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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Governor Crist Applauds Opening of Florida's First
Oil Spill Response Branch Office**

~ Branch office will allow federal, state and local government to streamline response efforts ~

PENSACOLA – Governor Charlie Crist, continuing his commitment to recovery efforts in the Gulf of Mexico, today attended the opening of Florida's first branch office committed to oil spill response. The branch office, located in Pensacola to serve both Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, brings together federal, state and local agencies to streamline response efforts.

"The Escambia/Santa Rosa branch office is an important component in better responding to the needs of Florida communities following the BP oil spill," said Governor Crist. "By bringing together all response entities in an impacted area, we will be able to more quickly deploy the necessary resources to cleanup and protect our coasts and communities."

The Escambia/Santa Rosa branch office brings together members of BP, the United States Coast Guard, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Florida Division of Emergency Management, as well as county representatives to more quickly and efficiently coordinate the deployment of assets such as reconnaissance teams, skimmers, cleanup crews, vessels of opportunity and wildlife response teams. The branch office team will be under the joint tactical direction of Coast Guard Deputy Incident Commander Joseph Boudrow and BP Deputy Incident Commander Mary Shafer Malicki, located in the Tallahassee Emergency Operations Center.

"Implementing the branch office model brings a level of command and control that includes representatives of local government," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "Local government best understands the needs of their communities, and we must better integrate them in the response in order to be successful."

The Escambia/Santa Rosa branch office is the first to open and will be followed by three additional branch offices that will serve the Panhandle region. The other three offices will be Okaloosa/Walton, Bay and Gulf/Franklin/Wakulla/Jefferson.

For more information on Florida's response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, visit www.deepwaterhorizonflorida.com, follow www.Twitter.com/FLDEPalert or call the Florida Oil Spill Information Line at 888-337-3569.

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