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CONTACT: GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE

(850) 488-5394

Governor Crist Calls for Increased Assistance to Local Communities to Prepare for Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

~ Directs flexibility for local governments, requests low-interest loans for businesses ~

TALLAHASSEE – In response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Governor Charlie Crist today directed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to issue an Emergency Final Order to accelerate preparedness and restoration in the 19 coastal counties under the Governor's state-of-emergency Executive Orders. In addition, Governor Crist requested that the United States Small Business Administration (SBA) make low-interest loans available to impacted businesses in the same counties.

"While Florida's beaches have not yet been impacted by this destructive spill, the many images of oil spilling into the Gulf of Mexico have given potential visitors false information and, therefore, negatively impacted Florida businesses," Governor Crist said. "Giving local government flexibility to prepare for the oil's possible landfall and immediate relief to our businesses will help secure Florida's economy and beautiful environment."

The DEP emergency order provides relief from many of DEP's regulatory requirements to minimize environmental hazards. The emergency authorization will cut red tape for local governments and bring faster relief to communities that may experience impacts from the oil spill along coastlines and estuaries by reducing regulatory process and increasing flexibility.

Governor Crist's request to the SBA for an economic injury disaster declaration for the 19 counties will allow fishermen, hoteliers and other tourism-related businesses to immediately receive financial assistance while waiting for funds from BP to become available. On May 4, 2010, Governor Crist confirmed BP's announcement that the State of Florida will receive a \$25-million block grant for the initial state and local preparation and response costs for the Deepwater Horizon Response oil spill.

Earlier today, Governor Crist [requested \\$34.75 million](#) from BP to 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. The funds will support both a statewide emergency campaign and efforts by impacted counties.

Yesterday, Governor Crist announced the creation of a [Gulf Oil Spill Economic Recovery Task Force](#) that will identify assistance needed by Florida businesses and

industries recovering from lost business and revenue. The Task Force will monitor BP's efforts to provide financial relief, as well as coordinate state agencies' efforts and gathering the information needed to quantify the economic loss due to the oil spill. The Task Force will also ensure Florida continues marketing Florida as a tourism destination and provides information to Florida businesses and industries in coastal areas, including the fishing, wholesale trade, tourism, retail and manufacturing industries.

On Monday, Governor Crist and Attorney General Bill McCollum called on former Attorneys General Bob Butterworth and Jim Smith to chair a [Legal Advisory Council](#) to explore options relating to the oil spill. The legal advisory team will bring together private-sector attorneys and other experts to begin assessing the impact the potential disaster could have on Florida and preparing for any future litigation, enforcement, or regulatory action that may be needed.