

I am writing you to oppose SB 857. This legislation is born out of special interest agendas and is not representative of the community at large.

As most homeowners have made clear, riverbank erosion happens mostly during times when there are few if any boats on the river, and as laid out clearly in the article at https://pamplinmedia.com/wsp/135-opinion/510279-408123-health-of-willamette-riverbanks-needs-careful-review?fbclid=IwAR3_hqHgCFtH8QkrqpC89J1JHD9wGN0krMF61NrD2ORKS7CDueUioCV5HPc, The year round erosion has increased due to bank mismanagement. As quoted in the article, the experts all agreed — the lack of native vegetation and mismanagement of native trees caused the majority of the erosion. The necessary scientific studies around erosion claims have not been pursued. Further, SB857 does not preclude larger and heavier boats from using the river, it only precludes towboats. This points to an agenda driven by special interest groups, rather than a focus on actually studying and improving the erosion issues. The head of Oregon Fish and Wildlife state that boat wakes have little to no impact on fish.

Our waterway policies should be grounded in solid research and favor the general public, not select waterfront homeowners and paddlers looking to eliminate motorized boating for their own personal gain. Real studies should be conducted to determine the best ways to keep the river safe and healthy. Furthermore, the Newberg Pool is already one of the most regulated bodies of water in Oregon, and wake surfing is only allowed in two small zones with no adjacent homes.

We are respectful and safe boaters who adhere to the rules of the river. The Willamette River is a common and shared resource that needs to be available to ALL Oregon residents, not those who want to exclude tow boats or use the river for their own purposes. We have purchased 3 boats in the last 15 years, which contribute to the local boating and fuel economy. Our tax dollars from these boat purchases and the boat registration fees should provide an opportunity for us to use Oregon rivers to the same extent as others who do not contribute financially. Our out of town family visits Oregon each summer to primarily enjoy time on the Willamete river. This legislation will hurt the local economy, which desperately needs support following COVID.

Lastly this bill will make our waterways less safe and negatively impact Oregon families and small businesses. The House already extensively debated this bill and did not move forward. I respectfully urge you to do the same. Oregon needs our representatives focused on COVID, economic recovery and getting our kids back in school. Please do not waste time on this unnecessary legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Franklin
Oregon resident and boat owner