



Montana Department of Agriculture Highlights Bitterroot Value-Added Ag Businesses

Director Clark and representatives from the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) headed to the Bitterroot Valley to continue their focus on highlighting the diversity in Montana’s agricultural ecosystem where they visited Montana Ciderworks in Darby and Hidden Legend Winery in Victor as part of the MDA’s value-added ag tour.

Montana Ciderworks was started in 2002 by founder and owner Lee McAlpine. Since, the cidery has become known around the state and beyond for their English-style ciders and as “Montana’s oldest cidery”. After working as a firefighter in Montana’s Bitterroot Valley, Lee saw the opportunity to create a value-added product specifically with the McIntosh apple variety. While Montana Ciderworks products can be found in many local shops and on tap across Montana, the cidery has created a name for itself through winning countless awards and intentional accolades in the cider industry.



While in the Bitterroot Valley, Director Clark visited Hidden Legend Winery in Victor, Montana. Hidden Legend Winery is owned by Ken Schultz who has been perfecting his craft for handmade mead since 1979. *“Mead is the father of all other alcoholic beverages,”* said Ken. *“It predates beer and wine.”*

At its core, mead is simply made by fermenting honey with water. The craft comes in when grains, spices, fruits, and sometimes hops are added to the recipe to create a unique taste specific to the maker. At Hidden Legend Winery, they strive to use natural and local ingredients such as honey, tart chokecherries, huckleberries, apples, and more to produce a flavor profile like none other. “We get our honey from up in Arlee at Arlee Apiaries and we’ll use around 60,000 lbs. of their honey a year to produce our mead.” Along with working with distributors to place Hidden Legend Mead around craft beer shops and wineries throughout Montana, Ken and his team also run a direct-to-consumer online store that gives them presence in 42 different states.



Director Clark and representatives from the MDA had the opportunity to see Hidden Legend Winery’s process from start to finish as well as talk about current challenges, plans for the future, and new flavor offerings that are gaining popularity.

“It takes passion to run a small business. Let alone a small business in rural Montana,” said Montana Department of Agriculture Director Christy Clark. *“From these small value-added ag businesses in the Bitterroot to the large commodity operations in the golden triangle or out east, its amazing to see how each operation, big or small, serves as a vital puzzle piece to the diverse agricultural ecosystem that drives Montana’s number one industry.”*





Montana Wheat & Barley Committee (MWBC) Welcomes New Communications & Marketing Director

The Montana Wheat & Barley Committee (MWBC) welcomes Lori Wickett, of Great Falls, as the new Communications and Marketing Director.

In addition to a research and education focus, MWBC has built a strong marketing/market development arm of the committee that directly represents Montana wheat and barley in foreign markets through organizations such as U.S Wheat Associates, U.S. Grains and more. International trade delegations and buyers come to Montana each year seeking the high-quality wheat and barley that Montana produces. The Communications and Marketing Director plays an integral role in the marketing system that provides Montana producers a presence in markets domestically and overseas.

MWBC Executive Vice President, Kent Kupfner, applauds the selection of Lori Wickett to serve as the Communications and Marketing Director of the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee. *"We welcome Lori and look forward to leveraging her skills and expertise to support and ensure the success of the committee and our producers,"* said Kupfner. *"Lori brings an unmatched and specialized experience to the MWBC that will help us better serve Montana's wheat and barley producers and industry stakeholders."*

Created in 1967, the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee is the producer-funded and directed checkoff organization for wheat and barley growers in the state. The Committee is a Governor appointed board of directors made up of 7 Montana wheat and barley producers.

The Montana Wheat & Barley Committee promotes local research and develops trade markets around the world. For more information on MWBC, please visit montanawbc.com.



Montana Wheat & Barley Update: Three Trade Teams in Thirty Days

August and September have seen busy visitor days with three trade teams arriving to Montana from Japan and Mexico. Customers who explored business opportunities through the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee (MWBC) included a newly created buyer group, first-time purchasers, and a group with a long tenure of Montana relationships.

In August, a Mexican craft malt group spent a lengthy day between Butte and Bozeman visiting Montana Craft Malt, Gallatin Valley Malt, the Montana State University (MSU) Malt Quality Lab and region barley growers. Sam Anderson, MWBC market development director, relayed his enthusiasm about this team.

