

Clinton Begley
Springfield, Oregon

Living in Springfield, the majority of my 108 days on the water last year involved travel of one or more hours each way, at least one gas station stop, and likely a meal stop. As an experienced paddler, the majority of my paddling occurs high in the watershed, in rural areas and near small local economies. My experience is not atypical among kayakers and these contributions to the service economy are significant and disproportionate to the investment of users of lower gradient and more accessible low-elevation waters near larger population centers - as is typical for other forms of water recreation.

The typical whitewater kayaker has invested upwards of \$1000 in personal safety equipment like helmets, PFD's, whistles, throw ropes, river knives, float bags, boat retrieval equipment, and dry suits, that help create a safe atmosphere for ourselves and others on the river. Many have likely spent around \$400-\$600 for a multi-day swiftwater rescue class and wilderness first aid to learn the techniques necessary to keep themselves and others on the river safe. This in addition to membership dues to organizations like American Whitewater, American Rivers and The American Canoe Association that each promote access, beneficial environmental conditions and river safety, plus membership in local and regional clubs like the Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club that promote and support beginner classes and open access to those new to the sport in our area. Many boaters volunteer for these organizations on river cleanups, safety training weekends, introductory classes, and as board members guiding their activities.

Kayakers are also typically very supportive of publicly funded state and federal programs allocating government funds towards issues of access and safety: The Local Government Grant Program, The Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program, The Land and Water Conservation Fund, And the US Coast Guard, to name a few, have all contributed toward either stewardship, access, or safety.

In other words, most kayakers do not have a fundamental objection to the appropriation of public funds in support of safety and access for non-motorized recreationists, and many resources already exist in support of those users, and receive our support.

Within the context that I've described, it should be clear that objection to House Bill 2320 is not reflective of an unwillingness by kayakers to pay their "fair share" for safety and access, it is an objection to the idea that the proposed activities are either "fair," or "our share." The user group benefiting from the proposed activities is not being asked to pay the fee, and paddlers are not target user group the fee would seek to serve through marine board activities. The primary target of the proposed activities appears to be users of innertube and other non-boat inflatable craft, and yet these users would not be subject to the proposed fee structure.

In effect, the paddlesports community is being asked to subsidize a user group with different motivations, expectations, level of engagement, economic impact and most importantly, approach to safety.

It would be just as arbitrary to ask tubers on slow rivers to pay a user fee for the primary purpose of whitewater related safety education and access - as tubers would not receive those benefits.

As written, I am unconvinced that the proposal is the best mechanism through which to address the issues of safety and access generally - as other entities and mechanisms I have mentioned

are already in place and well equipped to conduct this work on an educational rather than regulatory basis.

Perhaps most importantly, the proposal ignores the significant investment of energy, time and money of paddlesports enthusiasts to voluntarily build a community of practice around safety and mutual support, and erects constraints to participation by new users. There are significant examples of voluntary action being part of "the Oregon way," however this myopic regulatory approach imposes unfair impacts upon the paddling community, which has heretofore approached access and safety issues on a voluntary basis with great success.

I believe there is a more thoughtful approach to supporting the activities of this highly engaged paddlesports community, while ensuring that the safety and access needs of other non-motorized recreation users (tubers and the like) are addressed in a fair and equitable way.

As such, I must strongly oppose House Bill 2320 as written.