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STATE OF MONTANA

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Governor Bullock Announces Montana to Enter Phase Two of Reopening Plan on June 1st

MONTANA – Governor Steve Bullock today announced the state will move to Phase Two of the Reopening the Big Sky plan and will lift the 14-day out-of-state travel quarantine beginning June 1 as Montana continues to have the lowest number of positive COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations per capita.

“Montana has been an example for the rest of the nation in our response to this global pandemic. I have no doubt that we can continue to be that example, but only if Montanans, businesses, and visitors alike continue to take seriously the responsibility we all have in protecting others,” Governor Bullock said. **“As we continue with the next phase in our reopening, our goal together as Montanans for the foreseeable future is to mitigate the spread of the virus.”**

“The individual actions of Montanans have collectively made a difference. Staying 6-feet away, washing hands, wearing masks while in public, and staying home when sick, have all contributed to us being able to move forward with the plan to reopen Montana. We are at an important milestone and if each of us continues to do our part to prevent the novel coronavirus from spreading, we’ll stay on the path to fully reopen Montana,” John Felton, Yellowstone County Health Officer and President/CEO of RiverStone Health, said.

“Since this COVID-19 emergency began Governor Bullock has consistently listened to city and county governments around the state as he has formulated a strategy to respond. And that strategy has worked. Thanks to Governor Bullock's leadership, Montana has escaped the tragedies other states have experienced. We are fortunate to have him at the helm as we reopen Montana. We are thankful for his commitment to ensure we will keep Montana safe during the summer months as we rebuild our economy,” Cynthia Andrus, Deputy Mayor, City of Bozeman, said.

“We are grateful for Governor Bullock’s diligence as he works to reopen Montana safely and continues to and consider the unique concerns and challenges in tribal communities including a large population of elderly Montanans and families in multi-generational households. The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council appreciate Governor Bullock has respected tribal sovereignty and decisions to put in place more restrictive measures to keep tribal communities safe and has supported our efforts to contain the virus through increased testing,” said the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council.

In consultation with public health and emergency response officials, Governor Bullock outlined the following indicators which allow Montana to move into Phase Two beginning on June 1:

- A downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period.
- The current ability to contact and trace, along with plans to add additional contact tracers to the existing workforce.
- Ensuring that health care workers have the supplies they need to treat COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients.
- Ramping up testing capacity to eventually meet a target of 60,000 tests a month and prioritizing testing for vulnerable Montanans and tribal communities. A total of 5,600 tests were conducted last week. Increased testing continues with sentinel testing efforts in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, testing events in tribal areas, and drive through testing being conducted at a few sites.

Under Phase Two, effective June 1, avoid gatherings in groups of more than 50 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing. Groups larger than 50 people should be cancelled unless physical distancing can be maintained. It is recommended to continue to social distance in gatherings of any size.

Under Phase Two, effective June 1, restaurants, bars, breweries, distilleries and casinos remains in the same operations status as Phase One, but with an increase to 75% capacity. Gyms, indoor group fitness classes, pool, and hot tubs can operate at 75% capacity and only if they can adhere to strict physical distancing and they exercise frequent sanitation protocols. Concert halls, bowling alleys, and other places of assembly may operate with reduced capacity and if they adhere to strict physical distancing guidelines.

All businesses are required to follow the social distancing and sanitation guidelines established in Phase One, and Montanans are strongly encouraged to continue sanitation practices, including hand washing and wearing masks in public places like grocery stores.

“Social distancing, wearing a cloth mask, washing your hands, and sanitizing are all part of our new normal. If not for you, do it for others, especially for the most vulnerable among us,” Governor Bullock said. **“Not following these guidelines could put us in a position where we have to go backward, instead of being able to continue to move forward.”**

Vulnerable Montanans should still continue to stay home when possible during Phase Two. Visitation at nursing home and assisted living facilities remains suspended except for certain compassionate care situations.

Effective June 1, the 14-day travel quarantine for out-of-state travelers and residents arriving from another state or country to Montana for non-work-related purposes will be lifted. The Montana National Guard will continue to conduct screenings in airports and train depots and refer anyone with COVID-19-related symptoms to local public health officials.

To support Montana's destination communities, the state will assist with establishing the following protocols:

- Surveillance testing of employees.
- Enhanced contact tracing resources deployed to these areas as requested by local authorities.
- Ability to surge personal protective equipment to impacted health care systems.
- Guidelines for operation for business that see high-tourist activity.

Montana's gradual and phased plan to reopen began on April 26 with Phase One which allowed schools, places of worship, main street and retail businesses, and restaurants, breweries, and bars to reopen under social distancing guidelines. Governor Bullock also provided additional guidance to allow gyms, movie theaters, and museums to reopen under the first phase on May 15.

Governor Bullock and his Coronavirus Task Force will continue to monitor cases closely and carefully to analyze Montana's work to contain the virus.

The Directive and its Appendix with reopening guidelines are attached and are posted online at covid19.mt.gov.