

Submitter: Erik Ford

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire

Measure: SB1590

Dear Chair Golden and Committee Members,

I urge you to reject SB 1590, proposed by Senator Mark Meek. This legislation fundamentally opposes the health and well-being of the Willamette River.

Before proceeding with discussions in your Committee regarding SB 1589, I implore you to consider the following points:

The proposed bill threatens vital safeguards designed to prevent man-made disturbances on the Willamette River, specifically from wake boats. These vessels are designed solely to create artificial waves on inland waters, which severely impact the river's delicate shoreline ecosystems. Removing the current 5,500 lb weight limit for these boats poses a significant threat to these sensitive zones.

A cursory review of wake boat manufacturers' websites reveals their emphasis on the ability of their products to create large waves for inland surfing. This not only shows a disregard for natural coastal surfing environments but also places undue stress on the river's marginal habitats.

These marginal zones serve as critical habitats for young Spring Chinook salmon during the spring and summer, among other species, which are adversely affected by the turbulence caused by wake boats.

The push against Oregon's sensible legislation limiting the weight of wake boats reflects an industry unwilling to accept responsibility for its impact on local ecosystems. This issue is not unique to Oregon but is a national concern.

Oregon's introduction of weight limits and certification for towed water sports boats was a commendable move towards environmental stewardship. It is imperative that we do not regress on these protections.

The claims made by the wake boat industry overlook the widespread impact of their large, costly vessels on all river users. The unnatural waves generated by these boats pose hazards to kayakers, swimmers, the shoreline, delicate nearshore habitats, private docks, and other vessels.

Since the enactment of this law, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of stand-up paddleboards, canoes, kayaks, swimmers, and water skiers in the Newberg

Pool area of the Willamette, indicating a more accessible and safer river for recreational activities. This law has effectively democratized access to the river, enhancing its appeal to a broader range of users.

The arguments against wake boat restrictions are unfounded. Oregon is fully justified in regulating the use of its rivers to protect the interests of its residents and the environmental health of the state.

In certain contexts, some technologies are inherently inappropriate. We must maintain Oregon's progressive measures and encourage the wake boat industry to adopt a more responsible stance towards the river's ecological health and the interests of other river users and property owners.

I strongly advocate against moving forward with the detrimental SB 1590 legislation. Please stand with the Willamette River and reject this proposal.