

STMP PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY

Background

Goal of Sustainable Tourism Management Plan

San Juan County is developing its Sustainable Tourism Management Plan (STMP) to define and drive sustainable tourism in the San Juan Islands. The STMP will lay out the impacts and opportunities that tourism presents in San Juan County and provide a comprehensive roadmap for sustaining community and resource needs, now and into the future.

Tourism is a major economic driver in the County that helps support year-round livability for Island residents. It also presents management challenges and impacts to natural and cultural resources, demand on public and utility infrastructure, and influence on the availability of consistent employment and affordable housing. Each of the ferry-served island communities in the County hold differing interests and preferences regarding tourism, but share commonly held values that most Islanders wish to protect. Other key stakeholders include Coast Salish Tribes who, in addition to their tourism activities, have an interest in how tourism impacts their efforts to protect their ancestral lands and waters, and the rights they hold

This planning process builds on the extensive groundwork laid by prior research and planning efforts. It seeks to define how the County can manage tourism sustainably as an existing and ongoing industry while preserving natural resources, maintaining infrastructure, and supporting a year-round community and economy.

Goal of Public Engagement

The San Juan County community expressed the need for an inclusive and transparent public engagement process to co-create the STMP vision and goals and define implementable actions to ensure an effective and impactful plan. The goals of the public engagement and community meeting series were as follows:

Goal A	Build on communitywide support and encourage buy-in to advance County and community priorities. Objective 1: There is a shared vision, goals, and ownership of STMP. Objective 2: Build on existing consensus that residents and visitors have a common appreciation for island values and shared concerns about the impacts of tourism.
Goal B	Set a clear path forward to address the stated needs and make an impact. Objective 1: Identify tangible management actions and STMP identifies and prioritizes short- and medium-term actions that can be achieved in the next 5 years to meet the long-term vision. Objective 2: STMP preserves high quality conditions for residents and visitors.

The County engaged the public through a series of three sets of community meetings from April 28 – May 19 to 1) define the vision and goals for sustainable tourism, and 2) identify and prioritize concrete, near-term strategies and actions to meet the long-term vision. The community meetings built on [work](#) that began in 2016, including data collection and public engagement events, including large scale representative surveys of residents, businesses, and several types of visitors (at attraction sites, on ferries, private boaters at marinas and remote islands).



In addition to the community meetings, the County is working with the Coast Salish Tribes on a government-to-government basis to gather input and facilitate engagement with the formation of the STMP.

Summary of communications materials

Several materials were created to promote the community meeting series and provide ongoing communication with stakeholders, including:

- [Informational website](#) with all background resources, prior reports, and information on how to be involved.
- [Factsheet](#) to promote the community meetings (distributed via email and posted at locations throughout the County).
- Social media graphic to share on County sites as well as distribute to community-based organizations.
- Email listserv and copy to promote the community meeting series and share out summaries from each community meeting.
- Participant agendas, presentation slides, and recording links.
- Meeting summaries to document discussion and action items.
- Pulse surveys distributed at the end of each meeting to support the adaptive management of the public engagement process.

Findings

Meeting 1: April 28 from 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Meeting 1 was designed to provide background on the STMP and planning process, including the goals of the planning process, a summary of previous research, and the planning timeline. A detailed summary including responses to the discussion questions is available in the [meeting summary](#). 129 people participated in Meeting 1 across all islands.

During the meeting, participants were asked to provide feedback on draft Vision and Goals of the STMP via facilitated breakout groups. Feedback was summarized in a series of interactive tools and analyzed to code whether comments were specific to the goals or referring to recommended actions taken by the County.

Vision: Tourism in the San Juan Islands is balanced and sustainable, protecting and nurturing our unique environment while supporting a vibrant rural community and a thriving year-round economy.

