

July 21, 2008

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) voted in favor of two pieces of legislation today to prevent burdensome regulations on recreational boaters and commercial fishing vessels from going into effect. Due to a Federal court ruling, starting September 30th boaters will be required to obtain a permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for discharge incidental to the normal operation of a vessel. Without a permit, operators of a vessel would be subject to fines of up to \$32,500 per day. This means that in order to even rinse a boat, a boater would need a permit or suffer steep fines. For small commercial fishers, the regulations would make it difficult to even fish, a potentially disastrous predicament for the coast of Oregon.

The legislation passed today places a two-year moratorium on National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements for all vessels less than 79 feet long and all fishing vessels regardless of length. The NPDES permit waivers passed the House of Representatives today as two separate pieces of legislation, S. 2766 addresses recreational boats and S. 3298 applies to commercial fishing vessels. Both pieces of legislation passed the House unanimously by voice vote.

"I was pleased to vote for this common sense legislation," DeFazio said. "Stopping this onerous regulation from going into affect will help Oregon commercial fishermen to keep their businesses afloat. The permit exemption was critical because without it commercial fisherman would have to go through layers of red tape just to do their job. While it is important to protect our waterways, we must also balance the needs of industry. This is a good compromise."

The bills also passed the Senate today and are on their way to the President for signature.