



School of Engineering

February 7, 2022

Dear Senate Committee Members:

I am writing to support the maximum loading weight of a motorboat to under 5,000 lb to obtain a towed watersports motorboat certificate under SB 1589. I am a licensed Civil Engineer, with a PhD in Water Resources. The Willamette River has highly erosive bed and bank material, and heavy boat traffic (particularly larger boats) can create significant erosion. I have studied the erosion and depositional patterns along the Willamette River for many years, and have observed the extreme erosion caused in some river reaches that experience heavy boat traffic. The magnitude of the waves caused by large boats cause erosion that would never occur naturally, particularly when wake surfing. Natural erosion occurs during the winter months with high flows, not during the summer when erosion from boats commonly occurs. Erosion from these large boats can cause damage to docks, river banks can fail, and fisheries can be impacted. Although I have heard comments from the Oregon State Marine Board and boating groups that there is “no proof erosion is caused by large boats,” there are several published studies and reports by public agencies on many types of rivers quantifying the impact. There should be no question that these large boats are causing significant erosion, as well as damage to the river banks and aquatic ecosystem.

In the past few years, larger boats used for wake surfing have been allowed in Newberg Pool, and the impacts are visible. These boats were designed for large water bodies such as ocean bays, large lakes, etc. They are not intended for narrow rivers. Significant erosion along homeowners’ banks has occurred, and non-motorized boaters have been swamped (or worse) when these large boats pass. There are several documented incidences of wake surfing boats ignoring distancing regulations and generally causing havoc on the river. It is disheartening that the desires of a few boaters and the wake surfing industry have taken precedence over the many other users of the river. The river is much too narrow to safely allow these large boats to coexist with swimmers, fishing boats, paddlers, homeowners with docks, etc. as we have observed.

All sources of erosion need to be considered when making decisions to protect the shoreline. If one source (large boats) is not considered, then the problem will not be solved. Adult and juvenile salmon, sturgeon, osprey, blue herons, bald eagles, and other wildlife depend on the Willamette River Greenway ecosystem. The Willamette River Greenway is a priceless resource for the citizens of Oregon, and should be protected for future generations (not squandered so one specialized industry can make big profits). If we truly want to protect the Willamette River Greenway, we need to take action now to limit the damage caused by large boats.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cara J. Poor".

Cara J. Poor, Ph.D., P.E.  
Associate Professor  
Shiley School of Engineering