

## History of the “Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism”

- 1998            CREW Land & Water Trust and the FDEP Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve receive a grant from The Advisory Council of Environmental Education, Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission to provide an educational workshop for ecotour providers of Southwest Florida.
- 10/1998        As a result of the above grant, a Day-long Southwest Florida Eco/Heritage Tourism Workshop takes place in downtown Ft Myers. 85 total participants attended.
- 11/1999        A voluntary, SW Florida community-wide, committee of participants from the above workshop meets and organization was formed and named: The Society for Ethical Ecotourism in Southwest Florida. Committee to work on bylaws and mission statement.
- 11/2000        1<sup>st</sup> general members program held: “Ecotourism that Works” including a late afternoon boat tour by Captiva Cruises.
- 1/2001            SEE SW FLA Organization is incorporated.
- 1/2001            2<sup>nd</sup> general members program held: “Ecotourism and the Internet.”
- 5/2001            1<sup>st</sup> annual members meeting held at Babcock Ranch where the initial Board of Directors were voted upon. They included: John Kiseda, Mark Westall, Rudy Lampron, Steve Tutko, Vicky Tinder, Andrew Mackie, Ellen Lindblad. The first membership brochure was distributed, and certification program was established as a priority.
- 3/2002            3<sup>rd</sup> general members program held: “The best way to get close ... is to keep a little distance” presented by “Bird” Westall, along with an evening boat tour by Manatee World.
- 6/2002            2<sup>nd</sup> annual members meeting held at Lakes Park. Stuart Stauss agrees to chair the committee to establish society membership standards and 1<sup>st</sup> certification program.
- 11/2002        4<sup>th</sup> general members program held: A Members Round Table with Becky Bragg at Manatee Park.
- 6/2003            3<sup>rd</sup> annual members meeting held at CREW Land & Water Trust. The principles of ethical ecotourism were presented to membership and voted upon.
- 9/2003            First website established: [www.seeswfla.org](http://www.seeswfla.org)
- 10/2003        Day-long workshop presented in Southwest Florida: “How to run a successful ecotourism business” sponsored by the Small Business Development Center, Lee County Parks & Recreation, FLAUSA, Lee County VCB, and SEE SW FLA.

- 4/16/04 SEE SW FLA logo and Membership Self-Assessment Survey approved by Board.
- 5/18/04 Half-day workshop presented in Southwest Florida: “Eco-Economy: Benefiting Guests & The Natural Environment” sponsored by The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Lee County VCB, Lee County Parks & Recreation, and SEE SW FLA. First session of a four part series developed for hospitality services staff.
- 6/2004 Organization established as a 501(c) 3 “not-for-profit educational organization.”
- 6/2004 Certification/Recognition Program established and approved by Board.
- 6/26/04 4<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting held at Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Certification/Recognition Program and self assessment packet was introduced to the membership.
- 11/03/04 First three members certified by the Board of Directors: in Collier County; Franklin Adams of Everglades/Floridays Charters, in Lee County; Connie Langman of GAEA Guides, and in Charlotte County; Marian Schneider of Grande Tours Inc.
- 12/2004 Organization established as tax exempt by the Florida Department of Revenue. Two members certified by the Board of Directors: in Lee County: Tarpon Bay Explorers and Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge.
- 2/2/2005 Second revision #1.2 of the “Certification/Recognition Program” application packet was approved by the Board of Directors along with revisions to the bylaws.
- 4/6/2005 Two members certified by the Board of Directors: in Lee County: Captiva Cruises, and in Collier County: Stop’s Marine Charters.  
Board votes to co-sponsor the 1<sup>st</sup> annual “Great Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival” to be held in October of 2005. Grants applied for through Visit Florida and Lee County VCB.
- 6/11/2005 5<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting – Estero Island Land & Water Preserves  
Due to weather concerns, the meeting was moved indoors to the Point Estero Resort on Fort Myers Beach.
- 9/7/2005 Gulf Coast Kayak in Lee County certified by Board of Directors
- 11/2/2005 Four tour packages are provided by SEE SW FLA members to SW Florida Council for Environment Education Annual Dinner for their fundraiser auction.
- 1/4/2006 Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Collier County certified by Board of Directors.
- 6/8/06 SEE SW FLA receives \$300 from SW Florida Marine Industries Association to sponsor the summer Ecotour Provider Series.

