

Submitter: Derek Westhora

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire

Measure: SB1590

Senate Bill 1590 is poised to significantly enhance public access to towed water sports along the Newberg Pool, benefitting hundreds of families. This legislation builds upon the Oregon State Marine Board's (OSMB) efforts to create designated zones for these activities. These zones, shaped through consultations with a broad spectrum of river stakeholders—including small businesses, environmentalists, and homeowners—aim to balance recreational use with safety and environmental protection. By limiting towed water sports to appropriately assessed areas, SB 1590 ensures a harmonious coexistence of various river users and safeguards the ecosystem.

The bill also extends the OSMB's Newberg Pool Towed Watersports Education Program. This initiative is crucial for keeping boaters up to date on the latest in boater safety, wave management, and operator responsibilities, thereby enhancing both user experience and river health.

A notable provision of SB 1590 is the implementation of a standardized factory weight limit for boats, addressing the lack of a national standard. This measure not only restricts larger boats from towing riders but also simplifies enforcement challenges. Currently, the varying weight limits create confusion among consumers regarding eligibility and complicate enforcement efforts for the marine board.

Research supports the bill's approach to managing the impact of boat waves on shorelines. Studies have shown that waves generated by boats, when maintained at a safe distance (e.g., 200 feet or more from the shore), do not significantly affect shorelines. This finding is crucial in addressing concerns about erosion and environmental degradation.

The primary cause of human-induced erosion in the Newberg Pool is residential development, as highlighted by ecological restoration engineer David Gorman. Natural events, like winter storms, play a much larger role in erosion than boating activities. Furthermore, there is no concrete evidence linking the current boating restrictions to any beneficial outcomes for fish populations. Since wake sports predominantly occur during summer—outside critical fish migratory and spawning periods—concerns about their impact on these populations are unfounded, especially when activities are conducted at a considerate distance from shorelines.

In summary, SB 1590 represents a well-considered approach to managing towed water sports in the Newberg Pool area. By establishing clear, scientifically backed

guidelines and educational programs, the bill promises to enhance recreational access while ensuring the protection of both river users and the environment.