

May 28th, 2020

Re: House Interim Committee on Natural Resources

Adverse Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Natural Resources Industries, Organizations, and Constituencies

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee;

My name is Sam Taylor and I'm here as a representative of the Calm Water Coalition, an advocacy group for safety for all on the Willamette River in the greater Portland region. I'm also the Head Crew Coach at Lewis & Clark College, the Manager of the Oaks Park Community Boathouse, a board member of the Portland/Vancouver Rowing Association, and a paddler myself with Portland Kayak and Canoe Team. I'm speaking in response to in the impacts this pandemic has had on the rowing, paddling, and other non-motorized craft community.

For many of those, like myself, who are fortunate enough to have our own boat and live in a place where water access has largely been maintained, the pandemic has been a chance to get out on the water as much or even more than we have before. From our privileged position the effects of this as far as our recreation on the water have been minimal. Certainly some boat ramps and access points have been closed but overall the impact has been fairly small for private users.

However, especially in the greater Portland area, the nonprofit and other clubs that make up a large percentage of waterway users have had an entirely different experience. With the issuance of the Governor's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order most clubs shut down all operations somewhere around the third week of March. This full shutdown lasted about six weeks. In the last couple weeks easing restrictions and new interpretations from both national governing bodies and the state have allowed the resumption of some club rowing and paddling activities, however this is generally occurring only in one-person boats.

In the greater Portland area alone there are seven major rowing clubs and three major and numerous minor paddling clubs serving roughly 2500 people each year. There are many other paddling and rowing clubs statewide. Our clubs serve the public by providing waterway access to youth, college, and adults. We provide competitive and educational opportunities to middle school and high school students and programs that allow waterway access by the physically disabled or low income populations. For adults we provide fitness, competition, and social activities and, most importantly, waterway access. Not everyone can afford to purchase or has room to store their own boat, and our clubs are the backbone of access for that population.

While some of our clubs have been able to resume some limited operations in single-person boats with social distancing protocols, many of the boats we typically use (rowing in eight-person shells, dragon boats, etc) are simply incompatible with these realities. Clubs that are attempting to run programs are being forced to add staff time while taking in less revenue while also having to purchase new one-person boats and find places to store them. Other programs are choosing to suspend activities entirely and some have furloughed or laid off staff as a result. There is major concern in the community about the loss of learn-to-row or introduction to paddling classes this summer, a source of both program

revenue and new membership. Any grant, loan, or other relief program that can be created for small nonprofits that serve the greater community could be a great help.

The other major adverse impact has been the cancellation of events. The Portland Dragon Boat races, the USRowing Northwest Junior and Masters Championships, a number of paddling and windsurfing/kiting events in the Columbia Gorge, and I'm sure dozens of other local and regional events have been cancelled due to the pandemic. These events bring significant revenue from participants to restaurants, hotels, and other small businesses in the communities that host them and are themselves sources of employment for event organizers. Again, any sort of loan or grant program from the state that could help events come back next year would be helpful.

Thank you for your time and I appreciate the opportunity to share a little of our experience. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any other questions.

Respectfully;

Sam Taylor

Head Crew Coach, Lewis & Clark College

Manager, Oaks Park Community Boathouse

Member, Calm Water Coalition

Board Member, Portland/Vancouver Rowing Association