

Jet-boat operation needs another look

A jet-boat operation on the Willamette River has forced several public agencies to consider once again the interests of aesthetics versus those of business.

We usually assume that a country's resources should be made optimally available to its citizenry. Multiple use of the same resource then, makes a virtue of the principle.

But multiple use implies a harmony of activities as well as access, and some activities appear to preclude others. Thus, for example, environmentalists argue that clear cutting and certain other lumber industry practices destroy the opportunity for high-quality recreational use of forests.

So, too, has Robert Lefler's noisy jet-boat operation drawn charges of destroying the quality of the Willamette's more serene activities — kayaking, fishing, canoeing, swimming — along the 22-mile

stretch of river through which his 48-passenger craft passes.

Opponents of the once-a-day excursions between Eugene and Harrisburg, which began last year, says the jet boat generates a dissonant, 82-decibel racket and powerful wake that ruin the river for others. Lefler says the operation represents a permissible use of the

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waterway, has limited impact on other users and fills a public demand.

A remarkable assortment of official organizations have been drawn into the controversy.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers granted Lefler a permit to launch his boat from a dock near Valley River Inn. Monday, corps officials refused to revoke that permit as requested

by jet-boat opponents.

An environmental impact statement is being sought from the U.S. Coast Guard, which has authority over certain aspects of navigation on coastal rivers. Requests have also gone to the Eugene City Council to designate as a "quiet zone" certain portions of the Willamette that lie within city limits. Meanwhile, the state Department of Environmental Quality is studying a similar proposal for the entire Harrisburg-Eugene route and will confer with the State Marine Board on the matter.

In other words, more than enough agencies are involved in the controversy to allow for arbitration of the matter. The first step seems to lie in establishing one official organization (or several of them acting jointly) to examine Lefler's operation, solicit public comment and rule on the propriety of allowing jet boats

on the Willamette.

That undertaking demands, we feel, the preparation of a formal environmental impact statement. Part of the present problem derives from the rather inconspicuous ease with which Lefler obtained a dock permit that presented a fait accompli to now-distressed citizens.

Since he is currently operating under at least the semblance of official sanction, Lefler should be allowed to continue until the EIS is completed. Actually, a more accurate measure of the jet boat's impact may be gained by studying it as that impact takes place rather than by relying on the memories or speculations of the people involved.

On the other hand, sufficient indications of the jet boat's potentially damaging qualities exist to warrant a freeze on any expansion of Lefler's excursion schedule or the granting of permits to other similar operations.

yours

On 'social elitism'

I don't agree with Castonguay, Chamberlain, and Auxier that a prime reason for joining a Greek house is financial, but John Taylor's letter ("Come On, Greeks," May 16) and especially Richard Kaminski's ("Infinite Dismay," May 15) provoke criticism if only for their failure to employ anything but the same old smug, tired, anti-Greek arguments we hear all year long from disgruntled independents and righteous Emerald staff writers.

John Taylor asks Greeks to be honest, to face the fact that they are social elitists because they select and reject the people they wish to associate with. All right, let's be honest about it, and look at the situation sensibly. Everyone is a social elitist by this popular reasoning; how many of us befriend people at random? We all choose our friends on the basis of personal taste; because Greek houses do it on a larger scale, the choices are not necessarily any more cruel.

Kaminski complains that he is annoyed by large groups of Greeks walking across campus and cheering. It is from observing things like this that he has come to the conclusion that all Greeks do such things because they hate and condemn the rest of the University. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me; neither does his use of the words "idiots" and "morons" to describe these students.

A house organizes a party or some other event (Kaminski probably saw some guys walking around during serenade), and has fun with it. It's just healthy interaction between people. If those he saw were doing damage to someone or something, his reaction might make more sense.

Taylor talks about Greeks' "general immaturity," and we're always hearing them referred to as mindless clones. Greeks are widely thought of as anti-intellectual. The reasoning is never quite made clear, but it has something to do with the fact that the fraternity/sorority system is socially inclined and that Greeks tend to dress fashionably.

It is seldom taken into account that the system also stresses scholastic achievement, using in-house as well as inter-house programs. For example, most houses require members to hold certain grade point averages in order to hold offices and in order to be eligible for initiation. Also, it seems a little silly to classify all Greeks as idiots; anyone who emerges from any social situation at a University must make his own decisions about his lifestyle and values. There are intelligent, open-minded people in the system and there are stupid, backward ones. One really can't make a case for the argument that Greeks are generally "howling idiots."

If, as they imply, the attitude Kaminski and Taylor think should be used in looking at the

theirs



Greek system is one of objectivity, logic, concern for individuals and for public opinion, I think that they and many other students are going about it the wrong way. Seldom if ever do I hear non-Greeks criticizing the real problems with the system, such as that it, to a certain degree, promotes sexism and pushes drinking, problems which many Greeks are aware of and concerned about. Instead, they choose to react negatively to seeing, for instance, a group of fraternity guys out as a group — it frightens many people to see a lot of guys walking down a street, looking like they're having a good time.

Kaminski and others like him choose to draw conclusions about all Greeks, who are members of a system approved and regulated by the University, from such a fear, not from knowing any of these students as people or even from any real knowledge of how a house operates. There's no logic in that attitude, only prejudice.

Bruce Lundy
sophomore, speech

Quacking back

What the hey???

First, the Senior Quacks dump on the University hierarchy's defense of Oregon Gov. Vic Atiyeh as the choice for this spring's commencement speaker, saying the governor is too

conservative for the tastes of most University students. And then they turn around and host a senior ball for which they ask "formal attire, please."

Not only does this sound suspiciously contradictory (like, when is the traditional and conservative palatable?) but, having been underemployed for my last four years in college, I'm going to have a hard time coming up with some nice duds.

Oh, well... at least it's not disco music.

Keli Osborn
1979 alumna

letters policy

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