

# Fitch Mountain Community Survey: January 2023

Question 1: What is the right way (i.e. policy mechanism) to govern the number of vacation rentals on Fitch?	Question 2: Do you live next to or own a vacation rental? If so, what has your experience been?	Question 3: What is the most important thing to get right on this round of rule revisions?	Question 4: Anything else you'd like to add or seek clarification on?	Balance for community character/ cohesion	Noise	Public safety concerns (esp. fire + inadequate public infrastrux)	Enforcement	Fairness + clearly communicated rules	Live next to or own + curently have no problems	Categorical Exclusion (i.e. VRs have no place as a matter of principle)
				16 or 18% of comments	11 or 13% of comments	14 or 16% of comments	10 or 11% of comments	28 or 32% of comments	27 or 31% of comments	7 or 8% of comments
10% Cap:	I own a vacation rental property and have a professional property management firm in place. I stay in contact with my neighbors and they have been genuinely pleased with the level of oversight.	There are some vocal opponents of vacation rentals that seem to be looking to penalize well run operators and bad actors alike I understand that there are some issues that arise but it's in no one's best interest to have unruly guests and that is the exception to the rule. The professional management mandate should be sufficient but there is an opportunity to look at making it easier for owners to evict problematic guests in the rare event that becomes necessary.	The vacation rental industry drives significant revenue for local businesses and is an important part of the experience for many visitors who aren't good candidates for traditional hotels.						1	
10% Cap:	Yes, good and bad. Most people have been quiet and kept to themselves but recently one renter was having a lot of trouble and would come knocking on our door at all hours because the landlord stopped returning her calls. We wanted to be kind and help the renter but there was really nothing we could do to help. The landlord should have been more responsible and dealt with his renter so that we didn't have to get involved so often.									
10% Cap:	We own a property that has been used since 1998 as a vacation rental. We have had ZERO complaints about renters activities. All adjacent property owners have our contact information in case there is a problem, but we have never received a call, We have used professional managers who also monitor the rental activity.	Do not make it impossible for those of us who are retired and have made rentals part of our retirement planning. The river belongs to EVERYONE, not just those fortunate to live here.						1	1	
10% Cap:		If there's off road parking, then rentals should be fine. The owner is the landlord.and is still the responsible party for what happens.								
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%):		Consensus amongst the homeowners	It might be of value to circulate a survey amongst homeowners on the Mountain as to whether or not they want to have a vacation rental....it may be 5-10 per cent however, it would be good to know.							
10% Cap:	I frequently use vacation rentals when i am travelling in other countries and most of the people i come across that use them are reasonable and responsible.	the most important thing is carefully screening the renters. if you have good renters you dont have problems.	i think it is important to remember that fitch mountain has always been a vacation place and there are still a lot of people who own second homes here that have been in their families for years. there are several in my neighborhood and they are good neighbors when they are here and part of what gives fitch mountain its unique character. i would hate to see that destroyed.	1						

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Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%):	We had vacation rentals above our property in the past and noise was a problem from time-to-time. The properties have since sold so are no longer vacation rentals.	Maintain the Exclusion Zone since traffic and parking congestion already are an issue for residents. The high fire risk on the mountain also is a concern.			1	1				
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%): 10% Cap:	Across the street from one - where they can have up to 6 cars parked--which can mean a large group of people. No major problems so far, but it is not as peaceful as it used to be. Usually they quiet down in the evening. Another cabin further down, used to create a lot of noise that carried uphill - you could practically join in the conversation. Vacation rentals are almost always partiers - so are loud.	Difficult to make it fair. I certainly would not like one next door to me. It would make it almost impossible to live here.			1			1	1	
