

I support HB 2555 and ask the legislature to pass it.

I have recreated in the Willamette River for many years and have participated in many water activities including paddle sports, kayaking, swimming and towed water sports. I own a wake boat and spend many hours on the river each year from early spring until late fall. I have watched how the activity in the river has changed during these years as the boats have become bigger with more impact on other users of the river. I can visibly see the damage the wakeboats cause along the shores of the river and how the wakes erode the shoreline and cut into the bank, creating a 20-30 foot swath of muddy water because of the wake activity. I have observed boats take on enormous amounts of water as a result of a large wake that came over the bow. Forget about paddle boarding when there are wake boats around--it is very difficult to remain standing.

While I believe wake surfing to be fun and I am sensitive that people would PREFER to use their heavy wakeboats in the upper Willamette River I don't believe the slight inconvenience of taking it to another more appropriate location such as the Columbia River, Hagg lake, etc. is greater to the public interest than ensuring a safe experience for other river users, protecting the river ecology and habitat and significantly reducing the amount of damage to public and private property that results from these large boats.

This bill is reasonable and will not prevent people from enjoying the river. It will actually enhance the enjoyment of the river because we are removing the impact of these large boats. Most boats on the river are compliant and would not be impacted. Boats that weigh 4,000 pounds can still pull skiers and wakeboarders and create wake energy, but not as much as the larger heavier boats that are under discussion here.

From a policy standpoint, we need to find the right balance between unrestricted use of the river by heavy watercraft and the safety of other users, protection of habitat and protection of public and private property. The choice seems pretty clear to me and I hope that you will make the right decision to protect the river from the impact of these large boats and the adverse impact they have. The scientific data is clear on this subject. This is a national problem and is not going to go away. Let's take a leadership role in Oregon to protect this beautiful river with common sense regulation and say no to unsustainable recreational practices that are causing long term damage to the river. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share my opinion.