



Tourism and visitor management in the San Juan Islands

Part IV: Conclusions and recommendations

January 2020

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San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau photo by Robert Demar

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for

**San Juan County
Land Bank
Parks, Recreation, and Fair
Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
Marine Program**

in cooperation with

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Chambers of Commerce for San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez Islands
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Introduction

The San Juan Islands are a major northwest tourist destination, with increasing use and impacts that threaten resource health, the quality of visitor experiences, and quality of life for residents. Throughout San Juan County, several local, county, state, federal, and non-governmental organizations work with tourism and manage parks, protected areas, or recreation facilities. Collectively, these agencies understand that visitors' experiences occur across agency boundaries, and the impacts of tourism affect residents, visitors, businesses, and resource managers. As a result, **solutions for tourism-related problems require a broad county-wide vision along with coordinated management actions.**

Over the past three years, these agencies have collectively supported or participated in several projects (listed below) to organize background information, assess current conditions, assess stakeholder or user group opinions, and brainstorm possible management actions.

- **Visitor Management Workshop** (October 2016) reviewed existing information, brainstormed and prioritized issues, and considered example management actions.
- **Visitor Management Assessment** (February 2017) summarized the workshop and existing information, including long-term visitation trends, recreation impacts, priority visitor management "hot spots," information gaps, and study options to fill those gaps.
- **2017 San Juan Islands Visitor Study** (published February 2018) had several components.
 - **Visitation analysis** – described patterns and trends of visitation numbers from Washington State Ferries, other passenger ferries, cruise ships, airlines and charters, and private boats.
 - **Counts and observations** – provided site-specific use information at attraction sites, park units, or along road segments.
 - **Onsite survey** – one-page survey of people at attraction sites to evaluate crowding and facility conditions and characterize users (visitors and residents).
 - **Ferry survey** – six-page survey of people waiting for ferries to Anacortes (mostly visitors) covering several topics: respondent characteristics, recreation participation, attractions visited, reasons for visiting, evaluations of use densities at beach and marine viewing areas, and support for management actions.
 - **Accommodation inventory** – estimated the numbers and types of overnight accommodations used by visitors, compared them with visitation estimates.
 - **2018 public meetings** on all three main islands to present and discuss results from the 2017 studies listed above.
 - **2018 workshop with Terrestrial Managers Group** to consider results from 2017 studies, reactions from public meetings, and next steps.

In 2019, San Juan County supported additional projects summarized in a four-part report:

- Survey of **residents and businesses (separate report, Part I)**
- Survey of **all-island boaters (separate report, Part II)**
- Survey of **remote island boaters (separate report, Part III)**
- **Conclusions and recommendations (this report, Part IV)**

The overall goal is to develop information for these important stakeholder groups, ***comparable to the information about main island visitors*** developed through the 2017 onsite and ferry surveys. The information can then be used by individual agencies or cooperating groups of agencies to develop and implement a vision for sustainable tourism in the San Juan Islands. This “Conclusions and recommendations” document discusses the big picture findings and implications from all the studies and public input.

Organization of this document

This report is divided into two general sections.

- ***Conclusions*** summarize ***major findings from the 2019 studies and their implications for management, integrating information from the 2017 studies*** when relevant. These are starting points for developing a vision for sustainable tourism.
- ***Recommendations*** from Confluence build on those conclusions by considering ***specific management actions***. Some of these were suggested after the 2017 studies and 2018 public meetings, and some additions follow from the 2019 studies. These are examples of infrastructure, education, regulation, and capacity decisions that we think would garner public support and be successful. However, these ideas have not been thoroughly developed, prioritized, or vetted with the county, state, or federal agencies, nor have they been subjected to public review. We recognize that political, fiscal, or legal issues may need attention before decision-making and implementation. The goal is to provide ***a thoughtful brainstorming list*** to promote discussion about ways to address the pressing issues of sustainable tourism in the islands.

Public opinion data regarding many issues commonly show tight splits between support and opposition. But the ***results reported here often show 60%, 70%, or even 80% support***, often across groups that conventional wisdom might consider divergent in their interests. We hope that San Juan Islanders find ways to ***capitalize on this broad support to pursue actions that fit with the shared values*** that attract people to live, work, and recreate in this exceptional place. The goal is ***management by design*** rather than management by default.

