



600 S.E. BAY BOULEVARD NEWPORT, OREGON 97365 PHONE (541) 265-7758 [www.portofnewport.com](http://www.portofnewport.com)

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March 27, 2023

Chair Dacia Grayber and Members of the  
House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government and Veterans  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem OR 97310

Dear Chair Grayber and Members of the Committee,

I wholeheartedly support HB 2914-2 as amended to establish authority and provide resources to respond to the growing problem of abandoned and derelict vessels (ADV) that impacts our state waterways. In 2022, 13 vessels were removed from Yaquina Bay alone in a combined effort between the Oregon State Marine Board and the Port of Newport that included federal grants and Port funding over \$100K. While this was more than any previous year in recent memory, it created only a dent in the continuing work to remove unseaworthy vessels from the Port of Newport's marinas.

The problem of ADVs is well established and researched by the State of Oregon; a 2016-17 state-directed task force listed numerous contributors to this growing environmental issue. This problem is fueled by owners of vessels at the end of their operational life who find themselves incapable of funding the proper disposal of their boats. In many cases, these run-down vessels are sold extremely cheaply to an unwitting buyer who intends to turn them into a dwelling or to use them to get back on their feet.

Unfortunately, we in the Port Districts have seen that most of these ill-advised plans wind up with boat owners walking off, only to leave the Ports to try to fund the abatement, cleanup, and disposal of these unseaworthy vessels. When uninsurable vessels sink at the dock due to an inattentive owner, in most cases the Port must find a way to fund removal of the hull after federal funding pays to pump out fuel and oil. Ports have passed ordinances and taken on enforcement actions in their best efforts to keep unseaworthy vessels out of their marinas, and to remove those that have fallen into disrepair. The decay of a vessel on the water, while easily seen once it's reached the point of no-return, is not readily identifiable as a vessel operator slowly backs out of maintaining their boat while moored at Port facilities. Particularly when experienced en masse, disposal of abandoned vessels is well beyond the financial resources of the Ports.

We need the resources to both respond to the current epidemic of abandoned vessels, and to become more proactive in stopping a worsening situation. We also need the State's support in our efforts to remove vessels from our marinas and state waters that are clearly unseaworthy so that once we can get ahead of the ADV disposal problem, we can prevent it from growing back to this point in the future.

As requirements for disposal of materials have become (rightfully) more stringent, without effective efforts preventing vessels owners from abandoning their boats, the cost of proper disposal



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presents abandonment as the more financially advantageous option. We need to work to improve the availability of services that facilitate proper vessel disposal. To become more proactive, we also need additional funding to be effective at impounding vessels that clearly need to be removed from the water. In the worst cases, we need to fund the removal of abandoned vessels from State Waterways.

HB 2914-2 as amended provides resources to start tackling this problem as it currently exists and also to begin getting ahead of the problem for the future. We will need to work together to remove and prevent the abandonment of derelict vessels, and to attend to the problem of people attempting to inhabit dangerous and environmentally unsafe vessels on the state waterways. While most people can relate to this problem as an eyesore, in reality it is a risk to public safety, health, and the environment we cherish.

Sincerely,

Aaron Bretz, Director of Operations

Member, Oregon Public Ports Association Abandoned and Derelict Vessel subcommittee