



March 1, 2021

Representative Brad Witt, Chair  
Representative Vikki Breese-Iverson, Vice-Chair  
Representative Zach Hudson, Vice-Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Re: Comments on House Bill 2555 and House Bill 2695

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

We are writing you to ask for your support of HB 2555/HB 2725 and HB 2695. At the Native Fish Society, we are dedicated to the recovery of wild, native fish and promote the stewardship of the habitats that sustain us all. We are motivated by the increasing science-based knowledge that has been shown to identify the need to support both these bills. This is why we, along with Oregon League of Conservation voters (OLCV) and the Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) encourage adoption of bills to improve important aquatic habitat along the Newberg Pool in the Willamette River and to reform the Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB).

HB 2555/HB 2725 will help protect nearshore habitat and native fish in the Willamette River by reducing artificial wave energy created by a certain class of recreational boats called wake boats. The bill will reduce the maximum loading weight limit of recreational boats to 4,000 lbs. in the Newberg Pool. By reducing the loading weight, wave energy will be reduced and associated shoreline impacts decreased. Additionally, the nearshore habitat that our native fish depend upon will improve. Decreased wave energy will also reduce stranding of threatened Chinook Salmon and Winter Steelhead. These species, which utilize the nearshore environment on their migration as juveniles to the ocean, can be washed ashore by waves resulting in mortality of species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act .

HB 2695 will increase representation of the OSMB by adding two more members to the board: one position for a representative with a background in environmental science and one position for a tribal member. This will help the OSMB make decisions based on science and traditional ecological knowledge and create a greater understanding of the impacts of boating on the environment and fish populations that reside in the Willamette River. HB 2695 will change how the OSMB board views the impacts of boating on the environment. In the past, the OSMB has taken the position that their mission is simply to promote boating without consideration of the environmental impacts caused by boats. Even after the passage of HB 2351, which gave the OSMB special regulations to protect shoreline in the Willamette River Greenway, the board still made no attempt to understand the impacts of wave energy on the shoreline and the surrounding environment of the Willamette Greenway. Adding these two seats will bring key knowledge to the board and improve the agency's ability to work on complex issues such as this.

The Native Fish Society along with Oregon League of Conservation Voters and the Oregon Conservation Network support the passage of HB 2555/HB2725 and HB 2695.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Fairbrother  
Conservation Director  
Native Fish Society

Julia DeGraw  
Coalition Director  
Oregon Conservation Network  
Oregon League of Conservation Voters