

Testimony before the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources in support of HB  
2555/2725  
March 8, 2021

Dear Committee Members:

We are owners of a family farm located along the Willamette River within the Newberg Pool. We do not have a fancy house overlooking the river. Our hazelnut orchard is located on river bottom land. We have owned this farm since 1959 and have a modest boathouse and dock on



the river. The bottom land is flood plain. The soils are classified as high value for farming. The bank along our river frontage is steep and very soft.

We have noticed a marked increase in erosion of the bank in the past 6-7 years, mainly due to the large waves generated by wake boats. The bank is being undercut, and the river margins are brown with suspended sediment during summer weekends when the wake boats are out. I have heard of some people opposing these bills saying the bank erosion really happens in the winter, or that the waves causing the trouble are from the wind. This simply isn't true. The river is quite sheltered where we are. Two inch high wind rifles can't be compared to 2 foot high wake boat waves. If you want to see what the wakes look like, view the video cited above (credit to Bert Krages). Two clips on that video are from our farm. At 46 seconds, you will see the wakes hitting our shoreline. At 1 minute 12 seconds you will see the wakes hitting our boat dock. During the summer weekends, the wakes are relentless. Aside from property damage, there should be real concern for soil and bank loss, as well as a degraded water quality which affects marine life. Hopefully this is something which would concern the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

There is a direct correlation between boat weight, displacement and wave energy. The 10,000 pound limit allowed by the Marine Board is way beyond reasonable. Basically every super-sized wake boat falls within this limit. It really isn't a limit. 4,000 pounds is reasonable and

would go a long way towards reducing wake energy and size. For reference, we have a typical runabout which weighs in at about 3500 pounds. Most recreational boats used before the wake surfing fad would easily fall under the 4,000 limit. Wake sports, especially surfing, have moved the goalposts completely. If reasonable limitations aren't set, the industry will undoubtedly manufacture even larger boats. Maybe fine for the huge lakes and reservoirs of the midwest, but not in the relatively narrow Willamette. Wake surfing can and should be done in wider environments. Henry Hagg lake is about a mile wide. Detroit Lake gets up to a mile wide. Foster reservoir on the South Santiam is about a half mile wide, the Willamette River at Swan Island is about 1500 feet wide and about 1,000 feet wide where it meets the Columbia, and the Columbia River width near Portland is about 2,000 feet wide. Compare this to the Newberg Pool portion of the Willamette, which is between 400 and 600 feet wide.

There is a reason at least 16 other states in the US , plus other countries, are considering laws and regulations concerning wake boats. Everyone is trying to catch up with the consequences of a rapidly changing wake boat industry. Regulations passed by the Marine Board in the past couple of years (education decal, boat distances, zones), have helped, though enforcement is minimal. The 10,000 pound limit recently granted by the Board undermined any progress. A 4,000 pound limit would be a good place to start in achieving a balance between the numerous environmental, safety and property damage concerns, and the recreational interests of the public.

Thank you, Maria Hall, Willamette Farms.