assuming the ticketing is not used for a law enforcement revenue stream). No other state in the entire US requires pool toys, inflatable mattresses and the like to be permitted or registered (Oregon Marine Board, 2013).

The emergent need of HB2320 seems flawed as stated in Section 24. Looking at the data published by the Marine Board accidents and fatalities boating in Oregon are on the decline (Oregon Marine Board, 2015). What justification exists to require this to be enacted as an emergency?

I do stand behind the goal of requiring a lifejacket for all users, the statistics for deaths and accidents firmly support that all non-motorized boaters should be wearing life jackets or have them readily available when boating.

I strongly believe that HB2320 is not in the best interest of Oregon residents or visitors to our great state. The bill has too many flaws to be enacted and I strongly encourage you to reject this bill in committee and not to move this bill to the house floor.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Ben Corrado
3616 Wiltsey St SE
Salem, OR 97302

References

- Oregon Marine Board. (2013, April). *Non-Motorized Boating National Survey Results*. Retrieved from Oregon Marine Board: <https://www.oregon.gov/OSMB/forms-library/Documents/Non-Motorized/D-Nationwide%20NM%20Survey%20Synopsis.pdf>
- Oregon Marine Board. (2015). *Recreational Boating Accidents and Fatalities in Oregon*. Retrieved from <https://www.oregon.gov/OSMB/Pages/Accidents-and-Fatalities.aspx>