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SITES AND STARS MARK THE MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL

Jackson, Mississippi (April 29, 2009) – Governor Haley Barbour announces the continued growth of the Mississippi Blues Trail May 7-9 with three new markers honoring the Mississippi and Tennessee sites and blues legends from the Birthplace of America’s Music.

“With markers now stretching across the state and into Tennessee, the Mississippi Blues Trail is truly a tourism destination honoring our top musicians,” Governor Barbour said. “I thank Bonnie Raitt, Memphis officials and Mississippi communities for their help remembering these talented artists.”

Nine-time Grammy winner Bonnie Raitt will attend the May 7 unveiling of the Mississippi Blues Trail marker honoring the late Fred McDowell in Como. The ceremony begins at 2 p.m. and features performances by 11th- and 12th- graders from the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, singing McDowell’s songs. Representatives from Como-area churches — Hunter’s Chapel, where McDowell sang, and Hammond Hill Baptist, where he’s buried — will say the invocation and benediction. The blues marker will grace the small town’s Main Street median.

On May 8, the Mississippi Blues Trail goes national with its first out-of-state marker in Memphis. The unveiling by the Mississippi Blues Commission and the Memphis Convention & Visitors Bureau will follow the annual Blues Awards ceremony in Memphis. The event will be at 11:30 a.m. near Beale Street in front of the Fed Ex Forum.

And on May 9, the City of Belzoni will honor the third female on the Mississippi Blues Trail. A marker for ECKO Records artist and Belzoni native Denise LaSalle will be presented at 2 p.m. in front of the courthouse on Castleman Street.

Blues Trail markers are placed at key sites across Mississippi to honor historic blues locations and give visitors insight into this unique heritage. As the Mississippi Blues Commission and the Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Heritage Trails Program continues to unveil these The Mississippi Blues Trail markers are funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by support from the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Mississippi Department of Transportation, Delta State University and the Mississippi Development Authority.

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The Mississippi Blues Trail when completed will offer more than 100 sites; this path offers an unforgettable journey into Blues history, from the street corners and juke joints where musicians played, to the places they called home, to their final resting spots. Travelers are invited to walk where they walked, dance where they danced and play in the land where it all began. For travel information about Mississippi explore www.visitmississippi.org.

To contact the Mississippi Blues Trail office in Jackson, contact Alex Thomas (601-359-3297, athomas@mississippi.org) or Leigh Portwood (601-359-3061, lportwood@mississippi.org).

For further information on the Mississippi Blues Trail, go to www.msbluestrail.org.

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