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%): 10% Cap:		Make sure owners get the new word whatever it is						1		
10% Cap:	Other than them getting locked out it's been fine 🙌	Limiting what property owners can do with their home is ridiculous								
10% Cap:		<b>we think the permits should be capped but permit should be allowed to be transferable on sale.</b>								
10% Cap:	Think our next door does illegal rentals, but have not investigated or lodged a complaint.	Clarity for all parties.	I'm wondering how ADU laws and state override of local zoning will affect future neighborhood development.					1		
5% Cap:	mixed, I had one renter show up at our cabin to request that I not talk on my phone on my porch, it was offensive. Have had renters be too loud late at night, not be mindful of parking appropriately but then again some residents are that way too. Most of the time, it doesn't impact us but I do worry about it increasing as a transient population is not as respectful to neighbors on the whole. I also worry about housing shortages being worsened by increased transient lodging removing available housing from the market. Also, in a urban wildfire, I think that too many transient residents could really complicate evacuation	Setting reasonable caps and standards and enforcing them. Have a process where habitual offenders (constant negative impact on neighbors) lose their permit	are there any standards regarding noise, parking, providing evacuation information, etc.?			1	1			
10% Cap:	We have had both good and bad experiences with them as neighbors here. Some renters are polite and follow the rules, but some play extremely loud music and have parties.	Limits on noise! Cut off times and noise levels should be kept to strict rules.			1					
10% Cap:	The vacation rental experience has been surprisingly good. Renters have been respectful for noise.									
10% Cap:	I live next to a vacation rental and all is fine.	Fairness to all current owners. I think 10% rentals is not too saturated						1	1	





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10% Cap	I own a vacation rental on the mountain and use the funds to help offset the cost of home ownership in our area. This has been an effective means of keeping me in the area.	I support limits on the overall number of vacation rentals to preserve our neighborhood's character (i.e. no "party houses"), but find the X-Zone restriction overly conservative. The most important thing I would like to see in this round of revisions are enhanced monitoring of performance standards with respect to number of occupants and vehicles, according to existing permit limitations.		1			1			
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)		Fitch Mountain is simply not suited for vacation rentals. The narrow roads and thick vegetation have always made for a dangerous egress; with the current extreme fire likelihood, that is greatly exacerbated. Adding strangers unfamiliar to the area creates additional hazards for them as well as Healdsburg residents, both on Fitch Mtn and further west. The sewage situation is an ongoing problem which has not been solved and now water is an added concern.				1				1
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	I live near one. Overall, they usually behave themselves. The owners have set rules that they must follow or forfeit their security deposit.	To keep it as it is and have rules that the vacationers need to follow or forfeit their security deposit.							1	
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	Some of the time the home next to us is a weekend rental... for the most part, responsible quiet adults, over the years there has been a need to call the home and explain the rules to the weekend renters	LIMITING vacation rentals, having a means to file a complaint if we have one to an overseeing arm of gov't. Strengthening the code of care for fire and other emergencies / evacuation procedures etc that the homeowners who rent out have to adhere to. Knowing the location of these vacation rentals				1	1	1	1	
10% Cap	i live across the street from two houses which have been used as vacation rentals and/or second homes, and down the street from two others. the owners/users are generally very considerate and there have only been one or two occasions in 25 years where somebody has had to call the sheriff	one or two strike and you are out rule for people who allow unruly guests. i am ok with vacation renters since i do this myself in other places but i think it is imperative that vacation renters respect the privacy and living situations of the locals. if the vacation renters blend in they are almost never a problem.	limiting use of the public facilities (del rio beach for example) so that parking does not continue to become the problem that it has always been. some stepped up enforcement of the area around palomar would be nice.	1		1			1	
