

Sophia Cassam

From: Michael Riordan <mriordan137@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 12, 2021 12:10 PM
To: Council Public Comment
Cc: Sophia Cassam; joe symons; R. Brent Lyles; Janet Alderton
Subject: Support for Docket Request #21-0003

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Dear County Commissioners,

I write in strong support of Docket Request #21-0003 by Joe Symons and request that the Council add this docket to the Department of Community Development work load, to be accomplished before completion of the Comprehensive Plan now under revision.

To me, it is unimaginable that the County can achieve a credible comprehensive plan without the build-out analysis that Mr. Symons has been requesting for years, if not decades. It makes supreme sense that we have some sensible idea of the possible future population of San Juan County. The largest number I have heard mentioned, 134,000, is nothing short of laughable.

Given what happened this past summer with the tourist surge and problems with ferry service (in part due to the coronavirus), I estimate that the maximum population San Juan County can support is something like 30,000 to 35,000 — including part-time residents and visitors. That's at most twice our current year-round population. As I wrote in a comment to the *Orcasonian* article on this matter, we are ALREADY at our limit here, given current ferry service — which is highly unlikely to improve much over the next decade, according to Ken Burtness of Lopez, who has worked on the ferries for decades and currently serves on its citizens advisory board.

I also worry that our resident water supplies are insufficient to accommodate many more people than that. We are almost entirely dependent on rainfall, and on what can be absorbed on our lands or deliberately stored in aquifers. Eastsound Water Users Association (with which I am most familiar) has only about 100 more water hookups to serve the Eastsound UGA — a number that is regulated by the state Department of Health. The USGS is currently reviewing our likely water supplies, which has not been done for two decades. Until that analysis comes in, I cannot see how a credible build-out analysis (and Comprehensive Plan that depends on it) can be realized.

People speculate that water can be trucked in on the ferries, or that desalination can add substantially to our water supplies, but those are options only for the wealthy who can afford the costs. For example, I had to truck water for a winter in the early 2000s when the well at my rural Santa Cruz, CA, home ran dry, and it cost me 20 cents a gallon — not including the tanks, pump, and additional piping required. Figure at least 50 cents a gallon to truck it in on the ferries. And desalination is economically feasible only for a few wealthy waterfront enclaves, plus it will markedly increase the salinity of adjacent waters.

Nature, economics and external government agencies put severe limits on the population that can be reasonably accommodated here in San Juan County. We need to know what those limits are NOW, before proceeding much further with the Comprehensive plan.

Respectfully,

Michael Riordan

Orcas Island

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