Conclusions

The general conclusions below summarize consultants' broader views about the 2019 studies (surveys of residents, businesses, boaters, and remote island boaters), and how they add to findings from 2017 (surveys of visitors and several other topics).

1. Common appreciation of island values

The reasons for living in the San Juan Islands are widely shared by residents and businesses, and the **same characteristics attract visitors** to the islands, including those who travel to the islands by ferry or on their own boats. All groups rate natural resources and the recreation opportunities they provide near the top of the list. Community and social characteristics are also important, with residents and visitors rating a relaxed pace of life ahead of a lively village scene. Quality accommodations, restaurants, arts, and shopping are important and probably constitute a baseline for successful tourism or residential communities, but they are not the primary values that attract people to live in or visit the area.

Differences among the islands are small. People on all three main islands appreciate the natural scenery, rural setting, relaxed pace of life, and friendly culture. Residents and businesses embrace these values, visitors come to enjoy them, and the contrast between the islands and the higher density, faster-paced Puget Sound metropolitan areas is more important than differences between San Juan, Orcas, or Lopez (or the boaters that visit remote islands).

Study findings remind everyone to carefully **protect these common values**. As the surrounding region grows, there will probably be persistent pressure to develop and grow tourism in the San Juans. Data show that lower density, natural resource-based tourism is the current San Juan Island tourism niche, and it appears that residents, businesses, and visitors would like to keep it that way.

2. Common concerns about tourism impacts

Most residents and businesses understand that **tourism brings economic benefits** and a greater array of amenities than residents could sustain on their own. But both groups recognize that high-use summer **visitation also produces negative impacts**. Traffic congestion and parking shortages in Friday Harbor and Eastsound top the list, but crowding on beaches, in boat harbors, and on trails and rural roads may also affect the bucolic life that most residents value.

Residents and businesses report more crowding than visitors, and they use several coping strategies to avoid crowded conditions. Many appear concerned that ever-increasing tourism will threaten the values that enticed them to live and work in the islands. Businesses and visitors (especially boaters) are slightly more likely than residents to accept the negative trade-offs that come with tourism, but they also recognize that summer peaks are challenging to handle and strain infrastructure. Taken together, results suggest **there is likely to be strong public support for coordinated efforts to reduce tourism impacts**.

3. Crowding and tourism impacts vary by time and place

The studies provide information about ***times and places with higher crowding and tourism impacts*** (see crowding ratings appendix in Part III, as well as evaluations of conditions in the resident/business survey). Data show residents are more sensitive to crowding than businesses and visitors, but all recognize higher impacts such as traffic and parking in Friday Harbor and Eastsound. Popular attractions (e.g., beaches and hiking trails with marine wildlife viewing) and mooring/docks on main and remote islands are also crowded in summer, making them candidates for management attention.

4. Are the San Juan Islands approaching visitor capacity?

Very few residents think the islands “can handle more tourists” (6%), and 94% report the islands are at capacity (52%) or over capacity (42%) during the peak summer months. Similarly, few businesses (20%) say the islands can handle more tourists, and 79% report the islands are at (54%) or over (25%) capacity. Majorities of both groups chose the “at capacity” response (defined in the question as “a good balance between the number of tourists and the ability to handle them”), so most people probably would not advocate for a reduction in tourism. But most would not advocate for an increase either.

Many tourist destinations gauge success from ever-growing visitation numbers, and they commit substantial resources toward tourism promotion. In contrast, many San Juan Island residents and businesses appear to have a more thoughtful perspective about tourism growth. When asked whether they support visitation limits if use continues to increase, 50% of residents said “yes” limits will be needed eventually, and another 35% said “maybe” (85% combined). Even among businesses, 34% said “yes,” 41% said “maybe,” and only 25% said “never.” This suggests considerable support for planning to develop a sustainable equilibrium that includes a vibrant tourist economy, high quality visitor experiences, and quality of life for residents.

Researchers have described stages in a tourism life cycle to illustrate how increasing use and development may change a destination (Butler, 1980). Earlier stages of exploration, development, and consolidation often lead to later stages of stagnation and decline. Avoiding these later stages requires recognition that uncontrolled growth can “love a place to death,” and making sure that use and development are in balance with infrastructure and the destination’s intended types of experiences. The recipe for success is not necessarily more infrastructure to handle higher use (such as ever-growing accommodation or transportation systems), but rather defining quality and managing use and impacts so they do not exceed acceptable levels. The San Juan Islands have an opportunity to manage use before it substantially detracts from the quality of visitor experiences or quality of residents’ life.