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	I have not had a negative experience by living living near a vacation rental due to the diligence of the homeowners being careful about their renters. I'm concerned that not every homeowner of a VR is necessarily as responsible as my lovely neighbors.	Full time homeowners tend to care for their properties with a vested interest in the friendly cooperation of their neighbors. Vacation rentals are a risk whether the renters will be respectful of the property they rent since they may never be back to the area again. For that reason, I would like to see vacation rentals eventually disappear by not inviting more of them to exist on the mountain, but allowing the ones already here to	Many thanks to the current VR owners for making sure their transient tenants have not been problematic.						1	

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10% Cap	We did a vacation rental in our house for almost twenty years with ZERO PROBLEMS. We find the current ordinances to be unnecessary at best and punitive. The worst example of "NIMBY" thinking. We live in a beautiful place and it is our right/responsibility to share it with others. Arnie Steinman - 2656 S Fitch Mountain	Ease of permitting for existing and new vacation rentals.	Many people bought homes they can only afford with the income from vacation rentals. The rule changes are particularly difficult for seniors.					1	1	
10% Cap Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	No We live across the road from a vacation rental. The owners have been very discerning as to who they allow to rent their home. A lot of repeat year after year renters that has made it nice for us to get to know them.								1	
5% Cap		safety of visitors and residents: how/where to evacuate, notifications, parking, no fires, etc. Noise/nuisance: ability to contact someone to remedy situation in a timely manner, septic: required inspection, maintenance and limits on visitors based on capacity	TOT from vacation rentals goes toward that community's .....roadside vegetation management?		1	1	1			
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	Bad Disrespectful entitled owners Block the turn around on a dead end road	Get rid of vacation rentals on mt not safe area for that with limited access and fire danger and belligerent tenants and owners	No vacation rentals							1
5% Cap	I'm not always at my best/most aware of local needs when I'm on vacation and living near vacation rentals has certainly increased my desire to be thoughtful. Noise, trash, abd unsafe behaviors are unfortunately very common. My biggest concern is safety because vacation rentals are highest when fire risk is high. That's why I advocate for a 5% cap. Motivating rental property owners and enforcing safety and community standards is close to impossible. Let's keep the potential hazards to a minimum until effective policies are identified and their adoption is demonstrated.	One plan obviously doesn't address specific areas. Fitch Mountain is already a disaster waiting to happen because of our roads. Rule revisions need to consider worst case scenarios such as a fast moving fire when the community is full with vacationers in rentals.	I appreciate the work being put into the rule revision project. I don't mean to discount the economic interests of vacation rentals property owners, I just think a clear eyed assessment of the vulnerabilities of the community needs to be primary.			1				
5% Cap	No	Clarity in administration. It should be transparent and fair to both the permittee and neighbors.						1		
10% Cap	I live next to one and it is not a problem.	A fair % for all.						1	1	
10% Cap	No. Although I would prefer there to be no vacation rentals, I think a limited number is acceptable if properly managed. I also think it would be selfish of us to promote the total elimination of vacation rentals because non property owners should have a way to enjoy staying on Fitch Mountain.	Enforcement of the regulations. It is pointless to make rules and to then not enforce them.					1			



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10% Cap	Neither	Exclusion zone seems unnecessary and doesn't attract more owner- occupants than a cap otherwise would. I feel you'd just have more vacant properties on any given day if people couldn't rent the properties which doesn't help foster any sense of community.								
