An Overview of Environmental Ethics
With a focus on Ecotourism
and an introduction to Florida SEE

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Outline:

• What are “environmental ethics?”

• Defining “ethical ecotourism”

• Who is the ecotraveler?

• About Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism (FL SEE)

• FL SEE Certification Program

Photo Credit: IRLNEP
Environmental Ethics:

Distinguishes between a thing’s **instrumental** value to man and its **intrinsic** value.

We can all agree perhaps that to pollute the environment is morally wrong.

But, is it wrong because a sustainable environment is essential to the well being of present and future humans?

Or, is it wrong because the natural environment, with all of its living and non-living components, has value in its own right, independent of its value to humans?
Environmental Ethics:

Traditional western ethics are strictly human-centered: All aspects of nature exist solely to serve human needs.

“Nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man”

Aristotle, in *Politics*

"If a man shoots his dog because the animal is no longer capable of service, he does not fail in his duty to the dog... but his act is inhuman and damages in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind... for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealing with men."

Immanuel Kant, in *Lectures on Ethics*
Environmental Ethics:

Environmental ethics considers the moral relationship between humans and the environment. It assumes that human beings have a responsibility to other living things and the natural world.

“That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.”

Aldo Leopold: A Sand County Almanac, 1949
Environmental Ethics:
Environmental ethics considers the moral relationship between humans and the environment.
It assumes that human beings have a responsibility to other living things and the natural world.

“The ‘control of nature’ is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and the convenience of man”

Rachel Carson, *The Silent Spring* (1962)
Environmental Ethics:

Environmental ethics considers the moral relationship between humans and the environment. It assumes that human beings have a responsibility to other living things and the natural world.

“Every component of the Earth Community has three rights:
— The Right To Be,
— The Right to Habitat,
— The Right to fulfill its role in the ever-renewing processes of the earth community.”

Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (2006)
Environmental Ethics:

Though rooted in 19th century Europe, environmental ethics became widely popular and accepted in the U.S. beginning with the First Earth Day in 1970.
Environmental Ethics:
Ecology flag symbol is an E and an O for Ecology and Organism first created in 1969. Look magazine used the Greek Theta symbol in their April 1970 issue to signify death caused by human threats to the environment.
Environmental Ethics:

Since then, a movement has begun to grant legal standing to species, water, and other elements of the environment.
So What Does This Have To Do With Ecotourism?

The conservation movement, cultural shift toward sustainability, and wider respect for nature has had an effect on the way that people travel and led to the popularization of ecotourism.

But, pinning down exactly what ecotourism is has been surprisingly difficult:

Ecotourism can be all of these things:

- Nature-based Tourism
- Green Tourism
- Sustainable Tourism
- Geo-tourism
- Responsible Tourism
- Pro-poor Tourism
- Ethical Tourism
- Adventure Tourism
- Alternative Tourism
- Voluntourism
Defining Ecotourism:

At its most basic, ecotourism meets three basic criteria:

• Provides for environmental conservation
• Includes *meaningful* community participation
• Is profitable and self-sustaining
So What Does This Have To Do With Ecotourism?

At the intersection of people, profit and planet is sustainability and the space where ecotourism is properly placed.
There is no single, agreed upon, definition of ‘ecotourism’; however, the one that has gained the most acceptance is from The International Ecotourism Society (TIES):

Ecotourism is:
Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.
Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel.

This means that those who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should follow several basic principles:

- Minimizing impact.
- Building environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Providing positive, authentic experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Providing direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Providing financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- Raising sensitivity to a region's political, environmental, and social climate.
Principles of Ecotourism

Done well, ecotourism helps protect natural areas and cultural heritage by providing economic incentives for sustainable development.

Ecotourism returns as much as 95% of revenues to the local economy, compared to only about 20% for “standard all-inclusive package tours.”

And, it enriches personal experiences and environmental awareness, imparting a greater understanding of nature and local cultures.

*The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST); Trends and Statistics Fact Sheet*
Ecotourism provides the moral authority for ecotourism efforts and the basis for long-term economic stability.

Ecotourism: the Promise and Perils of Environmentally-Oriented Travel by Heather Lindsay
Prioritizing conservation over short-term profit is at the heart of ecotourism and sustainable development efforts. But, it can be difficult to prioritize conservation issues ahead of the needs of people that must subsist in a short-term, unstable economy.
A Case in Point: Shark Tourism in Palau

Palau is one of the wealthier Micronesian states, with annual incomes of about $9,000 due primarily to tourism.

It contains a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the Pacific’s biodiversity hotspots.

Palau has contracts with Japanese and Taiwanese long-line commercial fishers, among others.

Local fishermen augment their incomes by shark finning.
A Case Study: Shark Tourism in Palau

Shark fins are one of the words most valuable foods – bringing over $700 per Kg.

Fishermen receive approximately $100 for the dorsal and pectoral fins from an individual shark – a very lucrative payout.