“These prospective buyers are putting together the largest Mexican purchasing group for craft malt barley,” he said. “They visited five states and explored supplier options while learning the research side of barley at MSU.” Anderson said that this potential relationship for Montana barley growers is strong. “They are evaluating quotes now; we should hear about their selections soon which is exciting.”



The Zenfunky team, Japan, made their first exploratory visit to an overseas supplier, visiting farms near Broadview. Zenfunky has always purchased their wheat domestically and chose Montana for their first look at importing grain. *“This is a consortium of small millers,”* said Kent Kupfner, MWBC executive vice president. *“They are looking to improve their supply quality to advance their product taste and consistency. Montana’s consistent and reliable supply of high-quality milling wheat attracted their attention.”*

While visiting, the Zenfunky group got the chance to ride along during harvest and experience what many never do in a lifetime: cutting U.S. wheat in a combine and riding the tractor pulling a grain cart. *“Like many teams before them, that experience was impactful,”* Kupfner added.

Different from these previous tours, the Japan flour millers team arrived in Montana to continue their longstanding relationships with Big Sky Country growers. Japanese managers from four large milling companies flew into Great Falls September 14. They toured the Montana State Grain Lab, CHS Big Sky and a farm near Carter. Lt. Governor Kristen Juras, Montana Dept. of Agriculture Director Christy Clark and fellow Dept. of Ag team members joined the group for a closeout dinner. *“The purpose of this visit was to celebrate our strong relationship with Japan,”* Anderson said. *“Japan is the third largest importer of U.S. spring and winter wheat and about 75 percent of Montana wheat is sold to the Pacific Rim. Japan is one of our very strongest partners.”*



Merrill Leads First Horse Genetics Trade Mission with AQHA & APHA through Spain & Germany

Montana Department of Agriculture Marketing Officer, Weston Merrill, had the unique opportunity to lead the MDA's first horse genetics trade mission through Europe in early September.

"U.S. Livestock Genetics Export Inc. (USLGE) is the USDA cooperators to promote U.S. livestock genetics throughout the world. Furthermore, USLGE receives Market Access Program (MAP) funding from the USDA via the Farm Bill to conduct trade and promotion activities throughout the world. The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA), through its membership to USLGE, has access to MAP funding to help Montana producers promote their genetics internationally," said Weston.

"The Montana Department of Agriculture had the unique opportunity to partner with the American Paint Horse Association (APHA) and the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) to conduct a horse genetics trade mission to Spain and Germany during the first week of September. MDA recruited Tana Canen, Mahlstedt Ranch and Stan Weaver, as well as Weaver Quarter Horses to participate in the trade mission. AQHA sent Tate Eck, Director of International Activities, and APHA sent a judge and clinician, Tony Burris, to the show in Spain."



“The group attended the Ranch Versatility Show hosted by AQHA España at El Sombrero Ranch in Cobeña, Spain, a small community 25 minutes just outside Madrid. AQHA and APHA are just starting out in Spain, a show with 27 competitors was very exciting! Participants and breeders came from all over Spain to compete and interact with the U.S. delegation. Day one was a Ranch Versatility Clinic put on by Tony Burris while day 2 and 3 were competition days that included ranch reining, trail, cutting, cow work and team penning competitions.

After the show, the group stayed an additional day in Spain to tour a cattle ranch and an AQHA horse breeder’s ranch before heading to Germany for the second leg of the mission. Cabaña Lopez Colmenarejo, owned by Francisco Lopez, is located 20 minutes north of Madrid and is the largest Limousin seedstock operation in Spain. The ranch runs 250 registered mother cows and sells around 60 bulls and 60 bred females per year. Later, the delegation visited the ranch of Santiago Menedez. Santiago has 4-5 brood mares and a registered AQHA stud. Side note, Santiago is a home builder specializing in wood frame houses known as Canadian Houses in Spain.

For the final two days of the mission the group travelled to Friedrichshafen, Germany for the Americana horse show. This is the largest Ranch Versatility Show in Germany with competitors from all over Europe including Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, The Netherlands, Germany, and Austria. This show was a completely different experience compared to Spain. There were 5 trade show pavilions filled with vendors from western wear to ranch equipment dealers. The Deutsche Quarter Horse Association (DQHA) has been an affiliate of the AQHA for nearly 50 years, so the industry is very mature in this part of Europe.”



