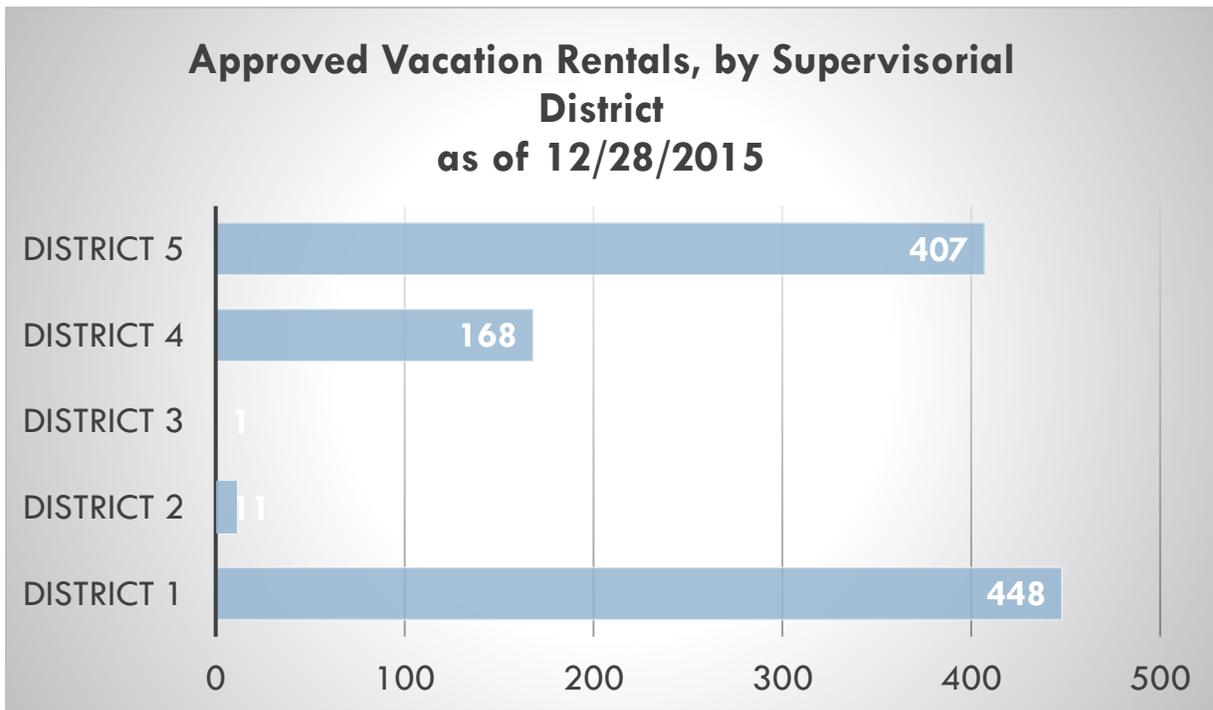


Background

The Board of Supervisors adopted the initial Vacation Rental Code in November of 2010. The new regulations became effective on January 1, 2011 and applied to all unincorporated areas of the County except for the Coastal Zone. The regulations allowed vacation rentals with up to five guest rooms in most zoning districts, subject to issuance of a Zoning Permit. Permit Sonoma (formerly PRMD) staff developed the Vacation Rental Code over a two-year period using an inclusive approach involving neighbors, industry representatives, and other stakeholders. Staff intended the regulations to both legalize existing vacation rentals as well as to establish operating standards and compliance measures for all vacation rentals in order to ensure neighborhood compatibility.

On November 4, 2014, Permit Sonoma staff received direction from the Board of Supervisors to adopt revisions to the Vacation Rental Code and worked on the revisions for over a year before they were adopted in early 2016. The revised Vacation Rental Code became effective on March 15, 2016 and introduced new and modified standards such as limiting one vehicle per bedroom for vacation rentals, requiring a certified 24-hour response property manager, and enforcing certified property manager reporting responsibilities.



As of December 28, 2015 Permit Sonoma had approved 1,035 vacation rentals. Most vacation rentals are located within the 1st District (Sonoma Valley) or the 5th District (Russian River Area), with a smaller number in the north county. As of November 2016, the number of approved Vacation Rental Permits within the inland portion of unincorporated Sonoma County had grown to 1,380.

How does Permit Sonoma define a vacation rental?

Vacation rentals are the rental of a private residence for periods of less than 31 days when the owner does not remain in residence during the rental period. Vacation rentals do not include Bed and Breakfast Inns or hosted rentals.

How does Permit Sonoma define a property manager?

The property manager is the person or company responsible for responding to any issues or complaints and may be the property owner, a property management company, or another designated responsible party. The 24-hour contact listed on the Vacation Rental Permit is considered the property manager. This person is responsible for ensuring that the vacation rental complies with the Vacation Rental Code and that all neighbor complaints for the vacation rental are addressed. The requirement that all property managers must be certified applies to all properties with a Vacation Rental Permit.

Permit Sonoma does recognize that the term “property manager” is generally used to describe those who handle various aspects of vacation rental duties. Some property managers handle all aspects of a vacation rental; including bookings, payments, maintenance, and guest interactions. Permit Sonoma does not require certified property managers to handle bookings, payments, or other tasks not regulated in the Vacation Rental Code.

How does a property manager become certified?

A property manager becomes certified by taking the Property Manager Certification Course provided by Permit Sonoma. In order to access the course, visit the Permit Sonoma Vacation Rental website at SonomaCounty.ca.gov/VacationRentals. The Property Manager Certification Course will become available January 9, 2017. All property managers must be certified by January 1, 2018.

In order to qualify to take this course, you must:

- Serve as the property manager or 24-hour contact for at least one active Vacation Rental Permit
- Be located within 30 miles of the vacation rental(s) that you intend to manage
- Read and understand all course materials

In order to obtain the certification, you must:

- Have answered all questions and received a passing score of 28. If you do not achieve a passing score the first time you take the test, you may retake the course
- Have paid the Property Manager Certification Course fee. Instructions on how to pay the fee will be sent via email after passing the course

Important: The property manager must confirm that they are within 30 miles of the vacation rental that they represent prior to taking the certification course. A property management company must ensure that they are located within 30 miles of all vacation rentals they intend to manage.

What are the most common complaints associated with vacation rentals?

Common complaints related to vacation rentals are included in the chart below. Parties, music, and noise make up more than half of all complaints received. Parking complaints are also common. It should be a property manager's first priority to ensure that their vacation rental(s) are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood by responding to all complaints received and by providing clear instructions to renters about noise, parties, quiet hours, and parking.

