

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau extends destination's meetings incentive

Islands Incentive to generate positive economic impact for local community

LEE COUNTY, FL – The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB) is extending its destination meetings incentive first introduced in 2008 to increase occupancy and utilization of other meeting-related services in the destination during the off-peak meetings season.

The *Islands Incentive* gives meeting planners the opportunity to receive a 5 percent credit – up to a maximum of \$5,000 – of the total actualized room revenue to be used toward any meeting or conference taking place in the Fort Myers/Sanibel area between May 1, 2010 and Dec. 15, 2010. In addition, meetings booked in 2009 or 2010 that occur between May 1, 2011 and Dec. 12, 2012, excluding February through April, will receive a 2.5 percent credit.

“With the current state of the economy affecting the bottom line of many meeting budgets, planners are seeking destinations that are affordable and accessible without cutting back on amenities,” said Suya Davenport, VCB executive director. “So we’re extending our destination incentive through 2012 to send a clear message to the industry that we welcome meetings business.”

Lee County lodging partners who wish to offer the *Islands Incentive* to meeting planners they are courting must have a minimum of 2,500 square feet of meeting facilities. To qualify, planners must book a minimum of 25 rooms per night for three or more consecutive nights at the property. The offer applies to new bookings and meetings that have not already been contracted and does not apply to weddings or social groups. Actualized room revenue will be calculated

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based on group pick-up at the conclusion of the meeting or conference. The offer is subject to availability.

To participate, all Lee County lodging partners must conduct an on-site training session for their sales team with a VCB sales manager, which can be arranged by contacting the VCB. Hotels need to submit a written request for support of the meeting at the time of the signed contract to Pamela Johnson, VCB director of sales. Requests for the *Islands Incentive* without prior knowledge of the VCB are not eligible.

The offer is to attract business to Lee County hotels and resorts, so it cannot be utilized when competing against other Lee County hotels. The meeting planner is reimbursed by the VCB after receipt of an *Islands Incentive* tracking form supplied to the hotel by the VCB and a W9 form completed by the meeting planner. Reimbursement will be made by the VCB at the conclusion of the meeting to the meeting planner, not the lodging partner.

In addition to its *Islands Incentive*, the destination is helping to address habitat loss and climate change by continuing to make donations to The Conservation Fund's Go ZeroSM program to offset the carbon footprint of meetings in the destination. Specifically, the VCB is donating 100 percent of the cost of offsetting the CO₂ emissions that result from any event within the destination, including attendee travel, facility energy use and off-site functions to The Conservation Fund. The VCB already offsets its own events with the Fund and is encouraging meeting properties and meeting planners to do the same.

Details of both meetings offers are available at the destination's meetings Web site at www.FortMyersSanibelMeetings.com, or lodging partners can contact the VCB at (239) 338-3500 or vcb@leegov.com.

More than 47,500 visitors to the destination in 2008 were traveling on business, which contributed to tourism's \$2.9 billion economic impact on the local community. The industry accounts for one in every four jobs for Lee County residents.

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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.*