5. Few people support ferry reductions to slow tourism growth

The **2017-18 studies analyzed ferry statistics** and concluded that “space is scarce for vehicles on popular WSF sailings...but there is unused space for vehicles on two to three ferries each day, even on the busiest days of the year.” In **public meetings**, we stated that available space on ferries could allow considerably more visitation than recent year peaks, a conclusion that sparked lively debate. Some argued that the lack of vehicle space on high-demand ferry sailings slows visitation. But perhaps more importantly, it reduces residents’ transportation options.

Visitors (in 2017) and residents/businesses (in 2019) were asked about their use of the ferry system. Visitors report getting reservations for their first choice date and time more frequently than residents, and residents are more likely to say the reservation system favors visitors than the converse. Perhaps more importantly, ***90% of residents and businesses oppose ferry reductions for slowing tourism growth*** (the only approach with majority opposition among residents). There is also support for ferry system changes that favor residents.

The clear message is that ***residents are highly dependent on ferry transportation as an integral part of their day-to-day lives.*** They understand that space is available at off-peak times, but when they need to get somewhere at a particular time, they want a space on the ferry for their vehicle.

6. Manage growth by managing the accommodation inventory (especially vacation rentals)?

The 2018 report included information about accommodation supply, and suggested ***overnight accommodations tend to drive visitor numbers*** because day use is a small proportion of total use. In addition, camping and hotel/inn accommodations have been relatively stable in recent years, while vacation rentals appear to be growing at a greater rate and fueling recent tourism increases. More importantly, vacation rentals have the potential to grow much more (from the large inventory of existing “second homes”), and the resident survey suggests that at least a proportion of those homeowners would consider converting their second homes into vacation rentals.

The surveys suggest that residents, businesses, and at least some visitors recognize that numbers of accommodations have a major influence on tourism impacts, and there appears to be ***greater interest in limiting VRs than hotels or other accommodation*** to control tourism growth. General antipathy toward VRs may be related to 1) impacts on real estate markets and affordable housing; 2) perceived non-compliance among VRs regarding registration and/or lodging tax; and 3) concern about how VRs impact neighborhoods and community livability. These issues are complex, but there is more political support for controlling VRs than managing other types of visitor accommodations.

The County has adopted new VR permitting regulations, and this new system is likely to increase VR lodging tax compliance and provide more information about the number and types of VRs in the islands. Taken with existing accommodation information in the 2018 report, the County will have the ability to accurately count and monitor the overnight capacity of the three main islands. While there is additional work needed to assemble, analyze, and then integrate that information with ongoing tourism management decisions, the system is a starting point for identifying ***how many vacation rentals is too many.*** The new regulations do not limit the number of VRs, but that might be a possibility if limiting tourism growth is a goal. It may be useful to ***identify non-binding but explicit accommodation ceilings*** for all overnight visitors on each island (including all sectors such as VRs, hotels/resorts, campgrounds, and visiting boaters). While VRs may be an easy target for accommodation limits, impacts on the ground are caused by numbers of overnight visitors regardless of where they stay.

7. Consider establishing use metrics so everyone can become calibrated to impacts

We recognize the challenges of identifying ceilings, even if they accommodate growth or get expressed as a percentage increase over existing levels rather than an absolute number. But having the conversation helps communities clarify the existing situation, encourages agencies to monitor changes over time, and helps residents, businesses, and visitors ***become calibrated to the way visitor numbers affect conditions*** on the islands. ***People commonly pay attention to monitoring metrics for other***

issues; examples include rainfall and reservoir conditions, tides and boating conditions, wave heights and surfing conditions, or snowfall and ski conditions.

Surveys indicate that San Juan Islands residents, businesses, and visitors are interested in these issues, but do not have readily available metrics to assess them. These reports provide examples of simple indicators of use such as vehicles arriving by ferry, numbers of vacation rentals, or visiting boaters in harbors. ***The first step is to clarify indicators, then begin recording and reporting them, so people can begin associating use levels with conditions.***

8. Support for acquiring public property

Compared to other counties in Washington, ***San Juan County has a scarcity of public lands*** (16% vs. 57% percent statewide). This includes San Juan Island National Historical Park (2,000 acres), Moran State Park (5,000 acres), scattered county parks, and recent acquisitions by Land Bank and other land trusts. ***This scarcity concentrates use and impacts, creates management challenges, and may limit the quality or amount of tourism that relies on this resource base.***

Surveys indicate residents, businesses, and visitors recognize the scarcity of public lands, and 61% (residents) to 90% (visitors) support acquiring more. There is slightly more support for acquiring beaches and shorelands than mountain and forested areas.

