



**For Immediate Release**

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**Media Contact:** Brent Lyles, Executive Director, Friends of the San Juans, [brent@sanjuans.org](mailto:brent@sanjuans.org), 512-773-9789

**Tree protections? Planning for growth? Your help is needed by Sept 14!**

By R. Brent Lyles, Executive Director, Friends of the San Juans

It's time to spring into action! On the morning of Tuesday, September 14th, the County Council will hold a hearing on the 2021 docket. This year's docket includes proposals for new tree-protection standards, stormwater-management standards, and doing an important "build-out analysis" for our County. These all deserve our community's attention and support. The purpose of the Council's hearing is to get public input -- the County Council is asking to hear from you! You can write a letter or show up (virtually) to speak at the meeting, or both.

**Why this is important:**

At Friends of the San Juans, we've spent a lot of time in recent months supporting the Planning Commission's efforts to do the right thing with respect to environmental stewardship in our County. The Planning Commission has now sent its recommendations on the docket requests to the County Council, *and it's the County Council that makes the final decisions*. Now is the time to speak out on these docket requests. Let's make sure the County Council members hear from the public loud and clear when they are making their decisions.

There are eight docket requests in total, and here's the rundown of where Friends of the San Juans stands on the four that we feel are especially important (see also [Friends' comment letter here](#), which provides additional details):

- **21-0001, Commercial Composting on Agricultural Resource Lands -- DISAGREE with the Planning Commission's recommendation.** There are LOTS of other places to put much-needed industrial composting operations in our County, other than on highly protected and highly valuable Agricultural Resource Lands. Those parcels were set aside for agriculture for a reason - let's keep it that way. It makes a lot of sense for smaller-scale, site-specific composting to be co-located with farming and livestock, but industrial composting is a whole other thing; anyone who says commercial composting is compatible with agriculture operations probably hasn't seen how big and industrial a commercial composting operation actually is.
- **21-0003, "Build-Out Analysis" -- DISAGREE with the Planning Commission's recommendation.** Despite a ton of public support for this, the County staff argued that doing a thorough build-out analysis isn't feasible or valuable. To their credit, the Planning Commission tried to find a middle ground and ask for a more limited analysis, but the County staff is pushing back against that too. We agree that a full build-out analysis is a big project, but given the realities of rapid development in our County and the climate crisis, the information that our County would get from this kind of analysis is just simply too important to kick down the road any further.

- **21-0005, Creating New Tree-Protection Standards -- AGREE with the Planning Commission's recommendation.** We're glad to see the County staff and Planning Commission members taking this seriously, and we're delighted to support their recommendation to move forward with this.
- **21-0008, Creating New Stormwater-Management Regulations -- AGREE with the Planning Commission's recommendation.** Ditto for this one -- we're enthusiastic about getting moving on this much-needed addition to our County's codes.

[Click here](#) to see the most recent memo about these docket requests from the County staff, which is helpful for getting the lay of the land on all eight docket requests -- see especially the tables in the staff's memo.

### **What's next?**

When people like you “lean in” and speak at a County Council hearing, it makes a powerful statement. Please consider showing up on the 14th, either by phone or via video: [Click here for instructions on how to do that](#). Also, please consider writing a letter to the County Council, care of Sophia Cassam at [sophiac@sanjuanco.com](mailto:sophiac@sanjuanco.com). If you've already written a great letter to the Planning Commission about the docket, feel free to resend that same letter again, this time to the County Council! And we'd encourage you to also send your letter directly to the Council member who represents your island. If it's helpful, we've provided some [tips on letter-writing on this webpage](#), and we also recorded a short video segment with the San Juan Islands Community Network about tips for engagement, which can be found [here](#).

Thank you for speaking up! If you have any questions, please reach out to Friends of the San Juans' Executive Director, R. Brent Lyles, at [brent@sanjuans.org](mailto:brent@sanjuans.org).