10% Cap	I sold my vacation rental on Fitch Mtn. I had a neighbor who regularly threatened to "report me" for things beyond the VR rules & regs like a kitchen light left on overnight. I would've loved a 3rd party handling the calls.	The Fitch Mountain "X" should be withdrawn, and the area should follow whatever the standard vr rules for the County are. (1) the imposition of the Fitch Mtn "X" zone 6 years ago was based on anecdotal stories by a few squeaky wheels that painted a problem much larger than reality. It was supposed to be reviewed after 1 year based on true complaint data (2) On F.M., there's no pattern of large party houses disturbing the quiet enjoyment of full time residents, a situation that's led to the creation of X zones in areas like Sonoma where you find much larger properties (3) Fitch Mtn was developed for seasonal occupants. Yes the roads are narrow & parking is tight but you can bet that at the first hint of trouble 2/3 of the mountain will leave & return to their principal residences.	Caps are a good idea, but they will only work if someone is actually keeping track of permits. The system is currently clogged with permits that are being unused -- many remain on record altho the property has a new owner TIGHTEN THE RULES: (1) no TOT revenue for 2 years? rescind the permit. (2) Property sold? rescind the permit (find a way to track this vs relying on permit holder reporting the sale) (3) annual monitoring fee unpaid? rescind the permit				1	1		
10% Cap	Mostly Ok, annoyed with renters using our parking spaces with no authorization	Have limits but not fully exclude	We love sharing our mountain with tourists the trick is just to limit not eliminate altogether						1	
5% Cap	I own and zero issues!	Not to punish existing rentals or limit their use upon sale.						1	1	
5% Cap	There are two vacation rentals a few houses away from me. I believe one is operating without a permit. Recently I have not had any issues except the voice level can be a bit loud when I'm visiting friends next door to that rental. There have been problems in the past with loud amplified outdoor music, moving residents beach 'furniture' for their use and not picking up after their dogs on the beach.	Before you decide on a cap be sure that the illegal vacation rental properties have been identified so there is a realistic cap.	I chose the 5% cap even though I might have gone for a higher cap but the first two choices don't agree with what I think should happen. The 10% can't be determined until the illegal rentals have been identified (as we might already be there or above this limit); the 2nd allows for less rentals but I don't necessarily think they need to ultimately go away if they're managed and rules are enforced; I could have gone for a higher percentage if the illegal issue was sorted out.		1		1	1		



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10% Cap	I live NEAR a few VRs and my experience has been mixed. But I live near some seasonal cabins used by the property owners and these folks can be just as noisy and clueless about fire danger. I truly believe that the VR owners can set a tone of respect for the neighborhood in the way they describe their property, the orientation materials they offer, the signage in/on the property. I say this because it's always the same VRs that are noisy and disrespectful. And others that are nearly always quieter and seem to realize they have responsibilities.	The rules for operation, including fire risk and evacuation materials. And the role of the property manager in the event of an emergency (e.g., in the event of an emergency in the immediate area of the VR, the PM must contact the current customers and ensure they understand their responsibilities and how to stay informed. All properties should be required to have a NOAA-capable radio that is charged labeled with the relevant frequencies for the area.	I prefer a system in which VRs must be owned by "real people" and not businesses and the number of VRs owned by one person/family is limited.			1				
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)										
10% Cap	Yes Variable occupancy and levels of noise	Balance community with property rights of owner	Septic law changes always a concern	1	1	1		1		
10% Cap	Live next door to. Have not had any problems.	Make sure there is an easy, efficient and enforceable complaint process should problems arise.	Nothing				1		1	
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	When we first bought our property on S Fitch in 2012 we lived next to a 5 bedroom VR and it was out of control. Every weekend I had to call the owner about the loud music until 2am, screaming, loud shoes, a complete disregard for the quite nature of Fitch Mtn. The owner did not believe us until I finally convinced him to meet me at 2am at the bottom of our driveway and he then he said, "oh, I get it now." It was weeks on end of endless noise and the county did little to nothing to help us. The owner even had a \$1000 fine for noise complaints but that did not stop the unruly guests. Our only break from the situation was the sale of the property and that the new owners could not continue the VR due to the changes in rules.	Please limit VR; more young families are trying to have a safe neighborhood. Often VR have zero connection to the area which equates to loud noise, disregard to the unsafe driving conditions around the mountain, and vandalism of the area. In addition to septic restraints coming down the line and VR occupants not understanding the fire danger and evacuation plans.		1		1				
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	i do not own a vacation rental. I bought my house on Fitch Mountain in 2015. If i had known there were vacation rentals in my neighborhood, I may not have bought so readily. The streets in our neighborhood are narrow and enough for only 1 car at any given time. The rule of thumb has always been "the downside car has the right of way." Visitors (a la VRBO, airbnb) don't know these rules of thumb and make street traffic very frustrating.	For those grandfathered in, let them keep it. But no more new vacation rentals allowed.	Is there a published list of all homes that can do vacation rentals? I'd like to see where they are located.							

