

Press Release:

Survey of residents and businesses about Tourism in the San Juan Islands



Surveys of residents and businesses to help agencies make tourism decisions

Tourism helps support the San Juan Islands' economy, but it may also create some challenges. County, state, and federal agencies have been working together to manage visitors and their impacts. Recent studies reported visitors' opinions toward tourism issues and possible solutions. Many people requested similar surveys of **residents** and **businesses**.

San Juan County, through a Lodging Tax grant, is sponsoring the survey which will be conducted by Confluence Research and Consulting (scientists who conducted the 2017 visitor study available [here](#)). The surveys will ask a sample of residents and every business on the islands about tourism issues. This is a unique **opportunity for the public to help government officials make good tourism management decisions** that will maximize benefits and minimize impacts.

The survey includes questions about:

- Reasons for living in the San Juan Islands
- Crowding, traffic congestion, and parking
- General opinions about San Juan Islands tourism
- Strategies for making tourism more sustainable
- Prioritizing possible management actions
- Ferry use and reservation challenges
- Vacation rentals and tourism effects on affordable housing
- Tourism marketing priorities

The **resident survey** is being sent to about 15% of all San Juan County households, a scientifically-designed sample to represent the diverse views in the community. Respondents were chosen at random from a list of registered voters, with a supplemental sample of vacation rental permittees (to represent part-time residents who vote elsewhere). The **business survey** is being sent to one representative of every business registered with the San Juan Visitors Bureau, and the Chambers of Commerce on San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez Islands.

The survey questions were developed with help from the Terrestrial Managers Group (TMG) and SJI Visitors Bureau. The TMG includes representatives of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, San Juan County Land Bank, SJ County Parks and Recreation, WA Department of Natural Resources, WA State Parks, San Juan Preservation Trust and San Juan County Conservation District. These agencies are facing decisions each year about how to manage the numbers of island visitors.

While participation in the survey is voluntary, responses from those who receive surveys are important, and the agencies and researchers appreciate the public's help. Their ideas and opinions are important, even if they don't live on the islands full time, have lived here only for a short time, or don't care that much about tourism.

The survey will take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete, and it will be available online or in a print version. The survey invitations for most sampled residents will arrive by a posted letter explaining how to access the online survey. For residents and businesses for whom we have an email, invitations will arrive by email with a link to the survey. For those who want a print version, we will send the survey and a self-addressed and stamped return envelope.

All data from the surveys will be kept confidential, and responses will never be associated with respondents' names or other information. Identification numbers included in the invitations will help researchers know who returned the survey, so we can stop sending reminder letters.

For more information about the surveys, please consult the county webpage:

www.sanjuanco.com/1391/San-Juan-Islands-Visitor-Study

Or contact Dr. Doug Whittaker at dwhittakercrc@gmail.com or (907) 346 – 3769.