

Donna DePamphilis

From: Linda Ann Kuller
Sent: Tuesday, August 8, 2017 11:44 AM
To: Donna DePamphilis
Subject: FW: Negative impacts of tourism

From: Deborah Hopkins / San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau [mailto:deborah@visitsanjuans.com]
Sent: Monday, August 7, 2017 12:39 PM
To: Linda Ann Kuller ; Erika Shook ; bethrobson@gmail.com
Cc: Jamie Stephens ; Dona Wuthnow ; Lincoln Bormann ; BLM - Marcia DeChad... ; Christa Campbell, Lopez Chamber ; Rick Hughes ; 'Barbara Marrett/San Juan Islands Visitor Bureau'
Subject: RE: Negative impacts of tourism

Hi Elisabeth,

Thanks, too, for your email, there are a number of people and organizations who realize the critical importance of balancing our tourism economy with our environment and island communities, and we've been working on this in a number of ways over the past few years or so. We realize that each island has a different viewpoint regarding tourism, visitor capacity, etc. I've cc:ed Christa at the Lopez Chamber of Commerce, Marcia at the BLM/National Monument, and Councilman Rick Hughes who chairs the LTAC grant program.

In addition to the County's Comprehensive Plan, a Sustainable Tourism Master Plan is underway and it will be taken to the public for input when ready; it's at a stage where a County planner or consultant needs to take it to the next step. The Visitors Bureau has attended the two sustainable tourism meetings on Lopez, and we've held our own meetings with our Lopez members and the Chamber, and will continue to do so twice a year, in order to be sure we're communicating the right messages to potential Lopez visitors.

I recommend that you stay in touch with Christa at the Lopez Chamber – who helped coordinate the two sustainable tourism meetings -- and me, regarding our future discussions. We tentatively plan to have another discussion with our Lopez members and the Chamber in November.

Sincerely,
Deborah

Deborah Hopkins Buchanan

Executive Director
San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau
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Economic Development & Stewardship Education Through Tourism



Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards: #2 "World's Friendliest Islands" 2016
TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice: "10 Best Islands in the U.S." 2013-2015
Conde Nast Traveler Reader's Choice: "Best U.S. Islands for Families" 2015



From: Linda Ann Kuller [<mailto:lindak@sanjuanco.com>]
Sent: Monday, August 7, 2017 11:46 AM
To: Erika Shook <erikas@sanjuanco.com>; 'bethrobson@gmail.com' <bethrobson@gmail.com>; Deborah Hopkins/San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau <deborah@visitsanjuans.com>
Cc: Jamie Stephens <jamies@sanjuanco.com>; Dona Wuthnow <DonaW@sanjuanco.com>; Lincoln Bormann <lincoln@sjclandbank.org>
Subject: RE: Negative impacts of tourism

Hi Beth,

We will track your comments. I am also sending them on to our Terrestrial Managers workgroup contacts. They are also looking at impacts to our public lands.

Linda

From: Erika Shook
Sent: Monday, August 7, 2017 11:16 AM
To: 'bethrobson@gmail.com' <bethrobson@gmail.com>; Deborah Hopkins/San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau <deborah@visitsanjuans.com>
Cc: Jamie Stephens <jamies@sanjuanco.com>; Linda Ann Kuller <lindak@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: RE: Negative impacts of tourism

Hi Elisabeth,

Thank you for taking the time to send us your comments on tourism. As part of the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Department of Community Development will be looking at seasonal population (i.e. tourists and seasonal residents) and how to address and plan for the impacts of the seasonal population. We are in the early stages of the plan update and expect that there will be a significant discussion about planning for the seasonal population. You can follow its progress and learn how to participate here: <http://sanjuanco.com/1079/Comprehensive-Plan-Update>.

I've forwarded your comments to the staff working on the update for consideration. We don't have any immediate discussions planned, but do expect to address this topic as part of the update.

Erika Shook, Director - Direct Line (360) 370-7571
SAN JUAN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
360-378-2354 | 135 Rhone Street | PO Box 947 | Friday Harbor, WA 98250

From: Elisabeth Robson [<mailto:bethrobson@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, August 7, 2017 7:57 AM
To: Deborah Hopkins/San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau <deborah@visitsanjuans.com>; Erika Shook <erikas@sanjuanco.com>
Cc: Jamie Stephens <jamies@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: Negative impacts of tourism

Dear Deborah, Erika,

I am a full time living and working resident of Lopez Island, and realize full well just how important tourism is to these islands. However, I'd like to note that there does not seem to be much opportunity for residents to discuss with officials the negative impacts of tourism on our community.

Having just yesterday experienced yet again one of those negative impacts (tourists driving into my property for an apparent joy ride, ripping out a tree and crushing my drainfield pipes) I read with interest this article in the Guardian this morning about the growing negative impacts of tourism around the world:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/05/only-governments-can-stem-tide-of-tourism-sweeping-the-globe>

As another data point, I ride my bike regularly to Agate Beach where I have watched the summer traffic increase steadily, and the cliff erode to the point where it has been necessary to put up barriers to prevent parking on the cliff edge. A discussion of how (and whether) to provide extra parking at Agate Beach is now necessary. Obviously this is just one of many data points we can all provide about how increasing visitors are affecting our islands in potentially negative ways.

Some tourism is good. Too much tourism is very bad for communities. It seems that we spend a lot of time and money trying to get more tourists to the islands, and very little time having substantive discussions about the limits necessary to keep our communities healthy. We seem to react to emergencies in overuse rather than planning ahead.

We now see impacts primarily on lack of availability of long term housing, crowded ferries, overflowing parking, overflowing trash bins, and overused trails. When does tourism make these islands uninhabitable for residents? Obviously we are not there yet, but I think it's vitally important that we have more discussions about it.

In addition, tourism greatly adds to carbon emissions around the world. At what point does tourism simply become morally and ethically wrong? It is one thing to drive here for the weekend from Seattle; entirely another when people fly half way across the world to visit the San Juans. I wouldn't begrudge anyone the enjoyment of this beautiful place, but global tourism is not compatible with the long term future of human civilization on this planet, and either we will start feeling the impacts of climate change or we will come to our senses and tax carbon so highly that eventually tourism will be reduced. Either way, it will impact our community for good and bad.

In searching the web, I found mention of a San Juan County Tourism Masterplan, but was not able to find a detailed document newer than 2008, and that document did not discuss the impacts of tourism in much detail; I also found a LTAC grant program encouraging tourism; and I know at one point there were a series of meetings about sustainable tourism in Lopez. However, these documents either perhaps do not reflect the depth of the discussion that is needed, or perhaps if discussion is happening, it is not being recorded or made publicly available. Perhaps I am the only one interested in this, and I realize it's a highly contentious issue. Have you have tried to engage the public on this topic before, and failed to generate interest? If you have tried previously, I'd like to know more about the outcome.

In my opinion, we should be having more of these discussions with more public input. Can either of you provide information about how and when we might have such discussions?

Thank you,

Elisabeth Robson
Lopez Island