

**From:** [Tom Whittaker](#)  
**To:** [Exhibits HNR](#)  
**Subject:** HB 2351  
**Date:** Friday, March 1, 2019 2:03:35 PM

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To Chair Witt and House Committee on Natural Resources members,

I appreciated the brief time I was given for oral testimony at the previous hearing on February 14<sup>th</sup>. To respect the request of the Chair and allow others to testify, I did not address all the points I had in mind, and want to take this opportunity to add to my testimony, including some added points that committee members raised during the hearing.

I live on the Willamette River, at River Mile 40. My address is 12140 SW Riverview Lane, Wilsonville, OR 97070. I've been swimming and paddling on the River since 1975.

I've lived on the River since 2001, and in recent years have witnessed the acceleration in the damage to shoreline and structures with the advent of the sports of wakeboarding and most recently wake surfing. I have shared my concerns with other neighbors, and as a result, after trying for some time to [get](#) the Marine Board to address the issue, we are asking the Legislature to become involved.

In August, 2018, tests were conducted on the Willamette to provide scientific data to the Marine Board characterizing the differences in wave energy generated by different boating activities on the River. I understand you have the results of that study directed by Gregor McFarlane, Associate Professor of Maritime Engineering and Hydrodynamics. The results clearly showed the increased energy of the waves needed for wakeboarding and wakesurfing. A lateral distance of at least 400 feet was required to allow those waves to disperse and attenuate to water ski wave levels.

In my comments on the 14<sup>th</sup>, I tried to describe how those waves hit the shore, and how much more damage they do when compared with waves from water skiing and from the natural forces of the River. Using a digital range finder, I measured the width of the River on February 20 as 214 yards shore to shore. I suspect that width drops to less than 200 yards at summer water levels. In that width, waves from wakesurfing in the middle of the River will not disperse or attenuate to that of water skiing before impacting either shore.

I want to add new points from my personal experience in response to questions from the committee.

**Costs of Damages:** I've attached a photo of my dock, taken last week, along with the cost proposal to execute the repairs in 2016. At one time, and for many years prior, the float that supports the end of the ramp and that with the slide was one structure, which performed without trouble prior to the advent of wakeboarding and wakesurfing. The waves from those sports basically broke the spine of the structure and required a rebuild of the lighter colored end, and hinging of the two to avoid further damage.

**Shoreline Ecology:** I'd also comment regarding changes in the ecology of the shore. For years,

when walking down the ramp to the dock, in the mornings in particular, it was not uncommon to see crawdads and small fish in the water. Those sightings have all but disappeared in the past three to four years. The plume of sediment that is stirred up by the larger waves in question extends much farther out into the River along the shore than previously, and I suspect has an impact on what lives in the margin of the shoreline. The Marine Board has the ability to set rules to protect the River, but has been reluctant to do so.

**Bank Erosion:** There are two locations on my River frontage where the bank has slid into the River, and the top has been reduced by 3 to 4 feet in the last two years. The large wakes in question tear at the toe of the shoreline and weaken the support for the bank above. When the bank above gets saturated, it cannot be supported, and slides into the River. I previously sent photos of slides on the other side of the River from my property.

**Safety:** I mentioned the damage to my dock, and need to also point out that when large waves from wakeboarding and wakesurfing hit the dock, it is difficult to stand up and balance. Those waves present a safety hazard to all dock users that did not exist prior.

I do have a boat, and have participated in wakeboarding, and tube towing. In that I learned to wakeboard late in life, I do not need waves that are very big to enjoy getting a good ride. Wakeboarding can occur with smaller waves that are not damaging to the shore or structures, and that do not pose undue risks to other river users. Because I live on the River, I understand how to operate a boat in a way that respects the River and other users. Unfortunately, that respect for the river and others isn't widely shown by those participating in wake sports. Those activities should occur on larger bodies of water, and those with rocky shorelines that are not subject to erosion as on the Willamette.

I plan on attending the hearing on the 7<sup>th</sup>, but am happy to submit this in lieu of adding to my previous testimony.

I thank you for your attention and time, and urge support of HB 2351, as well as HB 2352.

Sincerely,

Tom Whittaker  
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