Refined Goals:

	<p>Protect and conserve the natural environment and interconnect open space for ecological and recreation benefits.</p>
	<p>Build resilience to climate change by reducing carbon footprint and adapting infrastructure and services.</p>



	<p>Adapt infrastructure to accommodate seasonal variations in use.</p>
	<p>Preserve community well-being through ensuring equity and maintaining the rural lifestyle.</p>
	<p>Expand access to bike trails and lanes, public transit, and other mobility methods to ensure transportation is accessible and affordable to all.</p>
	<p>Support a year-round, thriving, and diverse community and economy by balancing investment and strategic promotion of Island activities.</p>
	<p>Support the local economy by creating a network to build resiliency and expanding local control and ownership of tourist activities.</p>

Meeting 2: May 10 – 12 from 5:30 – 7:30 pm

During Meeting 2, we presented strategy examples and options, as well as case studies from other places to help inspire discussion of strategy solutions for the San Juan Islands. We held small group discussions where participants reacted to example strategies and brainstormed new strategies and actions for the STMP. Detailed information is available in the [meeting summary](#).

There were separate meetings per island for Meeting #2:

- May 10: San Juan Island: 60 people
- May 11: Orcas Island: 43 people
- May 12: Lopez Island: 31 people

The feedback from the meetings was summarized and analyzed to present a list of updated strategies:

- **Education:** Programs that look at educating visitors and residents around sustainability best practices such as impacts to natural resources and expanding alternative transportation.
- **Land Use & Infrastructure:** Programs, policies, and physical infrastructure to expand the amount of land for conservation and expand accessibility of transportation across all islands.
- **Regulations, Fees, & Tourism Priorities:** Requirements for tourism operators and visitors to reduce the externalities of tourism.
- **Accommodation & Vacation Rental Management:** Limitations on vacation rentals.
- **Land use, Infrastructure, & Regulations (Island-Specific):** Tailored to each island regarding locations of expanded biking and walking trails, transit improvements, and upgrades at specific parks.



- **Use Metrics & Capacities (Island-Specific):** Expanded tracking of visitors, cars, and other metrics to access capacities and set limits for each Island and specific locations.

Meeting 3: May 17 – 19 from 5:30 – 7:30 pm

At Meeting 3, we reviewed the updated strategies and shared a list of all-island, and island-specific actions identified at Meeting 2. We conducted a prioritization activity for each strategies' actions to gauge what actions were rising to the top. We ended with a full group discussion for new action ideas and a review of the actions that rose to the top from the prioritization activity. Detailed information is available in the [meeting summary](#).

There were separate meetings per island for Meeting #3:

- May 17: San Juan Island: 30 people
- May 18: Orcas Island: 28 people
- May 19: Lopez Island: 14 people

During the meeting, community members shared their feedback on which actions they support. A summary of community support is shown in the tables below.

Key:

	High
	Medium
	Low
n/a	Action was added after Island-specific meeting

All Islands

Strategy: Education

ID	Action	San Juan	Orcas	Lopez
A1	Expand stewardship, Leave No Trace, and responsible travel education including information on finite resources for visitors and tour operators via online and brochures.			
A2	Expand whale viewing management education through the whale flag program, online information, and brochures.			
A3	Expand trail impact education such as through establishing the Tread (lightly) online app			
A4	Conduct transportation education to encourage carpooling, transit, and biking in summer.			
A5	Conduct ferry-based stewardship education via videos or in-person education.			
A6	Conduct ferry-based orientation education for new arrivals including how-to and etiquette.			
A7	Expand green certification program for businesses.			



A36	Expand tourism development activities to support the local economy, such as through connecting tourists to local purveyors, expanding food carts.			
A37	Provide resources for real estate agents to share with prospective buyers (what it means to live and buy on an island)			
A38	Expand education around disaster preparedness (fire, earthquake, tsunami)	n/a		

Strategy: Land Use & Infrastructure

ID	Action	San Juan	Orcas	Lopez
A8	Purchase and conserve more lands: 30% goal by 2030; 50% goal by 2050 (15% now)			
A9	Increase marine protected areas including eel grass no anchor zones, go slow zones for whales, 30% goal by 2030; 50% goal by 2050.			
A10	Work with existing airlines to electrify plane service to Islands.			
A11	Electric bus transit on ferry-served islands and integrate school and public transit (intentional about number and size to meet user capacities)			
A12	Install electric vehicle charging stations at major destinations and accommodation centers			
A13	Expand pollution-free transit through micro-mobility options in Friday Harbor, Roche Harbor, and Eastsound			
A39	Create public bike lockers/bike storage/bike barns	n/a		
A40	Encourage walk on to ferries	n/a	n/a	

