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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE SEPTEMBER 29, 2010

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Governor Crist Extends Small Business Bridge Loan Program for Florida Panhandle Counties

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist this week extended Florida's Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program, which provides expedited, short-term financial assistance to eligible small businesses in Northwest Florida that have been economically impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

"It is clear that small businesses in Northwest Florida continue to suffer from this disaster," said Governor Crist. "By extending this important program, these business owners will have access to short-term funds which will help as they await long-term assistance from the Gulf Coast Claims Facility, federal disaster programs or insurance claims."

To be eligible for the program, a small business owner (less than 100 employees) must have been operational for one full year prior to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on April 20, 2010, and demonstrate physical damage or economic injury as a result of the incident. Small business owners in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf and Franklin counties may apply for short-term loans of up to \$25,000 until October 27, 2010. Affected small businesses in Wakulla, Jefferson, Taylor, Dixie, Levy, Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, Collier, Monroe, Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties have until September 30, 2010, to apply for assistance through this program.

Florida's Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program was first activated in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew in order to provide short-term emergency funding to businesses affected by the storm. The program has since assisted businesses following the Winter Storm of 1993, the Northwest Florida Floods of 1994, and Hurricanes Opal, Georges, Charley, Frances, Ivan, Jeanne, Dennis and Wilma.

To receive an application or more information about the program, please visit www.floridaoilhelp.com or contact the Florida First Capital Finance Corporation at (850) 681-3601.

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