

Gaming Summit Returning to Gulf Coast

Biloxi, Mississippi (AP) – The Southern Gaming Summit will return to Biloxi next May as the coast casino industry continues its recovery, the event's organizers say.

The Mississippi Casino Operators Association and Ascend Media Gaming said that one year after Hurricane Katrina, eight of the region's 12 casinos have reopened, and gaming revenues are approaching 75 percent of pre-storm levels.

The recovery of the gaming industry on the Mississippi Gulf Coast has helped the summit sell 80 percent of available floor space, said Beverly Martin, executive director of the Casino Operators Association.

Beau Rivage Resort and Casino, owned by MGM Mirage, reopened for business Tuesday on the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's landfall. Harrah's Entertainment Inc. reopened the Grand Biloxi Casino Hotel and Spa in mid-August.

The Southern Gaming Summit will be held May 9-10 at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center. The hurricane-damaged facility was unavailable for this year's meeting, which was held in north Mississippi's Tunica County.

„Gaming on the Gulf Coast has bounced back quicker than anticipated,“ Martin said. „We're already seeing some of the casino revenue that moved out of state after the storm come back to the gulf, and we expect that trend to grow.“

She said the 2007 summit „will showcase the renewal of gaming here and give our exhibitors and sponsors the opportunity to interact with what figures to be the fastest growing gaming market in the country.“

The Southern Gaming Summit, entering its 14th year, is billed as the largest regional gaming trade show and conference in the nation.