

From: [Patrick McKee](#)
To: [Commission-Public-Records](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public written comment: What's really returning when the cruise industry returns
Date: Tuesday, May 25, 2021 8:58:26 AM

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Commissioners of the Port of Seattle;

I'm writing to you all as a citizen of the Salish Sea - as are my children and grandchildren, as are you and your families and friends. Take a moment to consider those who preceded us on these lands and waters, the Coast Salish peoples, who coexisted for thousands of years with a diverse and healthy bioregion. I know, I know, it's the obligatory pro forma land acknowledgement; but think of what our mere 200 years of occupation have done to the land whose beauty and wonder we claim to love, and think about the decisions we're making every day, and why we make them, and what they really cost. Think about where it's all headed.

Now we're given to understand cruise ships will be returning as early as July 24.

What is the plan for dealing with the environmental impact of a renewed cruise industry? The already critically endangered southern resident orca population is at great risk simply from ship noise, let alone the exhaust and the wastewater discharge and the trash dumping; the Washington Department of Health mapping tool demonstrates quite clearly the life-threatening effects of shipping and air travel (where do we imagine these thousands of cruise passengers are arriving?) particulate pollution on frontline communities in the Seattle region; and the overall toxic footprint of jet travel and cruise ship greenhouse gas emissions fuels the climate catastrophe that is already upon us.

What is gained? There is at present no reliable metric that demonstrates the economic benefits of cruise travel, certainly not when compared to traditional tourism in which travelers stay in the city - actually spending money in hotels and restaurants and cultural / recreational venues.

We do know this: the cruise ships are NOT American ships, and the cruise corporations are NOT American companies - they are registered elsewhere to avoid taxes and labor and environmental regulations. The externalized costs of the industry - climate destroying carbon emissions, health impacts on near port communities, noise pollution, plastic waste - affect us all deeply; we pay the price for the destruction of human lives and regional biodiversity, we pay for the health care and the attempts at environmental mitigation. Cruise ship workers, are NOT covered under American labor law, often working long hours for low wages without protection, while cruise corporations pay their CEOs millions of dollars a year. Meanwhile, the rest of us are paying for the cleanup.

This is all unsustainable. If the Port of Seattle aspires to be "the greenest port in North America" the Commissioners have to reckon with the true cost impacts of the airport and ship travel associated with the cruise industry as it exists today; additional cruise terminal facilities and airport expansion are only going to hasten the catastrophe science is warning us about. You all know this - you live here and you work here, you care about the place. Instead of rushing back into full on cruise industry activity why not extend the pandemic-induced cruise moratorium until there's a real public discussion of cruise ship costs and community benefits?

Thank you for your consideration,

Patrick McKee
Mercer Island, WA
323.336.3651