“The trip confirmed that the demand for the “Western Lifestyle” in Europe is exploding. Not only for horse breeders but the general public. The Americana show hosted thousands of visitors per day. Boots and western apparel were flying off trade show racks. The demand for western horse genetics in Germany is very strong as they know U.S. product is high quality and they look forward to learning more in specific about Montana horse breeders.

For me, the real diamond in the rough is Spain. Their affiliate is only 3 years old, and the industry is in its infant stages. The Spanish horse heritage is strong. In fact, many of today’s Quarter and Paint Horses originated from Spanish bloodlines during colonization. The Spanish breeders at the VRH show in Cobeña were eager to learn from the Montana breeders who participated. While the industry is not as mature as it is in Germany, we have the opportunity to be on the ground floor. If our funding request goes well APHA, AQHA, and MDA will be hosting a buyer’s mission to Montana in 2024 with buyers from Spain and Germany.”

-- Weston Merrill, Marketing Officer, Montana Department of Agriculture





NASDA Annual Convention 2023 - Cheyenne, WY

Director Clark and Deputy Director Coccoli joined over three hundred state, federal, and agriculture industry representatives to collaborate on leading issues impacting the agricultural industry at the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture ([NASDA](#)) Annual Meeting in Cheyenne, WY September 11-14.

NASDA members adopted [policy amendments](#) related to the agricultural workforce pipeline, federal support for farm transitions, investment in agriculture education, and agricultural property and forestland protection.

Approved [action items](#) included:

- Conservation Project Timeline Flexibility,
- Labeling of Plant-Based Milk Alternatives,
- Labeling of Human Food Products derived from Cultured Cells of Livestock, Poultry, and Seafood,
- Standard of Identity for Yogurt,
- State Pesticide Certification and Training Plans, and;
- Extreme Weather and Natural Disaster Relief Programs

Participants attended a hosted rodeo event at Cheyenne Frontier Days, home of the “World’s Largest Outdoor Rodeo and Western Celebration” and enjoyed dinner with Governor Mark Gordon at the Wyoming State Capitol.

NASDA efforts grow and enhance American agriculture through policy, partnerships, and public engagement and serve a critical role in representing the agricultural interests of all fifty states and four U.S. territories at the federal level.

Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur will serve as NASDA’s 2023-2024 President.





Montana State Grain Lab Update:

The Grain Lab continues to be busy from harvest with a total weekly volume of around 600 samples, more than 20% above last year. There are more grains than pulses coming in but that has begun to shift, both wheat and barley sample volume stayed strong this month. Overall volume typically continues to drop throughout October and November when conferences and training begin. A new Ag Technician, Leif Mudrud, started this month and is working out of Shelby to collect official samples for locations across the high line. Leif brings good customer service experience from work at Albertson's and NAPA and has also completed training for volunteer fire fighting.

This month was another busy one for Grain Lab tours and demonstrations. Tour groups included a trade team of 5 milling representatives from Japan who purchase their winter and spring wheat from Montana, a Chinese Trade Team of 11 that were focused on green peas and hosted by US Pea & Lentil Council Marketing VP Jeff Rumney and MT Pulse Crop Committee Exec. Director Liz Edmundson. The lab also provided a tour to 24 members of the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class of 2023 for their Ag Day education. The current and future leaders were learning about the grain lab's role and how it operates. Another visit included 20 members of the Rural Community Insurance Services group, RCIS. Lab staff and agents are frequently in contact with each other to ensure that the information required to process grower's claims is complete, accurate, and timely.



The end is in sight, each harvest season lab staff contribute many hours collecting, categorizing, and distributing hundreds of samples that are used by various federal and regional programs to review Montana's crop quality. Collections include several commodities such as malting barley samples for the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Moisture test samples for the Federal Grain Inspection Service, Pulse quality samples for local and national studies, wheat samples for certifying counties to be free of Karnal Bundt disease enabling foreign trade, and even educational samples for high school students.