Worldwide, as many as 73 million sharks are killed for their fins each year. In some areas, the shark population has decreased more than 90%, with devastating effects to reefs.
A Case Study: Shark Tourism in Palau

Beginning around 2001, the first conservation organizations in Palau recognized the damage being done to shark populations and biodiversity in the islands and set about raising awareness, lobbying to end shark finning and for the creation of a marine sanctuary in Palau.
A live shark is worth MUCH more than a dead one.

Palau’s tourism study calculated that an individual reef shark had an estimated lifetime value of $1.9 Million to the local tourism industry, compared to just $108 market value as shark fins when it is caught and killed.

(In the Bahamas, shark tourism is now valued at $78 Million annually.)
The Economic Case for Shark Conservation:

- Shark-related tourism attracts approximately 590,000 tourists to 29 countries that support shark tourism, creating about 10,000 jobs.
- Shark tourism benefits shark populations, local communities, countries, and the tourists who view the animals in their natural habitat.
A Case Study: Shark Tourism in Palau

Palau to ban commercial fishing, promote tourism

By EDITH M. LEDERER
February 5, 2014 12:03 AM

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The president of Palau declared Tuesday that his Pacific island nation will ban commercial fishing and become a marine sanctuary.

President Tommy Remengesau Jr. said in a keynote address to a U.N. meeting on "Healthy Oceans and Seas" that once current fishing contracts with Japan, Taiwan and some private companies expire only fishing by island residents and tourists will be allowed in its 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone.

Remengesau said establishing "a 100 percent marine sanctuary" will enable Palau to preserve "a pristine environment" and promote snorkeling, scuba diving and ecotourism as an alternative way to grow its economy.
Ecotourism Pitfalls:

• Not all operations claiming to be “green” actually are.

• In many areas, ecotour operations are owned by foreign corporations, so there may be little benefit to local people, despite environmental and cultural impacts from additional tourism visits.

• When new conservation efforts do get implemented (i.e., fishing limits, habitat protections, etc.), local people may resent them because they view policies as benefitting others but not themselves.

• Natural areas may not be optimally managed, receive too many visitors, and may still be degraded by tourism operations.
Who is the Ecotourist?

Ecotrailers seek out authentic experiences in nature that lead to a deeper understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the environments and cultures they visit.

• Eco-travelers understand the connection between conservation and tourism. They have tremendous impact on the tourism industry by choosing to travel responsibly.

• Ecotourists tend to be better informed and have greater expectations.

• Sustainability is mainstream for most ecotourists.
Some Statistics:

• 62% say it's important they learn about cultures they visit
• 52% seek destinations with a wide variety of activities and events
• 30% would choose a destination because it is considered eco-friendly
• 93% say travel companies should be responsible in protecting the environments they operate in
• 75% say hotel's environmental policies are important to their stay
• 47% of Conde Nast Traveler readers were interested in voluntourism vacations
Florida Ecotourism:

Outdoor recreation in the U.S. contributes $730 Billion in economic benefits to local economies and supports 6.5 million jobs.

- In 2010, Florida’s 12 national parks attracted over 9 million visitors and provided over $552 Billion in economic benefits.
- In 2011, Florida’s 160 state parks attracted over 20 million visitors and provided over $967 Million in economic benefits.
Florida Society for Ethical Ecotourism:

Is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to maintaining a professional code of ecotourism ethics in order to encourage an awareness and stewardship of Florida's natural and cultural heritage by:

1. Endorsing compliance with federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection of natural resources and customer safety.

2. Providing environmental education and awareness which encourage behaviors that contribute to the sustainability of Florida's natural ecosystems and resources.

3. Promoting professionalism and integrity within the ecotourism industry by providing and maintaining a certification/recognition program for ecotour providers.
Florida SEE Educational Programs:

2012-2013 Ecotour Provider Webinar Series

- Tuesday, August 28, 2012 from 11:45 a.m. to Noon
  - Topic: Florida SEE Educational Programs
  - Webinar with a Message: Exploring Florida Through Integration
  - Presented by Nick Wright, Interpretive Consultant/Trainer, National Association for Interpretation.

- Tuesday, September 25, 2012 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
  - Topic: Responsible Tourism: Wild Florida and its introduction to the D.O.G. SMART Program
  - Presented by Jennifer Powell, Biologist, National Marine Fisheries Service.

- Tuesday, October 16, 2012 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
  - Topic: Guide Training Program

- November 2012 - Date and time not released yet
  - Topic: Exploring Florida’s Blueway: Waterways and Waterways
  - Presented by Christine Smith, Coastal Support Organizations & Volunteers Coordinator, Florida State Parks.

- Thursday, January 24, 2013 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
  - Topic: Exploring Florida’s Blueway: Waterways and Waterways
  - Presented by Joy Laws, Senior Education Specialist, University of Florida IFAS.

- Thursday, February 7, 2013 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
  - Topic: Exploring Florida’s Blueway: Waterways and Waterways
  - Presented by the Florida Offshore Resource Manager, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Being an Eco-Traveler in Southwest Florida!

As a premier destination for ecotourism, Southwest Florida provides many opportunities for residents and visitors to experience unique ecosystems and cultural awareness.

