

My name is Alex Ray, and I am the owner of Payette Environmental Services, LLC. I provide recreation management consulting services in Idaho and Oregon, with a specific focus on the intersection between recreation and water resources. I performed original research regarding wake boats and their effects on aquatic ecosystems (specifically, Payette Lake in Idaho) for my masters thesis research, and since that time I have been involved with a number of non-profit organizations and citizen groups across the country seeking to mitigate the effects of wake boats on their own local waterways. I have also spoken at several conferences over the last year concerning water quality, water resources, and wake boats, with more on the schedule.

I am very familiar with the Willamette River and its' riparian and aquatic ecosystems, and I am writing to support House Bills 2555 and 2725, as they are written. As you heard in testimony last week, wake boats of any size pose a threat to many aspects of the river, including (but not limited to) the overall sediment budget. Limiting the weight of wake boats on the Willamette River, and restricting use in the Newberg Pool, would be one of the best ways to mitigate these threats.

During expert testimony, numerous representatives raised the question of enforcement. As a recreation specialist, and having spent many years working in National Forests and Parks, I can testify that one of the most effective ways to foster compliance is by having consistent rules across a resource area. As you have seen, patchwork rules (like those currently in effect in the Newberg Pool), are not only frequently ignored, but they are hard to enforce from an officers perspective. By making one consistent rule across the entire Newberg Pool, education, compliance, and enforcement will all be greatly simplified. Given the width of the river in the pool, the high number of other recreational users, and the abundance of shoreline infrastructure in that section of river, the most logical and environmental friendly approach is to restrict the use of wake boats entirely.

There are many other bodies of water in the area in which to operate wake boats in a socially and environmentally friendly manner. By appropriately identifying these areas, and making regulations to ensure the use of wake boats happens responsibly, the issue of "moving the problem" is moot. With an ever-growing outdoor recreation sector in Oregon contributing heavily to local economies, it is also important user groups are not unnecessarily displaced by other user groups due to insufficient rule making, regulation, and enforcement. As previously stated, I support House Bills 2555 and 2725 as written, and believe they will be beneficial to all parties and stakeholders involved.