Montana Farmers Union Leadership Development Opportunity

Applications are open through Nov. 20 for the Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership (FUEL) program.

The free program is an opportunity to grow personally, professionally and in your community, through a unique experience to gain skills and form relationships to last a lifetime. The group receives hands-on learning experiences to enhance their knowledge of cooperatives and the roles that Farmers Union plays, and immerses in concepts ranging from emotional intelligence and conflict resolution to public speaking and how to have a lasting impact in their home communities.

“The FUEL program helps participants gain the skills and confidence needed to step into leadership roles in their community. From how to run a meeting, effective communication and team building, the ins-and-outs of parliamentary procedure, and how to effectively advocate at the state and federal level with your story – that’s just the tip of the iceberg,” said Rachel Prevost, a member of the 2022 FUEL Cohort and MFU's Government Affairs and Membership Services Director. *“The relationships and network that you build throughout the FUEL program will benefit you throughout the rest of your life, and position you well to effectively lead and advocate for your rural community. And Montana Farmers Union is here to support that.”*

2024 participants will travel to Scottsdale, Arizona, in March to participate in National Farmers Union Annual Convention, then to Minnesota in the summer and wrap up in Washington, D.C., for NFU's Legislative Fly-In scheduled for September.

FUEL program graduates have gone on to: Improve professional relationships, become community organizers, be elected for leadership positions, chair committees, and even work for Farmers Union.

Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership program participants can be Farmers Union members involved directly in Ag or those who are interested in advocating for our family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. This program is funded by each of the five participating states through Farmers Union Enterprises -- Montana, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Minnesota, and North Dakota -- and comes at no cost to participants.

The deadline for the upcoming year's program is Nov. 20. Send questions to Prevost at rprevost@montanafarmersunion.com.

Fill out your application at <https://montanafarmersunion.com/fuel/> today.





Detection of Rush Skeletonweed Confirmed in Lewis & Clark County

The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) confirmed Rush Skeletonweed at two different sites outside of Helena, Montana. Rush Skeletonweed (*Chondrilla juncea*), a Montana Priority 1B Noxious Weed, has limited presence in Montana and if found requires eradication or containment and education.

This is currently the only population of Rush Skeletonweed east of the Continental Divide in the state. The invasive weed can reduce crop yields by as much as 70 percent once established, which is why establishment prevention in central and eastern Montana is critical.

Rush Skeletonweed is branched with few or no leaves, giving it a “skeleton-like” appearance. The rosettes look identical to dandelions and once bolted, the stems have stiff downward pointing hairs at the base. Flowers are yellow, smaller than a dime, appear in late summer, and when seeded, have tufted white hairs that disperse in the wind. All plant parts exude a milky latex when broken. Rush Skeletonweed can invade rangeland, farmland, roadsides and even neighborhood yards. It can easily be confused with tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*), which has small four-petaled pale yellow flowers, and the native rush skeleton-plant (*Lygodesmia juncea*), which has no hairs at the stem base, does not contain milky sap, and has pinkish flowers.

Rush Skeletonweed is difficult to control and harmful to both agriculture and wildland habitat. There are currently 6.2 million acres of Rush Skeletonweed in the western United States, including 4 million acres in Idaho. While Montana currently only has around 3,300 acres, it is critical to keep it from spreading and to eradicate new infestations when found.

To report a suspected Rush Skeletonweed plant, submit a report on [EDDMapS](#) and contact your local county weed coordinator or the Montana Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed EDRR Program at MTEDRR@mt.gov. For additional resources and contact information, visit the Early Detection, Rapid Response webpage here: agr.mt.gov/Noxious-Weeds.