9. Support for infrastructure to handle visitors

There is a ***complex interaction among visitor numbers, infrastructure to handle them, and the quality of conditions.*** If visitation continues to grow, the islands will need increased infrastructure to maintain high quality conditions. Businesses tend to support increased infrastructure as a general approach, while residents and visitors are more divided.

For specific infrastructure actions, support is often strong from all three groups. Topping the list are separating bikes from vehicle traffic, subsidized alternative transportation for visitors, increased parking, and traffic management in villages during ferry rushes. The surveys suggest broad-based support for such projects, although challenges include costs, environmental review, and (for bicycle paths or lanes) design and space issues given narrow rights-of-way along the most popular routes.

When considering projects, it is important to recognize the conundrum that improved infrastructure may also attract additional use (“build it and they will come”), so ***capacity remains an important part of the discussion.*** We think it makes sense to develop infrastructure in balance with an intentional capacity, and then adopt explicit policies that limit visitation to capacity and keep infrastructure up to standards. This is the stated goal of federal agency visitor use management programs.

Capacities are challenging, but the alternative is growth at the whim of outside forces, often with lagging infrastructure that provides low quality. Academics who study tourism life cycles describe many cases of decline when destinations fail to define what they are trying to provide, or fail to limit use in balance with their infrastructure.

10. Support for several education initiatives

Businesses and residents support education as a general approach to re-distribute visitors from the peak to off-peak season, as well as specific education actions designed to accomplish this. For example, if visitors can be persuaded to shift to the off-season or leave their vehicles behind, impacts such as crowding, congestion, and parking shortages may be reduced. There is also support for etiquette education related to dog-walking, biking, or distributions and uses of boats.

Education is generally a cognitive fix where success is uncertain because it requires changing attitudes and behavior. Education is more successful when it encourages existing norms that are related to specific behaviors. Educational efforts in tourism and resource-based recreation have sometimes reduced littering, improved human waste disposal, reduced trail cutting, minimized wildlife impacts, and reduced riverbank erosion or site disturbance. But such initiatives often need to be combined with other structural fixes to be effective. For example, a “leave your car behind” program will work better in tandem with a viable transit system (a structural fix), and improved parking information to distribute vehicles will work better if that information includes real-time reports of available space in parking lots (a technological fix).

11. Support for additional commercial recreation management

Although survey questions were broadly worded, ***residents and businesses support increased management of commercial recreation activities***, particularly on-water whale-watching and bicycling tours. The whale-watching finding may follow from publicity about decline of the Southern Resident orca population (discussed in the following item). Survey results suggest broad public support for sustainable conservation of the wildlife and other natural resources that residents and visitors enjoy.

The San Juan Islands have received considerable attention as a cycling mecca, despite very few dedicated cycling paths or lanes. The reputation relies in part on the islands' natural scenery, topography, and relaxed pace, and presumes low vehicle densities on narrow county roads. ***With increased numbers of cyclists (particularly in large groups), popular biking roads can become congested and problematic for traffic.***

Increased management of commercial tours could include timing, riding etiquette, or alternative routes. Support for this is consistent with support for bike lanes/paths (an infrastructure solution) and education about bicycling etiquette. ***Cycling advocates have developed infrastructure and education recommendations for the three main islands, but agency action may be needed to implement them.***

There was more support than opposition for improved management of commercial kayaking. Kayak tours are probably fewer in number, more concentrated in a few locations, and their impacts are less visible to the average resident or business. Some respondents may recognize there are already some timing/limit regulations to prevent congestion at County facilities.

12. Orca conservation issues

Although the 2017 visitor studies and 2018-19 remote island boater survey did not consider Southern Resident orca conservation issues, ***the 2019 resident/business and 2019 all-island boater surveys addressed some aspects of this complex topic.*** Findings suggest ***considerable interest in whale***

conservation issues, general agreement with whale conservation goals, and willingness to support “collective action” regulations and education that would address concerns.

