

My name is Matt Radich, I am the President of Active Water Sports, an Oregon small business, and I represent our employees and customers in strongly supporting Senate Bill 1590.

Two years ago, a bill was passed that greatly reduced recreational boaters access to the Newberg Pool area of the Willamette River. The language in that bill proved to be both confusing and unintentionally punitive, leading to many negative consequences and a far greater number of families being kicked off the river than anyone had anticipated.

In addition to the loss of use by so many Oregonians, I am also very concerned about how Oregon small businesses have been impacted. Nationally, over the last two years, the recreational boat business has declined by around 15%. In Oregon over the same period, boat sales have dropped almost 40%. This can be directly attributed to the loss of boating access. At Active Water Sports we employ just over 30 people. Because of the drop in boat sales, we now employ four less people than we did two years ago. While this might not sound like a lot, it is to us, and it certainly is to the people that don't work here anymore.

I want to make sure everyone understands that the goal for passing SB1590 is not to remove all restrictions from the Newberg Pool. A comprehensive, co-operative plan was already in place that only allowed wake-surfing in two small zones and kept towboats away from docks and shorelines. It is our intent and expectation that the Marine Board would put the same surf zones and distance set-backs in place.

Passing Senate Bill 1590 will put the responsibility of regulating the river back on the Oregon State Marine Board - The state agency most knowledgeable on how best to tackle issues like this.

I would also like to speak to a related topic; the current federal lawsuit filed by the Boaters Rights Association, of which I am a member. The lawsuit was initiated over six months ago as a last resort. It was not filed to intimidate or blackmail our way into anything, it was filed because at the time, it was our only option to advocate for small businesses, their employees and all the recreational boaters who rely on public access to the river.

On the 5th of January 2024, United States Magistrate Judge Mustafa T. Kasubhai found the case to have merit and denied the states motion to dismiss, noting that:

“Because the State Law prohibits Plaintiffs from wake surfing and engaging in other recreational boating activities in the Newberg Pool, Plaintiffs have plausibly alleged that the State Law violates Plaintiffs’ right, conferred under the Act, to use federally funded facilities to access waterways for specified recreational purposes. Defendants are not entitled to dismissal of the case”

If this bill passes, there will be no need to proceed with the lawsuit as our concerns will have been addressed here.

I urge you to move this bill forward to make things right for Oregon families and small businesses.

Thank you,

Matt Radich