- 3/1/2006 SEE SW FLA logo copy righted.
- 3/1/06 SEE SW FLA receives \$4,497 grant from Visit Florida and \$27,068 grant from Lee County Tourist Development Council to help sponsor the 1<sup>st</sup> Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival.
- 6/2-4/2006 Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival held on Pine Island, co-sponsored by SEE SW FLA, Lee County Parks & Recreation, Pine Island Chamber of Commerce, Lee County Tourist Development, and VISIT Florida. 6<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting held at the Tarpon Lodge on Pine Island.
- Summer 2006 First Ecotour Provider Series jointly presented by Rookery Bay Coastal Training Program and SEE SW FLA in both Lee and Collier counties.
- 4/23-27/07 Ecotourism workshop; “Operating & Marketing A Nature-Based Tourism Business” presented in Panama City, Homosassa, and Fort Myers. Co-sponsored by SEE SW FLA, Florida Small Business Development Center, Lee County Parks & Recreation, Florida State Parks, Pandion Systems, and VISIT Florida. Used as a pilot program to be evaluated as a possible state workshop provided by VISIT Florida.
- 6/2/2007 7<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting held at the Support Services Facility at Rutenberg Park. Third revision of the Certification/Recognition Program reviewed along with the new Operating Procedures for that program.
- Summer 2007 Second Ecotour Provider Series jointly presented by Rookery Bay Coastal Training Program and SEE SW FLA in both Lee and Collier counties.
- 10/27-11/4/07 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival expanded to a nine day festival throughout Lee County, co-sponsored by SEE SW FLA.
- 3/26/08 SEE SW FLA receives a \$5,000 check from HSBC Bank as a donation for working with their voluntourism program with Lee County Parks & Recreation
- 6/7/08 8<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting held aboard the Coconut Woman Pontoon Boat along the Caloosahatchee River, courtesy of Banana Boat Tour Company.
- Summer 2008 Third Ecotour Provider Series jointly presented by Rookery Bay Coastal Training Program and SEE SW FLA in both Lee and Collier counties.
- 10/25-11/2/08 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival, a nine day festival throughout Lee County, co-sponsored by SEE SW FLA
- 11/20/08 SEE SW FLA receives a \$1,000 check from Walmart for the monofilament line recycling tubes project – making 1,000 tubes to give away.

- 9/10/08 Board forms a “Certification Committee” to revise the Certification Program. Members include: Joy Hazell, Pete Corradino, J.R. Trepper, and Rebecca Beck.
- 1/27/09 SEE SW FLA sponsors luncheon for The International Ecotourism Society looking to host their 2010 International Conference in Southwest Florida.
- 2/2/09 SEE SW FLA invited to Citrus County as a presenter for their ecotourism meeting. John Kiseda makes the trip to represent SEE SW FLA.
- 4/1/09 SEE SW FLA invited to Jacksonville to an ecotourism meeting on certification. Alex Bryske makes the trip to represent SEE SW FLA.
- 6/1/09 SEE SW FLA receives a \$250 grant from Charlotte Harbor NEP to sponsor the Lee County sessions of the 2009 Ecotour Provider Series
- 6/6/09 9<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting held at Koreshan State Historic Site. Members voted to keep the name: “The Society for Ethical Ecotourism,” to change membership categories and fees to; Supporting \$25, Associate \$50, and Certified \$50 + certification application fees. Members also voted to continue to develop and pilot the new Certification Program and to move forward with plans for SEE Chapters within the state of Florida.
- Summer 2009 Fourth Ecotour Provider Series jointly presented by Rookery Bay Coastal Training Program and SEE SW FLA in both Lee and Collier counties.
- 5/20/10 The Society for Ethical Ecotourism in Florida awarded the first ever “Chrysalis Award” for eco-innovation by The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau and The Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce.
- 6/5/10 10<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting held at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Membership informed of continuing process to update and expand organization state-wide.
- Summer 2010 Fifth Ecotour Provider Series jointly presented by Rookery Bay Coastal Training Program and SEE SW FLA in both Lee and Collier counties.
- 7/1/10 Awarded a \$5,000 “Cultural Heritage and Nature Tourism” grant from VISIT Florida to update organization and move forward with a marketing plan to expand as a state-wide organization.
- 1/2011 Bylaws revised by Board and re-structure as state organization approved.
- 2/2011 Re-filed with the State of Florida as the Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism doing business as “Florida SEE.” New logo approved.
- 3/2011 New website launched: [www.floridasee.org](http://www.floridasee.org)

- 6/4/2011 11<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting held at the Pink Shell Beach Resort & Spa on Fort Myers Beach. Final version of the new Certification Program was reviewed with the membership and officially launched. Revised Board of Directors structure with an Executive Director position was explained. Meeting was followed with a picnic lunch and tour of the Mound House on Fort Myers Beach.
- 9/1/2011 Gaea Guides of Fort Myers becomes the first certified ecotour provider under the new Florida SEE Certification Program.
- 9/2011 Florida SEE invited by T.I.E.S. to be an exhibitor at the “Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference 2011” on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.
- 12/15/2011 The first day-long Board of Directors Retreat was held at the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Collier County.
- 2/7/2012 Everglades Area Tours becomes the second certified ecotour provider under the new Florida SEE Certification Program.
- 6/8-9/2012 12<sup>th</sup> annual members meeting held in Everglades City, hosted by Charles Wright of Everglades Area Tours.