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Governor Riley Unveils New Tourism Theme and 2008 as "Year of Alabama Sports" ORANGE BEACH – The Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel has unveiled the phrase "Sweet Home Alabama" as the brand line to market the state as a tourism destination in 2008.

Governor Bob Riley announced the campaign Monday during the annual state tourism conference in Orange Beach. "The phrase is cheerful, happy and warm. It brings a smile to your face," Governor Riley said.

The new positioning line will be featured in the state's \$4.5 million marketing program, using television and radio, print ads, and public relations, tourism director Lee Sentell said. The campaign symbol is a colorful red, blue, yellow and white logo with the words "sweet" and "home" flanking the stylized word Alabama. The logo will also appear on the cover of the 2008 state vacation guide, officials said, with paper stickers of the logo distributed at the state's eight welcome centers during the summer.

In other action, the Governor announced that the tourism agency will continue its award-winning themes program which has spotlighted food, outdoors and the arts. He said 2008 will be the Year of Alabama Sports and 2009 the Year of Alabama History. In addition to 2010 being the Year of Small Towns and Downtowns, it will include an Alabama Reunion where communities stage events to welcome back former residents, Governor Riley said.

Sentell said the agency plans to sell Sweet Home Alabama t-shirts and caps in retail outlets. In addition to a \$25,000 licensing fee, it will pay Universal Music a six percent royalty on logo merchandise, he said. He said the American and European media have used the title of the 1974 song as the unofficial nickname of the state since the release of the Reese Witherspoon movie of the same name in 2002.

A recent search on Google showed some 4,000,000 files with the words sweet home Alabama.

Montgomery, Ala – Approximately 850,000 people attended Mardi Gras last year, ranking it number one in attendance among all the tourism events in Alabama.

Mobile's Mardi Gras dates back to 1703 when the French colony of Mobile observed North America's first Mardi Gras. The celebration lasts for nearly two weeks and culminates on Fat Tuesday, the day before Lent. For weeks, the streets of downtown Mobile are filled with the sights and sounds of live marching bands, brilliant-colored floats and teeming crowds of parade goers.

Other events that rank in the top ten for attendance include the Annual National Shrimp Festival in Gulf Shores, Fairhope Arts and Crafts Festival, Big Spring Jam Music Festival in Huntsville, W.C. Handy Music Festival in Florence, the World's Largest Yard Sale in Fort Payne, City Stages in Birmingham, the Alabama Jubilee Hot Air Balloon Classic in Decatur, the Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival in Foley, and Jubilee City Fest in Montgomery. Attendance figures used to compile the list were provided to the Alabama Bureau of Tourism & Travel by local tourism organizations.

Additional attendance categories include admission charging attractions, non-admission charging attractions, sport venues, and parks and natural destinations. For more information visit www.800alabama.com.

Alabama spas featured in national guidebook – Three Alabama spas have received the honor of being featured in "BestSpas USA: The Guidebook to Luxury Resort, Hotel, and Destinations Spas." Alabama ranked ahead of Hawaii, New York, New Mexico, and 43 other states in the number of spas highlighted as the nation's best. All three spas are part of the Resort Collection on Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail and are located at the Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa in Florence, Renaissance Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa in Hoover, and the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort Golf Club & Spa in Point Clear. <http://bestspasusa.com/Spas/Alabama/alabama.html>

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