It is challenging to translate broad support for conservation into specific support for actions that might change individual boater or commercial tourism behaviors. The fleets include commercial and recreational fishing and whale watching boats, and regulations cut across County, State, federal, tribal, and international jurisdictions. And regulations will affect different user groups in different ways.

The Governor’s Southern Resident Orca Whale Recovery Task Force has initiated several recommendations, some of which the state legislature has implemented through bills. The Department of Ecology and associated federal and county agencies have embraced other policy recommendations, and they are considering additional regulation or education actions. Data reported in the present studies suggest ***continued public support for these programs***.

13. More nuanced tourism promotion strategies

A majority of **residents want less tourism promotion**, and this is consistent with their concerns about impacts and growth. A majority of **businesses see a place for additional promotion**. The **surveys provide information about specific targets for promotion**, which can help develop more nuanced promotion strategies.

Residents and businesses generally recognize peak season impacts. As a result, both groups show the **most support for promotion targeting off-season rather than summer season visitation**, and there is little enthusiasm for package/tour or business/convention promotions. However, there is plurality resident support for targeting some specific segments (e.g., farm holiday, education, food, and arts focused tourists), more so among businesses. These groups may be considered small niche markets, whose visits in the off-season could perhaps create promotion targets that residents and businesses both support.

Finally, tourism promotion strategies can recognize distinctions among islands. Lopez has requested less tourism promotion in the past, but perhaps made exceptions for cycling-based tourism. San Juan Island appears more open to tourism promotion, while Orcas appears to seek a middle ground.

14. Define a vision for sustainable tourism?

Every tourism destination wants visitors who stay longer and spend more, but minimize their effects on natural and cultural resources or residents’ quality of life. This often creates an uneasy tension between the push for economic growth and the desire to protect and conserve resources or experiences. Data show some of that tension in the San Juans, but ***there is far more common ground here than in most places, and there are real opportunities to capitalize on it.***

Vision statements are sometimes filled with comfort terms that lack substantive meaning. But a **“vision for sustainable tourism” can be developed from the common values** illustrated in these studies. Those values can then be **defined by tangible desired conditions, standards that define high quality, and actions that will be taken** to ensure standards are met (all of which can be transparent for decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public). Specific steps in this process include:

- Identify the special values that attract residents, businesses, and visitors to the islands.
- Connect sustainability goals and objectives to those values.
- Establish indicators and standards that define acceptable levels of impact.
- Develop monitoring strategies to assess whether impacts threaten to exceed standards.
- Consider specific management actions to address impacts that exceed standards.

San Juan County is developing a **Tourism Master Plan** to consider Visitor Bureau goals, promotion strategies, and education or other programs that influence the kinds and amounts of tourism drawn to the islands. **This could provide a process for developing a vision for sustainable tourism as described above.** But it needs to go beyond a promotion plan or a description of visitor bureau staffing and actions; those are important, but only a part of the broader tourism decisions that are needed. **The plan should probably include kinds of recreation opportunities to be provided, important targets such as accommodation numbers, and consideration of differences by island.**

15. Consider the need for cooperative action planning

Even with a vision for sustainable tourism, there will be an **ongoing need to coordinate agency and stakeholder actions to serve that vision** within the context of individual agency responsibilities. This kind of cooperative planning is already occurring through the TMG, but there are opportunities to include more agencies, County council members, and other stakeholders. **We have seen this kind of action-oriented model energize agencies, stakeholders, and the public** in river and trail planning.

We suggest developing a non-binding, multi-agency cooperative action strategy that would outline the (approximately) **"top forty" management actions as a County-wide to-do list.** As discussed in previous workshop documents and studies, this process could:

- Review results from the 2017-2019 studies and related visitor management information;
- Identify highest priority issues;
- Brainstorm specific management actions that will address issues;
- Prioritize a list of implementable actions;
- Consider agency jurisdictions and responsibilities;
- Roughly estimate costs and funding options;
- Consider whether environmental review is needed; and
- Roughly assess stakeholder/public support.

The cooperative nature of the process looks beyond individual agency responsibilities to serve the broader needs of the islands, developing actions that share resources, cross jurisdictions, and avoid redundancy. The non-binding nature helps agencies be responsive, nimble, and efficient by reducing the level of bureaucratic effort. By focusing on the "best ideas" rather than their challenges, this approach produces projects that attract agency, stakeholder, and public support. That support in turn helps agencies address inevitable funding, environmental, or administrative challenges.

