

Dear Visitor Industry Task Force,

Thank you for participating in and facilitating this very important community-wide discussion. I appreciate the opportunity to comment and have paid close attention to the public testimony as well as the discourse in the Juneau Empire. Everyone I know has a strong opinion on this subject and it is obvious to me that we are at a crossroads.

Luckily, you have received a tremendous amount of input from the residents of Juneau. I hope you read and consider all viewpoints when making your recommendations. I also hope that this is not just an exercise in futility as many people I know cynically believe, that you are paying lip service to us so you can get on with the business of growing the cruise industry without restriction, as some have promoted.

I have been a resident of SE AK for 40 years and lived in Juneau for 22. I raised my children here and have decided to live out my life here, as long as the quality of life is not degraded to an intolerable degree. I have worked as a naturalist for a local guiding company and appreciate that there is a place for a carefully managed tourism industry (cruise ships) in town. I understand Whale Sense and TBMP, however, it is unrealistic to assume that the industry and those that profit from it are capable of monitoring themselves on a voluntary basis in perpetuity, especially when no one has given us an end point. What is the ultimate number of visitors we are willing to accommodate? What is the aversion to implementing regulations that spell out what can and cannot be done? It's clear cut and not subjective. I have been on a whale watching boat when a new captain threw the boat into reverse as 2 adults and a calf swam under and around our boat instead of putting it in neutral and staying in place. Nothing is perfect. Gone unchecked, we will change the behavior of these whales and drive them further and further out just as was done in California in the 70's to the migrating Grey whales.

I think CBJ has tried to do the best it can to both absorb the tourists and make a nice habitat for residents, i.e., infrastructure projects like the Sea Walk and Marine Park in accordance with the Long Range Waterfront Plan. With only 50% of the plan completed, I think we should wait and re-evaluate when they are done. I agree with the idea of a public opinion poll in the spring and fall of 2020 to take the temperature of the residents. I also endorse Jim Ayers idea of having an Ombudsman to interface annually with established neighborhood associations as a means of dealing with concerns on a site specific basis. Basin Road residents have different concerns than people in the valley who deal with the incessant noise pollution from helicopters. I also encourage you to consider the information and recommendations put forth by Jim Powell and his independent study. If the Sustainability commission recommends Juneau be 80% renewable by 2045, how is the cruise industry being asked to comply? My friend was at the local landfill when workers from a cruise ship dumped all the lounge cushions from their ship! How is this allowed to happen?

The number of cruise ships/passengers needs to be capped. It feels like a tsunami wave of people has broken over us! The trails, the roads with all the Sprinter vans and Greyline buses running from dawn til dusk and the constant noise pollution of helicopters is assaultive. I know the industry is several years out in front of us as boats are being built and sailing schedules set into the future. Is it too late for us, the residents to put the brakes on this runaway train? After listening the the lawyer for CBJ talk, it sounds like, if the will is there, there are some things that can be explored in order to steer things away from the precipice. We have been patient and gone along to get along with the growing of this industry but now it feels like we are getting run over (by a cruise ship).

I heard a lot of discussion about 'carrying capacity', which is a term I'm more used to hearing in reference to the forest or the ocean. Are salmon dying because the hatcheries are over producing and have exceeded the carrying capacity of the ocean? When an ecosystem exceeds its carrying capacity, its ability to sustain life, it becomes stressed and has an adverse effect on the creatures in it. I believe we are at that point with tourism in Juneau. We are stressed! TBMP wants to keep massaging the voluntary programs to accommodate more and more and more guests. But the residents, the people who live and work here, raise their families here, pay their taxes here, are asking for regulations that prioritize THEM over the endless expansion of this industry. It can be done cooperatively and sustainably if the assembly listens to its constituents and is willing to compromise.

Please remember that summer in Alaska is a special place and we have a right to enjoy it, the trails, camping, being out on the water, climbing mountains, without running into tour groups of people.

Act now to cap cruise ships &/or # of visitors.

Enact tourism zones: Save traditional use areas for the residents. (I don't want to see kayakers at Amalga!). Stop the outward migration of tour companies like Allen Marine.

Hire an Ombudsman to act as a liaison with neighborhood associations to address their concerns. (Not just a lip service position!).


Spread the ships out over 6 days (no more 22,000 Tues.) and reserve one day a week for locals.

Restrict the # of whale watching permits. WhaleSense is not enough!

Think of ways to grow the independent tourist industry. They make a more significant contribution to the local economy than cruise passengers.

Don't sell our soul as a community for the benefit of seasonal visitors!

Thank You,


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