

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Betsy Clayton
Waterways coordinator
Lee County Parks & Recreation
(239) 533-7474
bclayton@leegov.com

Canoe & kayak festival selected as Top 20 Event
Southeast Tourism Society recognizes Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival

Fort Myers, FL, May 16, 2011 – The Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival has been selected as one of the Southeast Tourism Society's Top 20 Events for 2011. The annual canoe and kayak festival this year will happen Nov. 3-6 with a hub at the Sanibel Causeway. New this year is a national presenting sponsor, *Canoe & Kayak* magazine.

The Atlanta-based non-profit Southeast Tourism Society represents 12 states and annually recognizes events that reflect its mission of creating economic development through travel and sustainable tourism. The award is significant because the Top 20 Events receive extensive exposure in print, broadcast and online media in the United States and Canada in more than 800 outlets. This is the second consecutive year the Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival was awarded Top 20 Event status.

Since 2006, the popular Southwest Florida event has offered seminars, guided trips, demonstrations, races, a photo contest, a fishing tournament and social events to an eager audience of kayakers. This year's festival will include on-water instruction, Stand Up Paddleboard activities and a *Canoe & Kayak* film festival. The magazine will be conducting an on-site sea kayak test for a 2012 issue and will sponsor a long-distance competitive race.

"The Calusa Blueway Paddling Trail and Festival provides the perfect setting," said *Canoe & Kayak* Publisher Jim Marsh.

The festival serve to highlight public parks and archeological sites as well as resorts, restaurants and campgrounds along the Calusa Blueway Paddling Trail, a 190-mile marked-and-meandering saltwater trail that spans the coast and inland rivers along The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel. The festival is coordinated by Lee County Parks & Recreation, which reported attendance for the 2010 festival from 21 states and four countries.

Festival details are available at www.CalusaBluewayPaddlingFestival.com and also on Facebook and Twitter. For trail information, visit www.CalusaBlueway.com. For Top 20 Events, go to www.SoutheastTourism.org.

Editor's Note: *The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel include: Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Boca Grande & outer islands, North Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres and Alva. Images are available upon request. E-mail Betsy Clayton at bclayton@leegov.com*