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10% Cap	We live next to one. The rental agency is responsive and we have had primarily good experiences with our temporary neighbors. It's fun to meet new people. For the most part renters have always abided by occupancy limits and sound restrictions.	Adequate parking							1	
5% Cap 10% Cap	No we are full time residents and two of our neighbors are as well. Our third neighbor isn't there all the time, but only lets family use the house when they are not there.	Upkeep of the mountain falls to full time residents and we don't want to get overrun with vacationers, but it also provides a source of income to people who need it so I don't believe it should go away completely.		1				1		
5% Cap 10% Cap	Our cabin is next to a rental, and we have also rented properties on the mountain when we have more people in town than can fit in our cabin. The rules are now very clearly stated especially as it relates to noise. Our experience is that renters abide by the rules more so than owners and locals particularly as it relates to noise after 10PM.	We need to balance the local ownership of cabins with welcoming new families and visitors to Fitch Mountain. Fitch won't remain a vibrant, wonderful spot with people who care about the river and the community if no one visits it over the years. An exclusion zone that makes rentals disappear over time would be bad for the community and the mountain in the long run.							1	
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	We have lived next to a vacation rental and experienced people yelling at 2am in the morning continuously. We have called the sheriff multiple times and spent many nights not sleeping and affecting us negatively at work.	Keep the property management companies out of Fitch Mountain. The road is narrow and not suited for people from out of town driving on it.	Some landlords are trying to do rent to own to bypass the laws to keep their existing permit when the home is actually sold to a new owner.		1	1				1
10% Cap	I own one in operation, and live next to another. Management and screening is everything, and best accomplished by individual owner/operators who can belong to, and therefore feel accountable to the surrounding community. The proximity (60/30- min) rule, and PRMD's presumptive privileging of professional mgt companies was & is a mistake. It punishes Bay Area owners, and undercuts accountability & community compatibility. County has done a terrible job communicating with VR owners and the community alike. Public noticing of meetings is inadequate - only vocal minorities track (and therefore warp) the process. More important: neighbors don't know the rules, and in the absence of knowledge, humans assume the worst and fall prey to scapegoating and polarization. The rules have been weaponized as tools of intimidation, harassment, and exclusion more than County seems to realize.	Clarity, fairness and data-driven decision-making. Don't pander to politics, just balance for community compatibility and appropriately focused public safety concerns. Make clear the difference between 'grandfathered' land-use rights that track to a permit vs. operational standards that tie to the new VR license so that operators and neighbors alike understand the ground rules. Make sure those rules can actually work on the ground.	I think an 8% cap might be the sweet spot for Fitch -- incl. the RRD-zoned mountain top. We have a handful of un-permitted VRs still (maybe 5?). These need to be cleaned up. In my opinion, there should be no VRs in the preserve. Whatever the number, a cap is better policy because it is clear, can be administered, and - importantly - signals a structure of belonging. Hopefully these things in combination can go some way to healing divisions.					1	1	



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Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	I do not. Across the street from me, the prior owner was doing some type of rental with visiting nurses. There was no problem with that at all.	Fitch Mountain used to be primarily summer homes with many family- operated cabins. Over the years, year-round living has increased. More important than the overall % density of vacation rentals is the concentration in any one area on the Mountain. Vacation rental saturation, combined with so many residences operated as "second homes" (five by me), drastically changes the character of a neighborhood.	Some cities have regulations regarding the proximity allowed for locating vacation rentals. I know of a section on my street that has three in a row. Is there such a regulation for Fitch Mountain?	1						