We think such a cooperative action strategy may be best if it stems from the Tourism Master Plan or a vision for sustainable tourism. But there is **potential for considerable synergy** if they are integrated or at least developed in concert. Comprehensive planning offers a way for those who live and work in the San Juans to define the kind of place they want the Islands to be.

Recommendations for specific management actions

The 2018 report included a list of brainstormed management actions. They are included in Tables 1 to 5 below, with additions from more recent work. Collectively they address issues described in the 2017-2019 studies, and are likely to have strong resident, business, and visitor support.

Table 1. Recommendations for San Juan Island.

	Action	Short description
1	Friday Harbor welcome center and parking	Multi-agency visitor center with parking for new ferry arrivals -- well-signed, close parking with duration limits to clear lot for next ferry arrival.
2	Friday Harbor ferry rush congestion management	Additional road and sign improvements to reduce friction during episodic but regular ferry rushes; could include in-person traffic direction.
3	Expand San Juan Island transit system	Organize and subsidize existing transit company schedules to encourage more visitors to leave vehicles on the mainland.
4	Lime Kiln congestion and parking redistribution	Real-time park occupancy information and improved parking organization to relieve episodic crowding during “whale rushes.”
5	Westside Preserve to Lime Kiln trail	Develop existing but informal trails to provide 1.5 mile hiking / picnicking / marine viewing opportunity.
6	Friday Harbor to Westside Preserve bicycle path	Cycling lanes and separated bicycle path on the steeper inclines on this popular route to reduce bike-vehicle conflicts.
7	Friday Harbor to American Camp bicycle path	Bike lanes or separated bicycle path along narrow roads from town to American Camp.
8	Cattle Point to American Camp multi-use trail	A 3.5 mile multi-use path from American Camp to South Beach & Cattle Point; crushed rock surface to reduce speeds and hiker-biker conflicts.
9	Zylstra Lake to False Bay multi-use trail	Multi-use trail from a parking area to lake and False Bay with appropriate trail design (e.g., crushed rock surfacing to reduce speeds and conflicts).
10	Young’s Hill – Mitchell Hill – Roche Harbor trail system	Integrated management of existing connected trails; improve signage, trailhead parking expansion, transit stops, and publicity.

11	County Park commercial kayak management	Informal scheduling to reduce parking, ramp, and beach congestion; formal scheduling or limits are options if use levels continue to increase.
12	English Camp kayak launch development	Develop a second west side kayak launching area for commercial and private use to relieve congestion at County Park.
13	Roche and Friday Harbor boat counts.	Develop and publicize counts of overnight visiting boats as indicators of an important accommodation sector.

Table 2. Recommendations for Orcas Island.

Action	Short description
1 Eastsound welcome parking lot	Welcome parking area for new ferry arrivals – well-signed, close parking with duration limits to clear lot for next ferry arrival.
2 Reduce ferry rush traffic congestion in Eastsound	Additional road and sign improvements to reduce friction during episodic but regular ferry rushes; could include in-person traffic direction at the three-way stop at Main Street/North Beach Road.
3 Bicycle trail from ferry landing to Eastsound	Connect bicycle lanes/route from Ferry Landing via Crow Valley roads to Eastsound. Appropriate design (e.g., crushed rock surface) on the separated path segments can minimize impacts
4 Mount Constitution parking & information	Increase/organize parking and develop real-time parking occupancy system at summit road entrance to deter vehicles when parking is full.
5 Mount Constitution vehicle-free periods	Scheduled hour-long “no vehicle periods” a few days/week could produce higher quality cycling opportunities and reduce cyclists at other times.
6 Cascade Lake – Mount Constitution shuttle	Subsidized shuttle to link camping areas, the day use area, Eastsound, or another “overflow” parking to alleviate Cascade Lake and Mount Constitution congestion on high use days.
7 Mountain Lake parking improvements	Improved routing, signage, and real-time parking information to discourage vehicles from proceeding when parking is full.
8 Develop parking and trails at Point Lawrence	Develop trailhead, parking, and trail system to distribute Orcas recreation use from other over-crowded areas.
9 Obstruction Pass State Park parking	Organize parking to accommodate more vehicles at this increasingly popular park.
10 Deer Harbor to Turtleback Preserve multi-use trail	Road improvements provide an opportunity to develop a multi-use trail connecting the village with a major hiking trailhead.
11 Informal improved Camp Orkila use distributions	Improve communication between camp and agencies to better distribute large scout groups at several island attractions.
12 Deer Harbor boat counts	Develop and publicize counts of overnight visiting boats as indicators of an important accommodation sector.