Strategy: Regulation & Fees

ID	Action	San Juan	Orcas	Lopez
A14	Pass Island-wide regulations for “sly / wild / boondock” camping visitors			
A15	Place limits on cruise ship size docking or off-loading on islands			
A16	Implement bicycle use fee for all visitors and/or bike tour visitors			
A17	Implement Marine Pass to assess impact fees for private boaters to offset water, trash, and pump-out costs			
A18	Re-balance Visitor's Bureau budget to shift funds from promotion to stewardship and emphasize off-season travel over peak season.			
A19	Change LTAC disbursement restrictions to allow money to be used for any action in Tourism Plan (including affordable housing and transit actions)			



A20	Encourage agro/craft tourism with tax subsidies for solar use, water sustainability, and tourism visitation			
A21	Expand off-season promotion through crafts and farm stays			
A22	Require certification for bike tour outfitters that incorporates safety, etiquette, scheduling, use metrics			
A23	Improve representation from non-business community on Visitors Bureau			
A24	Promote ride sharing via companies like Uber and Lyft.			
A25	Require permits for youth groups or camps for large group biking.			
A26	Increase incentives for lodging to increase minimum stay lengths			
A27	Require residents and visitors to pay an annual visitation fee (with lower fees for vehicle free or voluntourism visitors). Permit must be displayed at key public attraction sites like Discover Pass.			
A42	Open up an 'at-large' position for LTAC commission	n/a	n/a	

Strategy: Accommodations and Vacation Rental Management

ID	Action	San Juan	Orcas	Lopez
A28	Limit vacation rentals to existing levels; Allow no new permits and allow reductions through attrition.			
A29	Limit vacation rentals to slight increase over current levels.			
A30	Set vacation rentals limits by island.			
A31	Allocate vacation rentals permits to more sustainable or lower impact rentals (Criteria for lower impact rentals include those with longer minimum stays, no vehicle use, and fewer complaints).			
A32	Establish complaint line for vacation rentals or non-residents staying in second homes			
A33	Expand tracking of affordable housing metrics: e.g., Percent / number of units with long term rental vs. vacation rentals.			
A34	Expand metrics on housing type including long-term residents, long-term rentals, vacation rentals, second home with owner-occupant over 6 months, second home with owner-occupant less than six months (need estimates of percent occupied in summer).			
A35	Allow visitors to stay on farms at artist's homes (up to 50 permits)			
A43	Provide some sort of incentive to property owners for long term renting	n/a	n/a	



San Juan Island Specific Strategies

Strategy: Land Use & Infrastructure

ID	Action	San Juan
SJ1	Create ferry rush parking lot in Friday Harbor (short-term parking with lot to be empty as new ferry arrives; vehicles must have ferry receipt on dashboard)	
SJ2	Add walk-in/bike-in camping (10 to 30 sites) within one mile of Friday Harbor	
SJ3	4.3 miles of bike lane / paths on Bailer Hill / Westside from Hawk Road to Lime Kiln SP	
SJ4	2.2 miles of bike lane / paths on San Juan Valley Road to Zylstra Lake (with bike staging area)	
SJ5	4.7 miles of bike lane / paths from Zylstra to False Bay coupled with road realignment for public access along shore	
SJ6	3.5-mile multi-use path from Cattle Point to South Beach / American Camp (not along road)	
SJ7	Add parking and trail connections for Young's Hill / Mitchell / Roche trail systems	
SJ8	Increase transit – regular and frequent peak season loops connecting FH, Roche, Lime Kiln, and Cattle Point (with stops at other major attractions) to encourage vehicle-free visitors	
SJ9	Lime Kiln parking improvements and real-time tally	
SJ10	Metered parking for non-residents	
SJ11	English Camp kayak launch	
SJ12	Kayak launch improvements at Jackson Beach; remove creosote pilings and improve aesthetics	
SJ13	35 sites for seasonal workers and stranded visitors + restrooms (not scenic)	
SJ14	Bike share and e-bike share in Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor	

