



**Great Rivers and Routes  
Tourism Bureau**

200 Piasa Street  
Alton, IL

*Serving Madison, Jersey, Calhoun,  
Macoupin, Montgomery, & Greene County*

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**For Immediate Release**

## **Media Statement**

### *Illinois Reopening Plans Marks Beginning of Economic Comeback for Southwest Illinois*

The following is a statement from Cory Jobe, President & CEO of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau

**\*\*Media Interviews Available by Request\*\***

“Illinois will be taking a giant step forward in relaxing COVID mitigations and bringing much-needed tourism back to the state when it enters the Bridge Phase on Friday, May 14. This is something the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau, and all of our locally owned and operated restaurants, community festivals and outdoor event planners have been anticipating for months.

What this means for southwest Illinois is expanded occupancy limits for indoor dining and activities. It also means outdoor activities and festivals can take place, with capacity limits, for the first time in 15 months.

This is truly an economic boon for our region. With the increase in travel and restrictions lifting the opportunity for employment in the tourism and hospitality space is greater than ever before. Those individuals currently unemployed or not working have a greater opportunity to find a job in southwest Illinois.

If all goes well in the next few weeks, Illinois could be in Phase 5, or full reopening of the state, by Friday, June 11.

Tourism provides much needed economic development for our region. Pre-COVID, more than \$40 million in local tax revenues was generated by travelers to our region in just one year. We need to get back to those levels locally and with the relaxation of COVID mitigations, we are able to take the first steps towards economic recovery. We should see an influx of travelers statewide this summer and that

will continue throughout the fall and winter. By early 2023, we are hopeful tourism will expand beyond its pre-pandemic levels and provide much needed economic relief to the state and local regions.

The Great Rivers & Routes region has so much to offer including delicious dining, outdoor recreation, and cultural and historic destinations. We are eager to begin welcoming visitors back to the region and encouraging them to explore the only place in America where the Mother Road of Route 66 meets the Great River Road.”

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*(The Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau is a certified Destination Marketing Organization serving Madison, Jersey, Calhoun, Macoupin, Montgomery and Greene counties. The bureau is dedicated to educating visitors about the region by providing information regarding the area’s history, unique landmarks, recreational opportunities, leisure attractions, special events and scenic marvels.)*