Table 3. Recommendations for Lopez Island.

Action	Short description
1 Ferry Landing trails and picnic site improvements	Develop sustainable primary and spur trails to picnic sites near Ferry Landing to replace the spider-web of user-created trails and impacted sites on 2-acre DOT land and adjacent 26-acre Upright Head Preserve.
2 Ferry Landing to Odlin Park to Lopez Village bike path	3.5 mile dedicated bike lane or separated bike path to improve safety and reduce congestion of this commonly-cycled road segment.
3 Center Road bicycle path	Separated bicycle path or roadside bike lanes along this primary artery connecting Lopez Village to schools and southern attractions to reduce bicycle-vehicle conflicts, improve safety, increase bicycle commuting, and offer visiting cyclists more route options.
4 Separated bicycle paths on selected hills and sharp corners	Short segments of separated bicycle paths on steeper grades or at sharp corners with poor sightlines could make the low-medium density roads on Lopez much safer, reduce congestion, and enhance cycling experiences.
5 Shark Reef loop trail and trail improvements	Create a loop hiking opportunity to this popular attraction; would concentrate use on sustainable, well-designed trails that access pocket beaches and picnic/viewing sites that can handle daily use.
6 Watmough Bay and Point Colville parking improvements	Improvements at two small lots that access these attractions; this action would organize parking to accommodate more vehicles at both locations, and offer better turn-around options when parking is full.
7 Agate Park road realignment and parking improvements	Complete County plans to realign a segment of Mackaye Harbor Road from its shore-side location to the back of the park, develop parking, and separate vehicles from shore land use areas.
8 Fisherman's Bay and Spencer Spit boat counts	Develop and publicize counts of overnight visiting boats as indicators of an important accommodation sector.

Table 4. Remote Island recommendations.

	Action	Short description
1	Additional linear moorings on Sucia and Stuart Islands.	Address mooring shortages and crowding problems on popular remote islands.
2	Reporting system for numbers of moored, docked, and anchored boats on popular islands.	Boaters prefer first-come/first served system, but have poor use information before they arrive. Options include web-cams, daily staff/volunteer counts, or visitor registration (voluntary or mandatory).
3	Recreation opportunity classifications for remote islands.	Remote island surveys show differences in use levels and types of recreation opportunities for different islands or harbors. Clarifying agency goals and specifying target capacities would help visitors choose.

Table 5. Multi-island recommendations.

Action	Short description
1 Cooperative use statistics program	Integrate diverse use information already collected by individual agencies into a systematic program. Provide real-time indicators of visitation levels for each island and key locations, allowing agencies, stakeholders, and the public to calibrate use levels with on-the ground conditions to help assess long-term capacity. Daily visitor vehicles on each main island are the most useful metrics.
2 Cooperative Leave No Trace education program	San Juan County was the first county in the U.S. to voluntarily adopt San Juan-specific Leave No Trace principles to promote stewardship. This action would advance the initial concept by prioritizing and sharing funding for different education options (e.g., brochures, kiosk-based posters, social media, TV/radio announcements, ferry videos, etc.).
3 Long-distance trails and trail connections	Trail groups on all three islands have identified several connection priorities (e.g., cross-island trails on Lopez and San Juan). With nearly 85% private land on the San Juan Islands, there will be challenges to developing long distance trails or links that connect existing trails and attractions. This idea would identify and share routes and potential access solutions.
4 Whale viewing management and education	Continue work on spatial / temporal zoning and education / regulation options, including stakeholder involvement.
5 Vision for sustainable tourism	County-wide adoption of values, long-term vision for capacity, and type of tourism to be encouraged in the islands. Could identify accommodation targets by type, day use proportions, and long-term infrastructure needs. Could start from survey and other information developed in this project, but probably requires stakeholder and public involvement.
6 Cooperative action strategy	County-wide multi-agency list of actions. Non-binding, designed to recognize agency capabilities and divide responsibilities.