

## Sophia Cassam

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**From:** Karen Hays <swnekeh@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 15, 2022 10:52 AM  
**To:** Vacation Rental Comments  
**Subject:** Yes to strict caps on Short-Term Vacation Rentals

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Dear San Juan County Council,

We believe that a limited number of short term vacation rentals scattered around the islands of San Juan County is good for tourism and for LOCAL property owners who desire the hospitality opportunities and income streams such rentals provide. We support serious limitations on new permits for short-term vacation rentals for Orcas Island, where we live, to preserve the lucrative nature of a limited number of short-term vacation rental units.

In addition, we are very concerned that an unregulated excessive number of short-term vacation rental properties will ruin what makes the San Juan Islands enjoyable and livable for every type of resident and tourist. Whether you are low-income, middle-income, or wealthy, we are already experiencing the effects of the lack of affordable housing, the inability for local businesses to hire and retain employees, and the resulting U-turn many entrepreneurs are making when looking at the realities of trying to run a business (for locals and tourists alike) in our county. Residents of our island communities are also struggling to hire local people to help maintain their properties and roads because fewer and fewer are able to afford to live on island.

The Tragedy of the Commons in regards to our human, environmental, and lifestyle resources, as described by the Harvard Business School [ <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/tragedy-of-the-commons-impact-on-sustainability-issues> ], is real -- it is already happening all around us when it comes to an excess of short-term vacation rentals.

Below I have provided links to several recent articles illustrating how short-term vacation rentals (often represented by "Airbnb" as the biggest offender) have negatively affected both urban and rural communities in the USA and around the world. These issues are reported by the press on both the "right" and "left" poles of the media spectrum.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/garybarker/2020/02/21/the-airbnb-effect-on-housing-and-rent/?sh=166907cb2226>

<https://inthesetimes.com/article/rural-housing-crisis-vacation-rentals-bans>

<https://coloradosun.com/2021/07/26/short-term-rentals-colorado-mountains-tourism-housing-labor/>

<https://slate.com/business/2021/10/airbnb-housing-shortage-luxury-vacation-rental-galveston-texas.html>

<https://independentamericancommunities.com/2019/08/30/homeowners-say-airbnb-ruined-sedona-arizona/>

Also note that a simple online search for information about vacation rentals reveals articles coaching property buyers how to make ownership of short-term vacation rentals work for them as a profitable business -- often with those owners NOT living or being otherwise located in the communities where the rental units exist and thus transferring much of the tourist money transfer outside of the local tax and business jurisdictions.

<https://www.mashvisor.com/blog/cities-no-airbnb-legal-issues-2020/>

<https://www.hostyapp.com/the-best-us-cities-for-airbnb-business-in-2021/>

Imagine a world in which the San Juan Islands showed up on such lists!

Look at your own island town, neighborhood, and even your own home -- can you honestly say that allowing investors to gobble up single family houses, condos, and apartments for short-term tourism has greater value than what inspired you and your fellow community members to build a life here in San Juan County?

Very sincerely yours,  
Scott Norquist and Karen Hays  
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