MDA On the Road & Where to Catch Us

- Produce Safety Western States Regional Meeting - Virtual | Oct. 3 - 4
- Noxious Weed Task Force Meeting - Ronan, MT | Oct. 3
- Headframe Spirits Value-Added Tour - Butte, MT | Oct. 5
- Natural Resource Career Fair - Helena, MT | Oct. 5
- COSDA Annual Conference - Freeport, ME | Oct. 8 - 11
- USLGE Genetics Trade Mission - Chihuahua, MX | Oct. 11 - 17
- Quarterly Food Safety Coalition - Helena, MT | Oct 12
- Montana Fresh Hop Festival - Bozeman, MT | Oct 14
- NAISMA Annual Conference - Lincoln, NE | Oct 16 - 20
- MT Food & Beverage Show - Missoula, MT | Oct 16
- MWCA Fall Manager Training - Livingston, MT | Oct. 17 & 18
- MWBC Board Meeting - Great Falls, MT | Oct. 23 - 24
- 2023 EPA Pesticide Analyst Workshop - Madison, WI | Oct. 24 - 27
- MT Farmers Union Annual Convention - Great Falls, MT | Oct. 27 - 28
- Taiwan Trade Mission - Taiwan | Oct. 27 - Nov. 3

2023 Montana Fresh Hop Fest - Bozeman, MT

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More info here: <https://mtfreshfest.com/>



Growth Through Agriculture Grant & Loan Program Requesting Proposals

The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is announcing the opening of the FY2024 funding cycle for the Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) Program. Montanans interested in innovating or expanding agricultural businesses are invited to apply for funds through the state grant and loan program.

“The Growth Through Agriculture program continues to help Montana businesses and agricultural operations add value, scale up, and access new markets,” said MDA Director Christy Clark. *“I encourage producers, business owners, and those with innovative ideas for value-added projects to apply so as a state we can continue to elevate our agricultural ecosystem and economy.”*

The Growth Through Agriculture program was established by the legislature to strengthen and diversify Montana’s agriculture industry by developing new agricultural products and processes. GTA grants and loans are awarded by the Agriculture Development Council, consisting of seven members appointed by the Governor. GTA funding requires the investment of at least \$1 in matching funds for every \$1 in grant or loan assistance received.

Pre-applications for funding open October 2, 2023, and are due October 23, 2023. Selected proposals from pre-applicants will be invited to submit a full application in January of 2024, followed by grant award decisions in February. Information on submitting a pre-application, program guidelines, FAQs, and previously funded projects can be viewed online at agr.mt.gov/GTA.

Applicants may apply for grants up to \$50,000 and loans up to \$100,000. Examples of eligible project activities include equipment purchases, construction costs, advertising and promotion, and consultant services.

Those needing application assistance are encouraged to contact their local Food and Agricultural Development Center at agr.mt.gov/Food-and-Ag-Development-Centers.



2023 Montana Food & Beverage Show

This show will give vendors a chance to showcase and provide samples of their products to buyers, distributors, restaurants, hotels, bars, retail stores, and more!

This show will be open to professional buyers only. The Montana Department of Agriculture will also be hosting a chef, who will be highlighting the best of Montana in a series of dishes throughout the show!

The 2023 show will take place on October 16, 2023 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Missoula, MT from 11:00am – 6:00pm. Set up is available on October 15th, for those that need it.

More can be found at: <https://agr.mt.gov/Food-and-Beverage-show>



What We Have Been (responsibly) Drinking Lately:

We like to get our “Drink of the Month” into different hands around the department.

Ag Sciences Division Administrator, Ian Foley, shared with us his “Fall Go-To.”

“As summer turns to fall, I prefer darker beers. A good one right now is the Blackfoot Oktoberfest Lager.

