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Governor Crist Highlights Oil Spill Response Efforts at VISIT FLORIDA Board Meeting

~ Requests \$34.75 million from BP for emergency VISIT FLORIDA marketing campaign ~

TALLAHASSEE – Continuing his focus on strengthening Florida's economy, Governor Crist today attended the VISIT FLORIDA Board of Directors' quarterly meeting to discuss the future of Florida tourism. In addition to recognizing the Board's leadership role in coordinating tourism efforts, the Governor emphasized the need for heightened outreach to potential visitors following the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Following his meeting with the board, Governor Crist requested \$34.75 million from BP that will enable VISIT FLORIDA to create an immediate marketing campaign to counter the negative, widespread and false information potential visitors to Florida are receiving about the oil spill's impact on Florida's beaches and waters.

"Florida will continue to be one of the world's top tourist destinations," said Governor Crist. "We are working closely with our federal partners and BP to protect Florida's beaches and the communities, businesses and entire industries potentially impacted by the Gulf oil spill."

During his remarks, Governor Crist applauded VISIT FLORIDA for creating a variety of programs, through various media and social networking sites, to reach out to visitors and remind them that Florida's beaches are clean and open for normal water and beach activities. He also complimented VISIT FLORIDA for coordinating with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the State Emergency Operations Center on oil spill response efforts.

Today in a letter to BP, Governor Crist requested funds for an emergency campaign, established immediately and continuing through July, which will require an estimated \$24.75 million. The Governor also requested marketing support for impacted counties, beginning in May and continuing through September, which will require an additional \$10 million. The campaign, managed by VISIT FLORIDA, will include broadcast television and radio, print, online and social marketing, targeting in-state, domestic and international markets. The campaign will also include extensive proactive image generation and distribution of photos and videos of visitors enjoying Florida beaches and attractions.

This week, Governor Crist has taken several steps to protect Florida businesses impacted by the oil spill. On Monday, the Governor and Attorney General Bill McCollum called on former Attorneys General Bob Butterworth and Jim Smith to chair a Legal Advisory Council. The council was created to bring together private-sector attorneys and other experts who will use their expertise to assess the impact of the oil spill on Florida. On Tuesday, Governor Crist created the Gulf Oil Spill Economic Recovery Task Force to facilitate efforts by Florida businesses and industries in recovering from the loss of business and revenues.

In addition to these efforts, Governor Crist met with members of the European Union (EU) Consular Corps of Florida yesterday to discuss Florida-EU relations, including trade and investment, as well as social and cultural ties. The Governor was briefed by each representative on the current political and economic conditions throughout the EU, including oil spill recovery efforts, and discussed new opportunities for business collaboration. Europe represents Florida's largest foreign tourism market, with 3.25 million visitors traveling to the state in 2008.

Tourism in Florida provides 21 percent of the state's total taxable sales, and tourism industry employment represents more than one million jobs. In 2008, tourism returned \$3.9 billion to Florida in tax revenue and generated \$65.2 billion in direct economic impact.

About VISIT FLORIDA

VISIT FLORIDA is the official tourism marketing corporation for the State of Florida. VISIT FLORIDA is not a government agency, but rather a not-for-profit corporation that carries out the work of the Florida Commission on Tourism. Created by the Florida legislature in 1996 as a public/private partnership, VISIT FLORIDA's receives state funding from a portion of the two-dollar-per-day rental surcharge and general revenue.

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