

100 SE Harney Street #11
Portland Oregon, 97202
June 2nd 2021

Dear Senate President Courtney,

Thank you for the work you do as our Senate President. It's a difficult job.

I'm member of Calm Water Coalition, an organization of 3,500 members in Portland, working with similar groups in Newberg Pool and the Columbia river. The coalition's goal has been to balance recreational opportunities with protection of the river ecology. That is why I am writing to you today to ask for your support of SB 857. This bill is necessary to protect the Willamette Greenway from further erosion, endangered species habitat damage, to protect equal access, and ensure public safety, all currently at risk because of massive unnatural, high energy wakes created for sport.

Legislators took action to protect the Newberg Pool section of the Willamette River in 2019, and this year, the Oregon State Marine Board adopted New Boater Rules in the Lower Willamette to limit wake sports in Portland's highly congested recreational and narrow lower river areas. The increase of the base allowable weight on new wake boat models to 10,000 pounds is double the average current weight of +/-5,000 lbs. This increase appears to be counter-intuitive with newly adopted rules that support or lower the likelihood of personal injury to paddlers, rowers, and swimmers, reduce boating accidents, property damage, and bank erosion.

It's the size of the wake that affects the environment and the safety of other users. Studies show that an incremental increase in boat weight correlates directly to increased impact, erosion and bank slides. It is precisely the massive wake boat sizes and weights, along with added ballast and devices, that create ocean size waves and powerful wake, leading to problems in all areas of the Willamette.

SB 857 does not shut down boating in Oregon. It's a reasonable compromise that follows bipartisan legislation passed in 2019 to protect the sensitive river environment within the Newberg Pool. All boaters with a towed water sports decal will still be able to participate in towed water sports. Just the heaviest of boats, specifically designed to create massive waves, will be required to travel to wider and more appropriate bodies of water such as below the Hawthorn Bridge. The Greenway will also be off-limits to external wake enhancing devices.

I ask you to support SB 857-1 this session. This bill will ensure that the Willamette Greenway is protected from increasing environmental damage as a result of massive, high energy waves, which are not natural or sustainable in the Newberg Pool. And all the other thousands river users who are also your constituents will be safe on the river.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Meyer.