



## **MAX MAYFIELD SETS STAGE FOR BAHAMAS WEATHER CONFERENCE WITH A ROSTER OF TOP EXPERTS**

**NASSAU, The Bahamas, April 1, 2009** – The 13<sup>th</sup> annual Bahamas Weather Conference is scheduled for April 15-19, 2009 at the Sheraton Nassau Beach Resort in Nassau. 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 2009 Bahamas Weather Conference that will present a range of familiar topics on hurricanes. Bill Read, director of the National Hurricane Center, will present a review of the 2008 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 2009 Atlantic hurricane season and offer some analysis on why 2008 was a highly active season. In light of the continuing debate over category-focused hurricane warnings, Bill Read will also share insight on the future of the Saffir/Simpson Hurricane Scale. An expanded line-up of experts from throughout NOAA will explore hurricanes in the context of our changing climate including presentations from Dr. Chris Landsea and Dr. Jim Kossin. Dr. Bob Hartwig of the Insurance Information Institute will explain whether or not the economic downturn has affected the insurance industry's ability to pay claims.

The 2009 Bahamas Weather Conference will attract 90 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 Lafayette, LA, Baltimore, Memphis, TN, Tampa FL, Miami,

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Providence, RI and New York have benefited from information relayed by their favorite local weather person from the sunny Bahamas. The Weather Channel and The Weather Network in Canada will broadcast highlights of the conference across North America.

Launched in 2006, the Bahamas Weather Conference Web Channel, available at [www.bahamaswxconference.com](http://www.bahamaswxconference.com), brings key messages from the conference to a whole new audience through video podcasts available on demand or via YouTube.com. 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.

“It has been incredible to watch this annual conference grow from a room of 20 meteorologists to nearly 100 meteorologists actively absorbing our message of The Bahamas being an expansive destination that requires accurate reporting on hurricanes,” said Vernice Walkine, director general of the Ministry of Tourism. “We know that hurricanes rarely affect our entire country and it is imperative that we continue sharing that message with U.S. television stations, so that Bahamian tourism and Bahamian residents can reap the benefits.”

“Prospective visitors are making sensible decisions about traveling to our shores during hurricane season and we can credit the Bahamas Weather Conference for this,” said Hon. Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, Minister of Tourism. “The Bahamas Weather Conference is a bold initiative that has paid dividends with the U.S. media having a better understanding of our geography and being specific with reporting island names and the real potential threat of hurricanes.”

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.

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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](http://www.bahamas.com). To experience The Bahamas at home, visit [www.eshopbahamas.com](http://www.eshopbahamas.com).

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