10% Cap	I own a vacation rental and live on Fitch Mountain near others. I have never had any complaints regarding my rental. I keep in constant contact with my neighbors to be sure they are not being disturbed. As for other vacation rentals near me, I have never observed any problematic behavior. It has been my experience that the vast majority of vacation renters are respectable citizens. Vacation rental properties are always among the best maintained as we survive on good ratings from our guests.	Fairness and equitability. With it's years of history as a vacation rental destination I have never felt Fitch Mountain should have been designated an X Zone. Be that as it may, we are now at about 8% vacation rental saturation. Everyone seems to have become accustomed to that number so I suggest we stay there but NOT allow them to go towards zero over time. I checked the 10% box above as that was the closest to how I feel but keeping the current number of VR's in perpetuity would more accurately reflect my views. I bought my vacation rental at a premium because it was already a vacation rental. In fairness I feel I should be able to pass my permit with the sale of the home, should I decide to do so. This has been brought up before and we had been told there would be attempts to correct this "taking" but that has not happened.	Continuing on the theme of fairness and equitability I have some additional input. Issues such as noise, parking, septic systems, fire safety, covering up garbage cans and any other "rules" should apply to everyone, not just VR's. At a bare minimum existing vacation rentals should be grandfathered in before additional restrictions are added for new VR's. Another important issue that needs to be addressed are fake complaints from neighbors that don't want a VR near them for no valid reason, or worse, from another VR owner trying to eliminate competition. Last and most importantly, I would like it clarified, in code, that during personal use or other times when TOT tax is not in effect (such as rentals longer than 30 days) VR rules do not apply.					1	1	
5% Cap			Is there a way to raise questions about new construction that is obviously being used short-term, or existing housing that hasn't been a vacation rental before but appears to be now? (I guess I'm asking how to be a whistle-blower.)							
10% Cap	I think a reasonable amount of vacation rentals should be allowed. Many houses in this area have been "summer vacation" rentals since they were first built. My family had been renting homes and visiting for almost 30-years before we finally bought and moved into the area.	It is important any rules that apply to vacation rentals apply to all residents. It is unacceptable to use things like "safety", "fire hazard" etc. to limit things (parking being one example) to a vacation rental but not to others. Many people who own second homes but don't rent them out cause similar concerns like too many cars, loud noises etc. Any rules and concerns must be considered for all residents. It is not okay to single out vacation rentals with extraneous rules just as a way to make their lives harder and try and drive them from the neighborhood.						1	1	

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10% Cap	Yes. My family owns a vacation cottage on the Russian River in Healdsburg. One day this will be passed down to my siblings and myself. We rent the house as it is too small to be a permanent residence. It was built as a vacation cottage.	I have been coming to the Russian River with my family since I was a baby. We have rented houses along the water for a week in the summer for over 30 years and I have very fond memories of these trips. This part of Healdsburg has always been a vacation destination, and while I understand that short term rentals make housing more difficult in some cases, I don't think residence have the right to decide they no longer want it to be a vacation area.								
Exclusion Zone (currently at 8%)	There are a number of vacation rentals near me - and some of them I only know about because So Co contacted me when they were established- some neighbors seemed to have applied for the permit when they saw there were going to be limits and so don't currently use the rental as such. Had been a very troublesome one down the road- articles in the PD etc about the disruption caused by etc. Now house sold so the permit for being a vacation rental is gone- as is the problem.	More clarity on vacation rental requirements such as (1) criteria for qualifying for a new vacation rental (2) what violations will result in permit loss (3) annual checks for home owners of vacation rentals	*An additional concern related in a way: Long Term Rental Situation out here: I have many renters around me- there are duplexes, triplexes, studios, little cabins, larger homes all being rented long term. Absentee landlords often do little or nothing to maintain the rental- rentals falling into disrepair- poor renters! No pride of ownership or belonging. Some long term renters also seem to be pretending that the rental is their primary residence- tax consequences or inheritance				1	1		
10% Cap	No concerns or issues.	New permits don't necessarily need to be given to a waitlist. It could be randomly selected from a list annually.	More clarity on vacation rental requirements such as (1) criteria for qualifying for a new vacation rental (2) what violations will result in permit loss (3) annual checks for home owners of vacation rentals					1	1	