Strategy: Use Metrics and Capacities

ID	Action	San Juan
SJ15	Increase informal outfitter kayaking scheduling to reduce congestion at County Park	
SJ16	Friday Harbor and Roche / Wescott / Garrison boat counts	
SJ17	Daily tally – vehicles on island (plus/minus from ferry counts)	
SJ18	Real time parking tally at Lime Kiln (visible online and in FH)	



SJ19	VR and second home peak season occupancy estimates	
SJ20	Use by bike, whale watch, bike rentals, kayaking outfitters operating on county lands or waters.	
SJ21	Establish site capacities for right-sizing parking at Lime Kiln, South Beach, Cattle Point, English Camp, American Camp, other American Camp parking areas, Young’s Hill, Ruben Tarte, Jackson Beach	
SJ22	Establish at-one-time capacity for island (vehicles at one time; overnight visitors at one time)	



Orcas Island Specific Strategies

Strategy: Land Use & Infrastructure

ID	Action	Orcas
O03	Build 5 miles of bike lane from Eastsound to Moran State Park / Cascade Lake and campgrounds	
O04	Build bike lanes on Crow Valley Road	
O05	Increase/improve marine infrastructure West Sound dock / remove creosote pilings	
O06	Realign Crescent Beach Road and parking on beach side to address sea level rise flooding	
O07	Develop parking and trails at Point Lawrence	
O08	Build 4.4 miles of multiuse trail / bike lane from Deer Harbor to West Sound	
O09	Re-organize Mt. Constitution parking	
O10	Implement metered parking for non-residents in Eastsound	
O11	Re-organize Mountain Lake parking	
O12	Re-organize Obstruction Pass parking	
O13	Build 35 sites for seasonal workers and stranded visitors + restrooms (not scenic)	
O14	Build utility lines for new bike trails	
O15	Increase Eastsound parking and pass agreements for lots	
O16	Dedicate one Eastsound parking lot for short term parking to handle ferry rushes (countdown sign announces parking limit timed for next scheduled ferry arrival; ferry ticket required on dashboard)	
O17	Eastsound traffic circulation improvements (signage; in-person traffic direction at stop sign)	
O18	Vehicle-free periods on Mount Constitution Road (E.g., a few mornings per week)	
O19	Improve / re-organize Camp Orkila use distributions to avoid congestion	
O28	Complete bike lane from ferry to Eastsound	



Strategy: Use Metrics and Capacities

ID	Action	Orcas
O20	Deer Harbor boat counts	
O21	Daily tally – vehicles on island (plus/minus from ferry counts)	
O22	Improve VR and second home peak season occupancy estimates	
O23	Running tally of vehicles on Mt Constitution Road	
O24	Running tally of vehicles at Mountain Lake	
O25	Use by bike, whale watch, bike rentals, kayaking outfitters operating on county lands or waters.	
O26	Establish site capacities for right-sizing parking at Deer Harbor, Obstruction Pass, Mountain Lake, Mt. Constitution, Cascade Lake day use areas	
O27	Establish at-one-time capacity for island (vehicles at one time; overnight visitors at one time)	



Lopez Island Specific Strategies

Strategy: Land Use & Infrastructure

ID	Action	Lopez
L1	3.8-mile bike lane Ferry – Odlin – Village	
L2	3.2-mile bike lane / path on Center Road (Hummel to Fisherman Bay Rd junction)	
L3	~1.5 miles of separated bike lanes / paths on selected hills and corners along Mud Bay Road	
L4	Increase/improve marine infrastructure Hunter Bay dock, Richardson Road end	
L5	Ferry landing / Upright Head trail and picnic site improvements	
L6	Shark Reef – more boardwalk, occasional split rail fence, and complete loop	
L7	Watmough / Point Colville – organize and slightly improve parking	
L8	Agate Beach / Iceberg – realign road, improve parking, improve wayfinding	
L9	Add approximately 10 miles of cross island trail connections (walking/biking); may include easements	
L10	20 sites for seasonal workers and stranded visitors + restrooms (not scenic)	
L11	Share the road education for different types of roads. Color code – no bike lanes on the narrow, low use roads.	
L12	Allow visitors to stay at farms or artist’s homes (up to 50 permits)	
L19	Connect the two halves of Lopez Sound Road for a bike path	

