



BAHAMAS WEATHER CONFERENCE BEGINS NEW ERA WITH MAX MAYFIELD

NASSAU, The Bahamas, March 31, 2008 – The 12th annual Bahamas Weather Conference is scheduled for April 9-13, 2008 at the Westin Grand Bahama Island. This signature event, created by the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, has earned a loyal following, an enviable reputation and many awards for its effectiveness as a crisis communications program. The pre-hurricane season event is an important forum for Bahamian and U.S. meteorologists and has raised awareness of the particular concerns and geographical features of The Islands Of The Bahamas.

Max Mayfield, former director of the National Hurricane Center and conference moderator, has planned an agenda for the 2008 Bahamas Weather Conference that will present a range of familiar topics on hurricanes. Bill Read, recently appointed director of the National Hurricane Center, will present a review of the 2007 Atlantic season and a welcome introduction to the audience of broadcast meteorologists. Dr. Phillip Klotzbach from Colorado State University will present the forecast for the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season and offer some analysis on why 2007 was a far quieter season for the U.S. than expected. The pioneer of the seasonal forecast, Dr. William Gray, will also present and add historical perspective on the forecast process. An expanded line-up of experts from throughout NOAA will explore hurricanes in the context of our changing climate including presentations from Dr. Tom Karl, Dr. Richard Knabb and Tom Knutson. Dr. Nicholas Coch of Queens College, accompanied by additional presentations from Dr. Wilson Shaffer of NOAA, and David Vallee and Mike Wyllie of the National Weather Service, will consider what the impact of a hurricane strike on New York and the region might be.

The 2008 Bahamas Weather Conference will attract 100 television meteorologists from the U.S., Canada, and Europe. Many participants take advantage of the onsite satellite television facility provided to share insights from the conference with viewers at home. Millions in markets from Houston to Baton Rouge LA, Mobile AL, Tampa FL, Miami, Atlanta, Washington DC, New York and Boston have benefited from information relayed by their favorite local weather person from the sunny Bahamas. The Weather Channel and CBC Newsworld in Canada will broadcast highlights of the conference across North America.

Launched in 2006, the Bahamas Weather Conference VODcast Center, available at www.bahamaswxconference.com, brings key messages from the conference to a whole new audience through video podcasts available on demand or via iTunes subscription. Throughout the conference expert speakers are interviewed and the short, informational interviews are made available for Internet usage or broadcast. This development has allowed The Bahamas to expand the reach of the conference to a far greater number than could ever attend.

The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism was the first to address the topic of hurricanes directly, creating the Bahamas Weather Conference in 1997. With the GDP highly dependent upon tourism, accurate reporting on tropical storms is a critical factor in maintaining a healthy economy. The principal aim of the Conference has always been to educate attendees about the geography of the 700 island destination which covers 100,000 square miles of the Western Atlantic Ocean.

“We are pleased that meteorologists have taken to heart our message of The Bahamas being an expansive destination that requires accurate reporting with great attention to geography,” said Vernice Walkine, director general of the Ministry of Tourism. “While The Bahamas is sometimes threatened, hurricanes rarely affect the entire country.” This increased familiarity with the region and the resulting detail and accuracy in reporting on hurricanes in the region has benefited Bahamian tourism and Bahamian residents who often get their news and weather reports from U.S. television stations.

“The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism is extremely proud of this event,” said Hon. Neko Grant, Minister of Tourism. “The Bahamas Weather Conference was a bold initiative and has paid great dividends in specific reporting of island names and geography of The Islands Of The Bahamas by conference alumni. This increased accuracy in reporting allows prospective visitors to make sensible decisions about traveling to our shores during hurricane season.”

The value of the Bahamas Weather Conference has also been recognized by the National Weather Association and the American Meteorological Society. Both professional organizations extend continuing education credit to their members who attend the conference.

Life in The Islands Of The Bahamas is as culturally diverse as it is vibrantly beautiful, from the carefree Out Islands to exciting Nassau/Paradise Island and Grand Bahama Island. With world-class diving and fishing, gorgeous turquoise water and miles of picture perfect beaches, the 700 islands of The Bahamas offer visitors the opportunity to do everything or nothing at all. For more information on travel packages, activities and accommodations throughout The Islands Of The Bahamas, call 1-800-Bahamas or visit www.bahamas.com. To experience The Bahamas at home, visit www.eshopbahamas.com.

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