

Testimony in support of HB 2351 Natural Resources Committee, Feb. 14th, 2019

Good morning and thank you Chairman Witt and members of the committee.

My name is Dan Pence, from Portland.

I am a founding member of the Calm Waters Coalition, represent the Human Access Project, host of the Big Float and am a member of the River Huggers Swim Team. I also represent RiversWest Small Craft Center, a non-profit boatbuilding center that embraces the use of "Low-Impact Watercraft". I am also an owner of the Landing Boat Club, a cooperative marina on the Willamette River in Johns Landing. And, finally, I was, for four years a tiller for the UdragonU dragon boat team, and for ten years a member of Oregon Rowing Unlimited located at Oaks Amusement Park.

I'm here to speak for the many thousands of passionate River users who enjoy the Willamette while choosing to burn little or no fossil fuels, nor create large boat wakes.

We agree with the goals of the Willamette River Plan to:
Maintain access to the river.
Preserve native habitat and vegetation near the river. And
Preserve the visual experience of people using the river.

Unfortunately the historic actions of the State Marine Board have often been in willful disregard of these sensible goals. In their advocacy of unfettered high powered, high impact boating they have abetted sever damage to a valuable natural resource. The Marine Board has worked hard for 60 years to shield boaters from any responsibility to protect the health of Oregon waters. Air quality, water quality, shoreline erosion can all be impacted by certain types of boating activity. Particularly boats whose main purpose is to create large wakes for wake boarding and wake surfing.

These wake boats are a recent and growing threat not only to Oregon waterways, but to other users of the river; those using low-impact boats.

When I was a young man a boat wake was just incidental to whatever activity a boat was involved with. It's only been in the last decade or two that boats have been designed and marketed with the intent of making large wakes. And the technology has been evolving very quickly. Modern wake boats can add water ballast into tanks that can double their weight. They employ trim tabs and paddles that stick out to shape the wave. Computer controlled systems can be set to hold speed, weight and trim to make a desired wave with a push button. And that huge perfect wave can last until the fuel is gone.

I know how damaging these wakes are because of the repairs we have had to make at the Landing Boat Club. Ours is a modern marina built with steel pilings and concrete floats but as the popularity of wake boats has grown our marina has been falling apart. I have also seen sever erosion lately across the channel from our marina along the western shore of Ross Island. That typical mud and sand shore is literally washing away and undercutting the island. But the Marine Board says it has no jurisdiction over shorelines or docks.

Another problem with wake boats is their effect on other boaters. Paddling a canoe is very pleasant on a warm afternoon, until a wake boat passes by. When a 4' to 5' wall of water hits a small boat it can overturn, swamp and perhaps convince the paddlers that they need a bigger boat. Large wakes have the

power to take away the river from small boats. The state can encourage smaller wakes, or fewer paddlers. Pick one. You can develop a public park on the river or a freeway.

HB 2351 will allow the Marine Board to take action where needed to protect waterways not just for wake sports, but also for the majority of boaters who paddle, row and sail. For Oregonians generally, and the health of the river.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments. Questions?