Join us for this FREE public program series that will provide you with the inside tips and tricks of being a true eco-traveler here in Southwest Florida.

"Paddling The Blueway"
Thursday, January 24, 2013 from 7:30 p.m.

Sally Conner, Lee County Parks & Recreation Waterways Coordinator for the Great Calusa Blueway (Wadsworth Trail and I-10 Haulover) local parks and preserves, will share her insights into basic paddling gear and expert tips for paddling through Lee County waterways.

"The Nature of Southwest Florida"
Thursday, February 21, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

James S. Roberts, author of "The Living Coastal Florida" will share a photo presentation of his new book which includes the region’s broad and rich eco-diversity within the six counties of Southwest Florida. Autographs copies of his book will be available.

"A Time Gone By"
Thursday, March 21, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

Owen Cooper, Lee County Parks & Recreation Park Information Coordinator and John Knight, Lee County Parks & Recreation Environmental Education Coordinator will share true stories of the construction of Ridgeway Dam and other stories about the Lee Island Cooperative.

All programs take place at the Eco Living Center at Ruttenberg Park, 5400 South Pointe Blvd., between College Parkway and Cypress Lake Drive. While all programs are FREE to the public, space is limited and your RSVP is suggested at 239-432-2163. For more information contact: kleea@leegov.com
Florida SEE Certification Program:

Certification programs are a point of reference to help distinguish genuinely responsible companies, products, or services from those that are merely using "eco-" or "sustainable" as a marketing tool to attract consumers.

Certification sets standards and helps distinguish genuine ecotourism operations from others making empty claims, helping to protect the integrity of the ecotour industry.

Certification helps businesses improve their operations, weigh their offerings against industry peers, and focus attention on changes needed to make companies operate ethically and efficiently to attract more clients.
Florida SEE Certification Program:

For tourists, certification provides environmentally and socially responsible options – consumers know which businesses are in alignment with their sustainable lifestyles and ideals.

Certification increases public awareness of responsible and sustainable business practices.

Certification can help alert tourists to social and environmental issues in the areas they are visiting.

Certified businesses tend to offer better quality of service.
Florida SEE Certification Program:

Certify ethical and responsible ecotour providers who contribute to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Florida.

Certified members are recognized as preferred service providers who provide quality ecotour experiences AND are committed to best practices for ecological sustainability and natural areas management.
The Checklist is divided into the following categories:

I. Natural Area Focus
II. Interpretation/Education
III. Emergency Preparedness
IV. Environmental Sustainability
V. Minimum Impacts for Specific Activities
VI. Contribution to Conservation
VII. Local Communities
VIII. Cultural Component
IX. Customer Satisfaction
X. Marketing

### 1. NATURAL AREA FOCUS

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<th>#</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>At least 51% of each customer’s time, excluding travel, is spent outdoors and focuses on the natural area.</td>
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<td>The product is based around activities that help customers to personally experience nature (e.g., by the provision of opportunities for customers to observe natural features, listen to natural sounds).</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>At least 51% of an Operator’s tours/products are nature focused.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Each tour uses a route, location, schedule and operating practice that keeps customers’ encounters with other tour groups to a minimum (less than four per tour).</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>There is an opportunity for each customer to experience nature in relative solitude through the provision of a feature such as:</td>
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<td>• A designated part of the tour/operation/site that is provided for the purpose of comfortably resting and observing the natural environment</td>
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<td>• A walking trail that takes customers away from development and general visitor activity</td>
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Florida SEE Certification Program:

Ecotour providers meeting all applicable core requirements are visited anonymously by a FL SEE trained assessor to review at least 30% of their tours.
The Florida SEE Certified logo insures that ecotravelers have chosen a Certified Ecotour Provider who supports and implements best practices and principles of ecotourism.

**Certified Providers**

Certified Florida SEE Associate Members are recognized as preferred service providers who are committed to using best practices for ecological sustainability, natural area management, and quality ecotourism experiences.

**Levels of Certification:**

Florida SEE Certified Ecotour Providers can achieve four possible levels of certification based upon their completed certification checklist and assessment:

- **Bronze Designation:** Ecotour Provider meets all applicable CORE criteria on the Certification Checklist
- **Silver Designation:** Ecotour Provider meets all applicable CORE criteria and 50% - 74% of BONUS criteria on the Certification Checklist
Florida SEE Certification Program:

4 levels of certification are available:

**Bronze**: Provider meets all applicable core criteria

**Silver**: Provider meets all applicable core criteria plus 50% - 74% of bonus criteria

**Gold**: Provider meets all applicable core criteria plus 75% - 89% of bonus criteria

**Platinum**: Provider meets all applicable core criteria plus 90% - 100% of bonus criteria
Get involved with SEE:

Florida SEE invites anyone with an interest in ethical ecotourism to join our organization.

Educational workshops
Assessor Training
Annual Meeting

SAVE THE DATE:
Annual meeting will take place June 27-29 in Charlotte County, just north of Fort Myers, on the west coast.

Photo Credit: IRLNEP
Thank You
Any Questions?

Photo Credit: IRLNEP