

in the news: environment

Green lodging catches on in Keys

Banyan first to be certified; others on their way

By PAMELA J. SUAREZ
Keys Sunday contributor

A Key West resort is set to become the first state certified Green Lodging facility in the Keys, and others are being actively recruited to join it in making up an elite group of environmentally committed — and widely marketed — accommodations.

The Banyan Resort, 323 Whitehead St., has met the requirements to earn its certification, according to Laura Comer, south district green lodging coordinator for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Certified Green Lodging Program.

Paperwork to be completed at the state level is all that stands

between the Banyan and its official designation ceremony, which Comer expects will take place at the resort within a month.

Comer said that once certified, the Banyan can expect to save money on waste disposal, energy and water costs. The resort will also receive a marketing boost at both the state and local levels, according to Comer and Alison Higgins, president of Green Living and Energy Education.

Higgins said GLEE, a Keys-wide nonprofit organization that promotes environmental consciousness and sustainable living, has chosen the dates for its 2008 Green Living Expo. The event will take place May 9-11,

and Higgins said her group will publicize green accommodations and encourage event attendees and speakers to patronize them.

"We want green hotels to recommend. GLEE hopes to not only choose its official Expo lodging, but also recommend a variety of green hotels for visitors to choose from," Higgins said.

Higgins said that GLEE will endorse resorts and hotels even if they are still in the process of being "green certified" at the time of the Expo.

"As long as they've started the process and are actively pursuing certification, we'll promote their achievements to our Expo visitors. But we believe they can totally complete the



Photo by SAM NISSEN

The Banyan on Whitehead Street in Key West is going to be the first state-certified green lodging in the Keys.

process by then. It's doable."

Higgins said GLEE is collaborating with chambers of commerce in Marathon and the

Upper Keys to get more lodging facilities certified. Marathon

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