

TO: City and Borough of Sitka Planning Commission

FROM: Priya Gandhi, Sabrina Lee, Samantha Matthews, and Peggy Wilcox, Pardee RAND Graduate School PhD students

SUBJECT: Summer Externship Project – Impacts of Tourism on Residents of Sitka

PRGS-Sitka Sound Science Center Background

The Pardee RAND Graduate School (PRGS) is a Ph.D. program in policy analysis housed at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, CA. Students in the Community-Partnered Policy and Action stream—essentially an academic concentration—combine research methods and understanding of localized context to partner with communities to design, implement, and evaluate policies.

PRGS collaborates with the Sitka Sounds Science Center on providing students an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in supporting the City of Sitka and its community-based organizations. A group of students, similar to previous summers, will be living and working from the Science Center in August 2022. Their efforts will be further guided by a Community Advisory Group that the RAND Corporation has convened in Sitka, consisting of community leaders from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, the Sitka School District, SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC), Sitka Legacy Foundation, Sitka Conservation Society, and the Sitka Climate Action Task Force.

Summer 2022 Project

This summer, the Science Center and Community Advisory Group members have advised students to undertake a community assessment on the impacts of tourism on the residents of Sitka. The project team members are:

Samantha Matthews: Samantha is a first-year student whose research interests include mental health, crisis response, and homelessness. Originally from Maine, she is interested in these research areas in the context of rural communities. Prior to PRGS, she worked in local government and homeless services in eastern Los Angeles County.

Peggy Wilcox: Peggy is a PhD candidate at the Pardee Rand Graduate School seeking a degree in policy analysis. Her research focuses on the as yet unwritten policies of the North relating to how northern communities respond to novel external pressures as Alaska and the Arctic face 21st century environmental and socio-economic challenges. Peggy holds an MPA from UAS and is a mid-career student originally from Anchorage. She lived in Juneau during Juneau's discovery as a cruise ship destination.

Sabrina Lee: Sabrina is a first-year student who is interested in education research including K-12, early childhood education, and postsecondary education. Having grown up in Boston and Los Angeles, she seeks to understand education along with the well-being of families and children in the contexts of both urban and rural regions. Prior to

PRGS, she worked as an elementary school teacher for three years in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Priya Gandhi: Priya Gandhi is a second-year student whose research focuses on understanding what works to improve the physical and mental health and well-being of rural communities. She completed a summer externship for the Sitka Conservation Society in August 2021. Originally from New York, Priya worked at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation before joining PRGS.

Planning Commission Meeting

At this meeting, students will present initial project objectives and ideas and will request feedback from Planning Commission members.