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Governor Crist Joins Ocean Experts, Coast Guard in Pensacola to Assess Gulf Recovery Cleanup Progress

~Meets with Philippe Cousteau, joins Coast Guard Commander for aerial and shoreline inspection ~

PENSACOLA – Governor Charlie Crist, continuing his commitment to recovery efforts in the Gulf of Mexico, today joined oceanography experts in Pensacola for an aerial and shoreline tour of the oil spill. The Governor's visit included a meeting with Philippe Cousteau, a leading environmental advocate, and Dennis Takahashai-Kelso, who was the Alaska Commissioner of Environmental Conservation at the time of the Exxon Valdez spill.

"We must use every opportunity and every resource to confront the oil spill and its potentially devastating impact on our shores and families," said Governor Crist. "I am grateful for all of the people who have contributed to response efforts, but we must remain dedicated to improving on our successes and exhausting every tool to ensure the best possible outcome for Florida and the Gulf of Mexico."

During the meeting with Philippe Cousteau and Dennis Takahashai-Kelso, Governor Crist heard ideas on how to protect Florida's waters and coastline. Following the meeting, they joined Governor Crist as he led a shoreline beach inspection with Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Mike Sole, Major General Douglas Burnett and Major General Emmett R. Titshaw of the Florida National Guard, and Admiral Robert Papp and Commander Joe Boudrow of the United States Coast Guard.

"In the past five weeks, I've seen the Deepwater Horizon disaster unfold beneath the surface and across the shorelines and the communities of the gulf states," said Cousteau. "It's critically important that we focus resources and attention both on the areas that have already seen the impact of the spill and those in its path. Every area we protect now becomes a critical foothold in the restoration and recovery of these vital ecosystems and people who depend on them."

"As the BP Deepwater Horizon oil slick continues to make landfall in Florida – nearly a generation after the Exxon Valdez – we need to focus on the most important

steps to reduce harm to coastal ecosystems and the people who depend on them,” added Dr. Takahashai-Kelso. “First, it is essential to remove as much oil from the water as possible. That needs to be a continuing, relentless effort. Second, we need to listen closely to local people; their expertise is crucial to understanding where vulnerability is greatest and how best to proceed. Finally, we need to continue to build the baseline of scientific information in areas not yet touched by the oil. This information is necessary in order to respond more effectively if oil comes ashore in these areas and to understand the extent of damage.”

“We would also like to thank Governor Crist for taking the time to meet with us today,” Dr. Takahashai-Kelso continued. “It is important in this time of crisis to share all information and expertise that can be brought to bear in dealing with this emergency. Ocean Conservancy has been involved in Gulf of Mexico conservation issues for decades, and this situation has only made us more committed to the Gulf and its people.”

About Philippe Cousteau

Philippe Cousteau is a leading environmental advocate and entrepreneur and is CEO of the non-profit environmental education organization EarthEcho International. In addition, Cousteau is the Chief Ocean Correspondent for Planet Green, a Discovery Network, where he hosts television series, as well as hosting Blue August 2010, an entire month of programming on Planet Green that celebrates the oceans. He is Chief Spokesperson for Environmental Education for Discovery Education, the #1 provider of K-12 broadband delivered educational content to United States schools. Cousteau serves on the Board of Directors of The Ocean Conservancy, Marine Conservation Biology Institute and the National Environmental Education Foundation.

About Dennis Takahashai-Kelso

Dennis Takahashai-Kelso leads the science and policy direction for Ocean Conservancy. He was Alaska Commissioner of Environmental Conservation at the time of the Exxon Valdez spill. When the tanker Exxon Valdez went aground in 1989, spilling nearly 11 million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound, Dr. Takahashi-Kelso was on board within hours to begin enforcing clean-up standards. For the next two years, he worked in the spill area, in the state legislature, and in Congress to strengthen Alaska’s environmental laws and to advocate passage of the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990. He also served as Chair of the Alaska Emergency Response Commission and a member of the Alaska Coastal Policy Council, the Alaska Land Use Council, and the Alaska Water Resources Board.

For more information on Florida’s response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon, follow www.Twitter.com/FLDEPAlert or call the Florida Oil Spill Information Line at 888-337-3569.