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San Juan County Council

Dear San Juan County Council members,

I am writing to voice my support for the moratorium on the issuance of Vacation Rental Permits. I believe that it is time to pause until a complete study can be done on the effect of an ever growing vacation rental industry in the islands.

I first visited Orcas Island as a child in the 1960's, and moved here full time as a young adult in the 1980's. Over that time I have observed a lot of development and change in our community and in the natural environment. But the rate of change seems to be accelerating in recent years, and I fear for the integrity of our community if we don't enact more restrictions on vacation rentals.

I have several concerns regarding the growth in vacation rentals. The first is the impact on affordable rental availability, particularly for young people and families. We need data to correlate the increase of short-term rentals on the availability and affordability of long-term rentals. A shortage of long-term rentals has a direct impact on our community.

I am concerned about the presence of vacation rentals in residential communities. The County should set limits on the percentage of vacation rentals allowed in any given residential area. Increased traffic and noise have been reported by residents neighboring short-term rentals.

Finally, I believe that an excess of vacation rentals leads to over tourism. And over-tourism directly impacts and displaces people and wildlife. How does increased tourism affect housing, water, waste disposal and special area?. We need to put limits on these impacts.

I encourage the Council to implement this moratorium on new permits for a 12 month period in order to come up with some real data on the impacts of Vacation Rentals.

Thank you,  
Mary Gropp