Strategy: Use Metrics and Capacities

ID	Action	Lopez
L13	Fisherman’s Bay + Spencer Spit boat counts	
L14	Daily tally – vehicles on island (plus/minus from ferry counts)	
L15	Improve VR and second home peak season occupancy estimates	
L16	Use by bike, whale watch, bike rentals, kayaking outfitters operating on county lands or waters.	
L17	Establish site capacities for right-sizing parking at Odlin, Spencer, Watmough/Colville, Agate/Iceberg, and Shark Reef	



L18	Establish at-one-time capacity for island (vehicles at one time; overnight visitors at one time)	
L20	Limit access to heavily used areas	

Recommendations & Next Steps

1. Build out action implementation details to inform STMP

Ongoing technical analysis and research is needed to build out the following details and ultimately inform the actions of the STMP.

- **Targets** define specific, measurable, and time-bound outcomes as a result of the actions (ex. Increase amount of land conserved by 20% by 2030).
 - Additional technical analysis is needed to define quantitative targets for several of the key goal areas of the STMP, including:
 - Accommodations
 - Economic benefits of tourism and tourism development
 - Open space conserved
 - Number of vehicles
- Additionally, the following details are needed to support implementation of each of the actions:
 - **Responsibilities:** which agency or agencies will carry lead and coordinating responsibilities for an action?
 - **Timeline:** when will an action be implemented?
 - **Funding needs:** how much funding is needed and what are potential sources?
 - **Barriers:** are there policy, legislative, environmental, legal, or other barriers that need to be addressed before an action can be implemented?
 - **Performance Metrics:** how will we know if an action is successful?
 - **Scope:** is this within the scope of the STMP and/or County?

2. Conduct additional engagement with community

Public participation is essential to co-designing an actionable and impactful STMP that reflects the San Juan County community's interests and priorities. San Juan County will be returning to the community for additional input and feedback on the STMP suite of actions developed from Spring 2022 community meeting series and additional implementation analysis. The following Draft STMP is expected later this year and will share additional information about the actions (including responsibilities, timeline, funding, barriers, performance metrics). With additional considerations and feasibility for implementation of the actions built out, we will return to community to gather additional feedback about actions to prioritize or concerns about their implementation.

There are many engagement options to gather community input on the draft STMP actions, including online and paper surveys, workshops, focus groups, community meetings, and more. Over the summer of 2022, we encourage additional online written comments from interested individuals, businesses, or organizations to our inbox at info@sictourism.com so we can continue to hear from the widest variety of voices.

After the Draft STMP is released later this year, we expect to hold public meetings and use an online platform to gather additional comment about community priorities for different actions, concerns or kudos for specific proposed actions, and additional ideas for integrating actions so they meet the vision and goals of the plan.



We also recognize that additional information may be needed to better understand the impacts of tourism to ultimately develop ways to address specific concerns. The STMP will be developing pragmatic, implementable options for monitoring tourism use levels and impacts in support of setting possible visitor capacities for the islands. Such monitoring can also support the understanding of each action's effectiveness over time so that the actions, and ultimately the STMP, can be adaptively managed.

3. Continue to integrate STMP with other County plans

There are several other County planning efforts that seek to expand climate resilience, improve accessibility to affordable housing, and increase the amount of land and open space for conservation. These plans include the Climate Action Plan, County Comprehensive Plan, Parks Trails and Natural Areas Plan, and more. The STMP will look for opportunities to integrate its priorities and actions with those from other planning efforts recognize redundancies, identify cross-purpose support, and possibly leverage other funding sources to provide multiple benefits.

Thank you!

Thank you to all who have been involved in this process thus far, and we look forward to your continued participation in fall of 2022! We encourage you to stay involved by signing up for our project listserv via [our website](#). Our work on the STMP will be an evolving, ongoing process. We look forward to continuing to meet with community to gather feedback and working to protect the environment for future generations through the STMP.

