

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

I am writing to ask your support for House Bill 2555 as it is without any amendments. This bill will help resolve an issue that has been brought before the Oregon State Marine Board for many years and most recently, the state legislature. The issue of excessively large boats in the Newberg Pool will continue to be a thorn in everyone's side until a reasonable solution is found. HB 2725 is that reasonable solution. It does not eliminate boating or stop families from experiencing the river together; it will simply provide a reasonable weight limit for boating on this narrow stretch of the Willamette River called the Newberg Pool.

While listening and reading testimony, you may hear that setting a weight limit will cost thousands of jobs and millions of dollars to the economy. Please take a closer look at this statement and investigate this claim. You may wish to start by looking at the restrictions in place on Lake Oswego. For over 10 years, Lake Oswego has established a boat weight restriction of 3500 pounds with a requirement that no Wake Enhancing Devices be engaged. Not surprisingly, you will find that the number of boats purchased in the region has gone up, not down, over the past 10 years. In fact, Mastercraft created the NXT20 Lake Oswego edition to meet these requirements. The folks who boat on Lake Oswego have plenty of opportunities to ski, tube, wakeboard and otherwise utilize the body of water, without causing undue harm to other boats, paddlers, kayakers and homeowners.

To quote the words Matt Radich from Active Water Sports in a KOIN TV interview when being interviewed about the lower Willamette rules, "All those people (meaning those who are restricted from operating in sections of the Willamette) aren't going to sell their boats or stop boating." In other words, boaters will find an appropriate location to use their big boats or they will purchase a new boat to use in the Newberg Pool. This policy could actually result in increased net profits for the boating industry.

I also would also urge your review of a study commissioned by the Clackamas County tourism department, which specifically identified an untouched economic opportunity if the county increased access to paddlers and other non-motorized users. In other words, there are economic opportunities to be had for this region with the exclusion of large wake boats.

Finally, we wish to point out that the largest price tag will be paid by Oregonians with their tax dollars and personal savings as embankments collapse from the waves generated by these massive machines.

There are plenty of other appropriate locations for wake boats over 4000 pounds to operate safely and sustainably. Please support HB 2555 and help us find a reasonable solution to protecting the Newberg Pool for generations to come.