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**ANNUAL KAYAK FESTIVAL EASY TO NAVIGATE  
Calusa Blueway fest offers free chances to paddle**

FORT MYERS, Fla., Oct. 25, 2011 – Southwest Floridians will have an easier time navigating Lee County Parks & Recreation's canoe and kayak festival this year. Activities are planned throughout Lee County, but a new "hub" focusing on Sanibel Causeway Island A will make it easier for participants to gather in one central location to try out boats or hear speakers.

The annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival is set for Thursday, Nov. 3, through Sunday, Nov. 6, with signature sponsor Canoe & Kayak magazine. Festival organizers offer these tips to make the most of the event:

**Buy an \$8 day pass and take the trolley.** The pass helps festival-goers avoid the \$6 causeway toll and is the green way to go since the island has limited parking. (An inclusive \$60 four-day pass also is available.) Passes are available starting Nov. 3 at the Residence Inn by Marriott Fort Myers-Sanibel, which is located on Summerlin Road across from Tanger Outlets, or on Island A. Free parking will be available at Tanger and Port Sanibel Marina. The pass provides admission onto Island A, where participants can demo kayaks and stand-up paddleboards, hear national caliber speakers and taste local dishes from Gulf Seafood.

**Watch the races.** The races in past festivals were in hard-to-view locations, but not this year. The Nov. 5 Calusa Classic and Nov. 6 Calusa Dash both start at noon from Island A. The first leg of the 10-mile Classic parallels the causeway islands. The 4-mile Dash circumnavigates the islands. Adventures in Paradise is offering a spectator boat Nov. 5. To reserve a spot, call (239) 472-8443. Cost: \$15-\$25. Race registration continues up till 10:30 a.m. on race days for \$45-\$70. Call Race Director Brian Houston at (239) 579-6000.

**Come by boat.** Lee County Parks & Recreation is providing a "kayak parking area" so participants can paddle to Island A and leave their boats while enjoying the festivities. Powerboaters are welcome to anchor and wade ashore. Paddlers and boaters are urged to be aware of race-route areas and avoid them.

**Head north or west instead.** The annual extravaganza at UpRiver RV Resort is hosting its North Fort Myers celebration of kayaking, manatees and Conservation 20/20 preserves at noon Friday, Nov. 4. Greater Pine Island is hosting a trilogy of events Saturday, Nov. 5, with the annual Calusa Blueway Kayak Fishing Tournament, A Taste of Matlacha and Bluegrass for a Blueway at Matlacha Park. Taste and Bluegrass have free admission. Anglers still can enter for \$60. Call coordinator Joy Hazell at (239) 533-7518 or Josh Harvel at (239) 233-0655.

**Head to the beach.** The Southwest Florida Paddling Club, Tampa Bay Sea Kayakers and Paradise Coast Paddling Club are hosting free group paddles. Details are available on the festival website. On Fort Myers Beach, festival-goers can join the first ever Jug Boat Race to raise funds for Wake Up America. The Saturday, Nov. 5, event is at Bowditch Regional Park and involves homemade boats. Call organizer Wendy Rex at (239) 810-4742.

**Make it an evening affair.** The O'Brien Subaru Kickoff Reception is Thursday, Nov. 3, and the Canoe & Kayak Film Fest is Friday, Nov. 4. Both are at The Residence Inn by Marriott Fort Myers-Sanibel, providing opportunities to meet-and-greet VIPs in the paddling world, as well as food and beverages. Admission is \$15; four-day pass holders admitted free. Then Saturday, join paddlers at the San Carlos RV Resort to watch renowned backcountry gourmet Michael Gray whip up goodies and hear from the

paddling adventurers called The WaterTribe. Food and live music provided; \$20 at the door; four-day pass holders admitted free. Details are online.

This sixth annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival has been selected as one of the Southeast Tourism Society's Top 20 Events for 2011. Complete details — including how to win one of three kayaks being given away — are online at [www.CalusaBluewayPaddlingFestival.com](http://www.CalusaBluewayPaddlingFestival.com) or available by calling (239) 533-7474. Or find the festival on Facebook and Twitter.

Four-day passes will be sold online through Nov. 1 via a link from the festival website; click on "admission." People can buy four-day and single-day passes in person starting at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 2, at the festival's photo contest reception at Rutenberg Park's Eco Living Center, 6490 South Point Blvd., Fort Myers, FL 33919.