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Calusa Blueway events slated for this fall and 2015

Fort Myers, FL, Oct. 1, 2014 — Lee County is set to take the Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival – a longtime Southwest Florida autumn event – and spread it throughout the year.

Instead of an annual three-day happening, the festival's activities have been segmented to offer canoeists, kayakers and SUPers more to do in various months.

Returning to the slate of events are the annual catch-and-release fishing tournament and an SUP race. New happenings include a monthly speakers' program.

"The Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival had so much appeal but demanded multiple days of paddlers' time so Lee County Parks & Recreation is morphing the great aspects of the festival into multiple activities at many of our locations countywide," said Mike Hammond, Calusa Blueway coordinator. "This gives local paddlers and those who drive and fly to see the blueway something to do every month."

Upcoming events include:

Oct. 19: Ding Darling Days. Join Family Day at the Sanibel refuge to visit the Blueway Mobile and tent for route suggestions and opportunities along the 190-mile Calusa Blueway Paddling Trail. Visit www.dingdarlingsociety.org/dingdarlingdays.php.

Oct. 26: Surfers For Autism. The annual event at Fort Myers Beach by this organization is Oct. 25, and registered event participants and volunteers can register with Lee County Parks & Rec for a day-after eco-tour. Visit www.surfersforautism.org.

Nov. 1: Calusa Blueway Fishing Tournament. For nearly a decade, non-motorized paddlecraft transported anglers to inshore grand slams on Pine Island. Captains' meeting Oct. 30, all-day fishing Nov. 1. Visit <http://2014calusabluewayfishingtourney.eventbrite.com>.

Nov. 13: Fort Myers Boat Show. The Calusa Blueway returns to this annual downtown Fort Myers event; get blueway info at the City Pier. Visit <http://goboatingflorida.com>.

Dec. 6: Great Outdoors Adventure Day. The annual Friends of Lovers Key event at the south end of Fort Myers Beach near Bonita creates a collaborative focus on what you can do in parks and on waterways, including the Calusa Blueway. Visit www.floridastateparks.org or www.friendsofloverskey.org.

Monthly Speakers' Series: Calusa Blueway Gatherings will happen the first Tuesday of each month from December through April. Mark your calendar for 6:30- 8 p.m. Dec. 2, Jan. 6, Feb. 3, March 3 and April 7 at Wa-Ke Hatchee Recreation Center in South Fort Myers. Visit www.leeparks.org/blueway

May 30, 2015: Battle on the Blueway SUP Race. Details coming soon for race at Crescent Beach Family Park, Fort Myers Beach.

Stay tuned for more events and further details. Find Calusa Blueway on Facebook or CalusaPaddle on Twitter. Trail information is at www.calusablueway.com or www.leeparks.org/blueway. Visit the iTunes store or Google Play to download the free smart-phone app. Visitors can find information at www.fortmyerssanib

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Note to media: Images available upon request. Contact Mike Hammond or Kristie Valone at Lee County Parks & Recreation, (239) 533-7275.