

Adam Zack

From: Ingrid Gabriel
Sent: Wednesday, July 21, 2021 4:14 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: FW: Please stop adding to vacation rental pool on Lopez Island

Importance: High

From: Lori Taylor <wavelady@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2021 9:10 PM
To: San Juan County Council <councilvm@sanjuanco.com>; Jamie Stephens <jamies@sanjuanco.com>; Christine Minney <christinem@sanjuanco.com>; Cindy Wolf <cindyw@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: Please stop adding to vacation rental pool on Lopez Island
Importance: High

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I oppose a 34% increase on vacation rentals and support freezing or lowering the current number and a ban on non-residents running AirBnbs on Lopez Island!!

- Multiple studies have concluded that Airbnbs lead to gentrification. They increase rents and housing prices and drive out lower income communities.
- Vacation rental owners who live off-island are profiting entirely at the expense of our island community. Many VR owners who live on Lopez do not rely on VRs as a primary source of income but rather as a way to make extra money for travel, etc. Lopezians who rent second homes or cabins as Airbnbs could choose to provide year-round housing for locals and still make a sizable yearly income.
- Children of aging locals who would like to move here to help care take their parents cannot find housing. Young families are leaving the island due to lack of affordable housing. Even the new school superintendent must commute from Bellingham!
- In 2020, the San Juan County Board of Commissioners commissioned a study to compare the San Juan Islands to similar communities such as Aspen, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. The report concluded that in those resort communities, wealthy purchasers of vacation homes changed the character of the communities, raising rents and housing prices which eventually led to a mass exodus of modest income residents. The report also said that the similarities in size, scale, access, environment, and trends make the San Juans look just like Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard did 20 to 30 years ago. <http://www.doebay.net/appeal/socioeconomicgrowth.pdf>
- Lopez Island business do NOT want or need more tourism! Many local shops and restaurants can barely accommodate the business they already have and struggle to find workers. Some businesses have shortened their hours/days and most have help-wanted signs in the window. Last week, two village business closed down for a couple of days because they literally ran out of product!

- Vacation rentals stress our fragile ecosystem, especially our rain-fed aquifers. VR owners are unable to monitor visitor water usage and garbage production, regardless of signs they may leave in rental units. According to surveys, local residents host visitors for an average of 2 weeks per year. Vacation rentals host dozens, sometimes hundreds, of visitors year-round and must wash sheets and towels and clean units after each set of guests. I have firsthand knowledge of one Seattle owner who just pays the water usage overage fees and is pocketing thousands of dollars while his vacationing guests drain our aquifer...
- Increasing tourism on the island has NOT improved the quality of life for local residents! Locals must now wait in line for over two hours for a Lopez-only ferry. Locals compete with tourists for island resources, including food and basic supplies. Lopez is not becoming more self-sustainable, but rather adapting to a wealthier clientele who demand all the same resources as a big city.

I remember about 10 years ago when the discussion was started at the Lopez Island Chamber of Commerce on how to increase tourism during the “shoulder season” and hopefully extend into the winter months – so that Lopez businesses could remain open. The San Juan Islands Tourism Bureau was all about increasing tourist traffic to the islands and little Lopez had to decide if we were going to participate in their marketing. I thought then and still hold my opinion that this was the first of a long line of hasty [greedy?] decisions that have resulted in what is now an overburdened, very limited resource base. We can’t handle the housing, garbage, water usage, food provisioning, traffic [ferries, especially] that all these extra people burden us with. Covid had a huge impact on our small island – and now we are seeing the repercussions of too many people and an overwhelming burden on our local longstanding residents.

How long can this go on before we have a collapse of our resources? Please consider your stewardship as council members.

Please limit the number of permits that allow rentals on Lopez Island! Our local population needs support much more than the tourism industry can provide.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Be ‘n Touch,
Lori Taylor
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Lopez Island, WA
Property owner x 23 years*