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## **Amelia Island TDC Votes to Spend Additional Advertising Dollars in Jacksonville Area**

AMELIA ISLAND, Fla. (March 20, 2008) – Making a decisive move intended to bolster sales tax collections and protect tourism related jobs, the Amelia Island Tourist Development Council (TDC) on Wednesday voted to allocate an additional \$100,000 in advertising dollars from its marketing reserve funds, beginning in April.

“One in five people in Nassau County earn their living in the tourism industry, and tourism related business generates more than 36 percent of the sales tax collected here,” said Jack Healan, Vice Chairman of the TDC and President and CEO of Amelia Island Plantation. “With advanced reservations for lodging trailing last year’s numbers and the overall economy weakening, we felt it important to market Amelia Island as a close-to-home destination.”

Healan said the majority of the funds would be spent in the Jacksonville market, assisting local restaurants and retailers dependant on the day-trip market, in addition to lodging providers.

“I think it’s a great move,” said Steve Colwell, owner of Fernandina Fantastic Fudge and President of the Historic Fernandina Business Association. “We are really excited to remind Jacksonville of what a great shopping destination we are.”

The TDC has budgeted more than \$1 million for advertising and marketing in the current fiscal year, which includes spending on public relations, internet marketing, and advertising. Funding for the TDC comes from a two percent hotel tax on visitor accommodations.

Gil Langley, Managing Director of the TDC, said adding Jacksonville to the advertising plan could generate results in the short-term. “Our marketing plan for 2008 has always been to focus on markets within a ‘tank-full’ drive,” Langley said. “We have planned to target Atlanta and Orlando with about \$450,000 in advertising. The additional funding will allow us to target residents in Jacksonville looking for a nearby getaway.”

Langley noted that most hotels and bed and breakfast inns include Jacksonville in their top three leisure markets, along with Atlanta and Orlando.

“First quarter has been a bit softer in 2008 than in past years,” said Peter Arons, General Manager of the Hampton Inn & Suites. “We’re excited to see the TDC willing to make the extra effort to bring visitors to the island. The Jacksonville market has really been one of our best in past years, and the additional advertising will help us in the coming months.”

The TDC action to spend an additional \$100,000 in advertising dollars from its marketing reserve funds must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 26 at the County Commissioner Office.

The Tourism Development Council is the nine member board appointed by the Nassau County Commission to oversee the marketing of Amelia Island as a tourism destination. The program is managed under a contract with the Amelia Island/Fernandina Beach/Yulee Chamber of Commerce. For visitor information and online planning, visit [www.ameliainland.org](http://www.ameliainland.org).

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