

## Sophia Cassam

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**From:** Maryse Sagewynd <maryse@upperleftcoast.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 16, 2022 8:30 PM  
**To:** Vacation Rental Comments  
**Subject:** Comment on limiting vacation rental permits

**Importance:** High

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To the San Juan County Council:

I ask that the Council place a cap on the number of short-term vacation rental permits to no more than those "active and compliant" permits as of July 2021.

I have to ask: Why does the Council allow commercial interests to operate in residential neighborhoods? I'm not talking about long-term residents renting out a room in their house or an outbuilding on their property; I'm talking about people routinely renting out their own vacation housing or 2nd/3rd houses, about absentee companies building rental units to draw in visitors, about the proliferation of AirBnB-type places -- in other words, cash cows mainly for people and companies who don't even live here and don't suffer any ill effects from them. If these were all located in a commercial area, that might work, but they're located all over the place. They're not regulated, not really managed, not policed, they use a ton of resources without really paying for them, and they have no business being in residential neighborhoods.

I ask that the Council, in good faith and effort, seriously study and consider the many ramifications of so much human visitation on these islands, currently and for the future.

Your primary and most urgent responsibilities are to the year-round residents and to the native wildlife which struggles to survive amid the crush of human disturbance and taking of resources.

What you few people decide now will have effects that cascade into the future of these islands and their "liveability" for humans and nature. These islands are fragile. The soils are thin. The water is finite. The resources available for humans to live here are limited; human life here at the modern level of society is not self-sustaining. The very beauty and aliveness that visitors want to experience are degrading due to over-impact of human use and presence. Wildlife, on land and in the sea, is crashing.

The islands can no longer be considered as mainly a "business opportunity" if humans expect to still inhabit them for very long. What was done in the past, what was considered "progress," cannot be continued if we expect these islands to continue to be habitable. We have to bite the bullet and

restrain ourselves from this frenzy of building and developing and inviting in more and more humans, because the islands cannot sustain this. We are way past due in reining in this process.

All humans who are here, long-term or short-term, have a duty of care to make minimal impact on natural and human-provided resources and on their surroundings.

Our water is limited and expensive and permanent residents seem to be subsidizing commercial and rental interests in water; law enforcement personnel are few and cannot properly handle the crush of visitors; medical facilities are very limited; there is only one full-size grocery, and it is catering more and more to tourists rather than residents' needs, and sometimes has bare shelves in peak season; a majority of shops are geared toward tourists and there is a lack of many routine goods and services for residents; traffic is congested and increasing; ferries reservations are hard to get for residents in summer; noise and commotion in residential neighborhoods keep increasing until there seems to be nowhere to find peace and quiet. Safety is a real concern now; again, there are not enough law enforcement people to handle all the people, traffic and crime.

Because of the apparent frenzy of building and overload of outsiders, while getting basic goods and services and being able to come and go from the islands are all becoming a big problem, it does not feel safe in the long term for my husband and myself continuing to live here in our retirement, unless the County gets a proper handle on this influx of visitors, at the very least.

Maryse Sagewynd  
Orcas Island