

I'm writing today in strong opposition to the HB 2555, HB 2734 and HB 2725 bills being considered.

I rent a slip on the Willamette River at Boones Ferry Marina in Wilsonville. We, as well as many others in our community, find these bills to be a gross over reach, hastily crafted, and wildly discriminatory. The objective is, and always has been, to protect the rights of all users on the Willamette River. Creating a Willamette for all to enjoy.

Yet here are two bills directly targeting a specific group which strips them of all river rights based solely on hearsay and conjecture by a vocal group that wants the River all to themselves. They have glommed onto the environmental piece not because it's an actual issue or they even actually care but because they think it will help them win! How can you possibly justify stripping the rights from so many based on nothing more than complaints and "observations" from the very group that stands to gain the most from these bills?! Many of these river users already have to pay additional fees and are required to take additional training programs to operate on the river. While those who propose these house bills pay nothing to use the waterway and are required to take no training courses to operate safely. There should be consideration for requiring all river users to pay additional fees and take safety courses, not limiting access.

Public waterways are intended for the responsible enjoyment and use of the entire community. With very few exceptions, Willamette River power boaters operate and behave responsibly while on the water. Erosion is from the impact of months of rain and winter storms, not from the short season of recreational boating. Claims of wake-caused erosion are not backed by any studies of the Newberg Pool or any other similar local waterway. Claims of negative impact on native fish are not true either. In fact, ODFW Deputy Fish Chief, Bruce McIntosh, says that wake sport activities during the summer months have little to no effect on salmon and steelhead populations as those fish have naturally already migrated to other parts of the river outside of the Newberg Pool. It is also worth mentioning that most modern fishing boats, runabouts, pontoons, etc 20' and larger will be excluded from towing on the river since most of them are over 4000lbs. Pushing all these boats to smaller and smaller confines will only exacerbate safety and any environmental issues in those areas.

It may seem like you are hearing plenty of feedback pushing for these regulations. Rest assured you are only hearing one side of the story as we, the boating community, have been pursuing rational responses such as boater and river user education and collaboration. Not complaining to representatives for discriminatory rule making.

In summary, we need leadership and policy based on facts that defend and protect safety, access, and the environment for all users and wildlife. Evidence needs to support such environmental claims. Boater education should be the first attempt to resolve conflicts between powered and non powered users. Not limited access.

Thank you for your time and consideration.