

Submitter: Donette Miranda

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Environment and Natural Resources

Measure: SB1589

Dear Oregon Legislature,

I am writing you to oppose SB 1589. This legislation is born out of special interest agendas, namely residents along the Newberg Pool, and is not representative of the community at large.

The Willamette River is a public property, owned by the public. We pay significant taxes that are in part used to support the Willamette and other public waters. Therefore, we all have a right to use the river. We made a choice last during the pandemic to purchase a boat and have thoroughly enjoyed boating on the Willamette and other waterbodies. It has provided us with an activity that naturally allows for outdoor, social distancing and an opportunity to get out and enjoy nature, swim, and have fun during the pandemic. We would like to continue to be a boating family, but must have access to safe, local waters to do so. Having access to our river also provides so many benefits to the local community, including supporting the local economy. It is not in the best interest of society to take away public access to the few public boating waters that we have, based on the sole interest of a few. Further, previous regulations have implemented without due public process below the Willamette Falls have already unfairly impacted the general public. We all have rights to use our navigable waters of the state.

There are opinions and studies regarding potential benefits to fish populations from regulating water sports in the Newberg Pool. Limiting water sports in this area is not only biased, it will not create a significant benefit to fish. Implementing fish habitat restoration on more critical, upper stretches would be much more beneficial to fish. Our waterway policies should be grounded in solid research and favor the general public, not select waterfront homeowners looking to eliminate motorized boating for their own personal gain. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has been quoted stating that wake sports have little to no effect on salmon and steelhead populations. ODFW further stated that these species only migrate through the Newberg Pool area; and during the summer months, when wake sports are most popular, those species already have completed migration through the area. Furthermore, the Newberg Pool is already one of the most regulated bodies of water in Oregon, with wake surfers being subject to a weight limit, required to obtain a special safety certification, and allowed only in two small zones with no adjacent homes or docks. The pool is also used by large fishing boats and cabin cruisers, which can produce a similar or greater wake, and will not be limited by this proposed regulation.

This bill will negatively impact Oregon families and small businesses. Oregon needs our focus on COVID and economic recovery, homelessness, and increasing crime. Please do not waste time on this unnecessary legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Donette Miranda