

VCB breaks tax collection record for seventh consecutive year *Lee County tourism continues to boost local economy*

LEE COUNTY, FL – The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau (VCB), representing The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in Southwest Florida, reported record-breaking tourist tax collections for the seventh year in a row.

The VCB reported an increase in tax collections - \$39.8 million on paid accommodations for fiscal year 2016-17, which ended September 30.

“We strive to increase the economic benefit of tourism every year,” said VCB Executive Director Tamara Pigott. “The combination of savvy industry partners, hosting great events and additional marketing dollars continues to pay off.”

In Lee County, tourism employs one out of every five people. Approximately 4.8 million visitors arrive every year and generate \$3 billion in economic impact.

The VCB also reported positive results for other key tourism performance indicators for the destination. Visitation among 2017 visitors staying in paid accommodations held steady and expenditures were up. Domestic travel showed the greatest increase in visitation, including the Midwest region, which generated the largest share of visitors. One-fifth of paid accommodations visitors arrived from international markets.

“Our bed tax numbers couldn’t increase consistently without the support of the Tourist Development Council, Board of County Commissioners and county administration supporting revenue that sustains this growth,” Pigott said. “I’m also proud of the VCB staff, which works hard every day to bring innovative ideas and successful strategies to the table.”

Tourist tax revenue – also known as the bed tax – is a 5 percent tax that funds three countywide functions: destination marketing; beach and shoreline renourishment, maintenance and enhancement projects; and stadium debt service and major maintenance for Lee County’s spring training facilities. The countywide tax is authorized by Florida Statute 125.0104 to increase tourist-related business activities in Lee County.