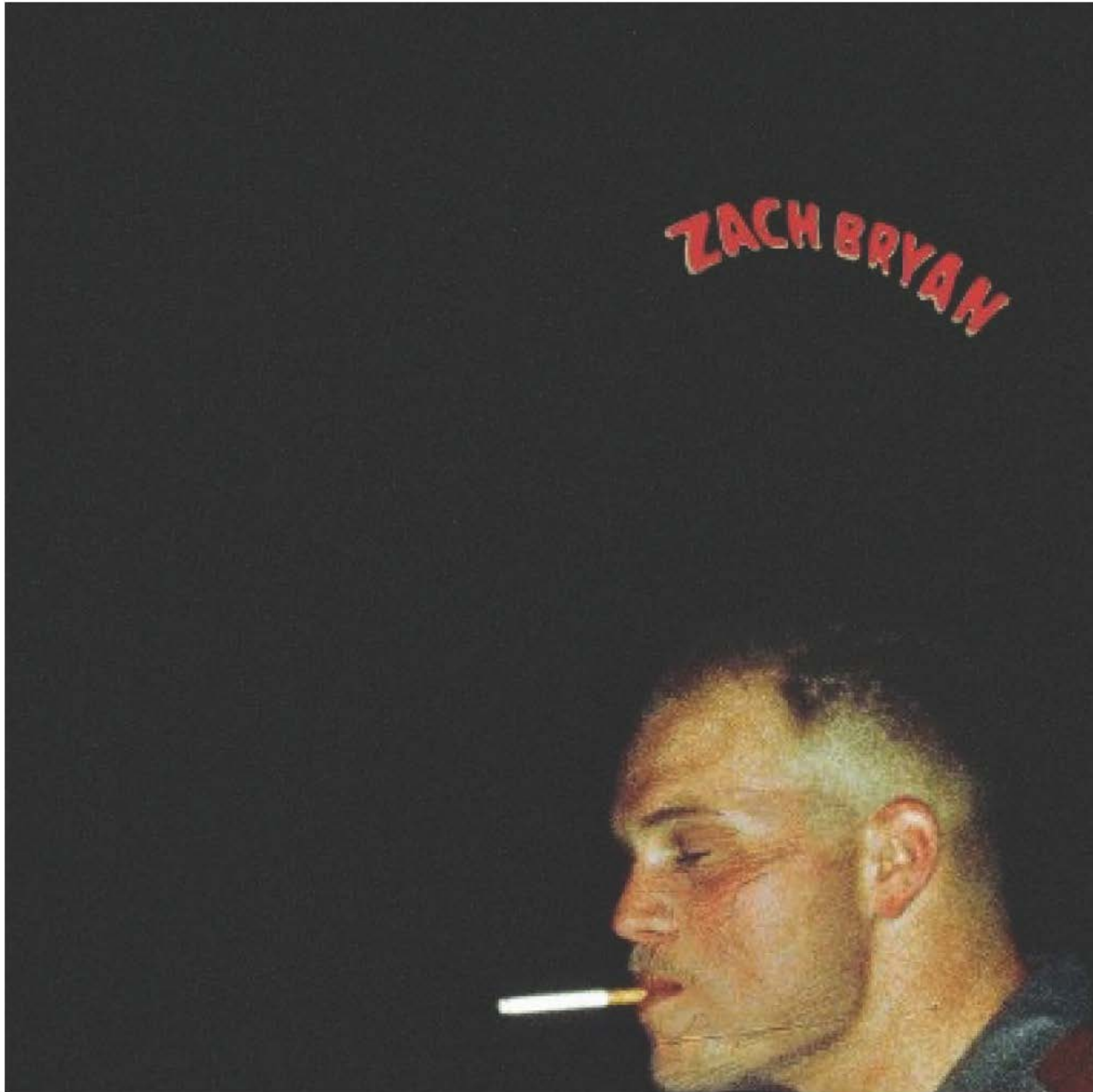
Blackfoot River Brewing Company’s Oktoberfest is a German-style fest beer is brewed with imported German Pilsner, Vienna, and Munich malts, and lagered cold for smoothness.

It’s smooth taste and malty finish make this a great beer for the fall. Blackfoot Oktoberfest is released in late-September and is available for just a few weeks.

The caramelization of the malts complements that of seared meats or hearty, spicy dishes.”



What We've Been Listening To Recently:



Album to Put on Repeat:

Self-Titled Album by Zach Bryan

1. Overtime
2. Summertime's Close
3. East Side of Sorrow
4. Hey Driver (feat. The War and Treaty)
5. East Side of Sorrow
6. Fear and Friday's
7. Ticking
8. Holy Roller (feat. Sierra Ferrell)
9. Jake's Piano - Long Island
10. El Dorado
11. I Remember Everything (feat. Kacey Musgraves)
12. Tourniquet
13. Spotless (feat. The Lumineers)
14. Tradesman
15. Smaller Acts
16. Oklahoma Son

We'd Love Your Feedback



Agriculture and in specific, Montana Agriculture is all about community. We thought, one does not have to be directly involved with agriculture to be apart of this community. Thus, our external facing monthly newsletter was created. It is meant to inform, inspire, educate, and reach our agricultural community hand out to whomever would like to be a part of the happenings here at the MDA.

Like to see a section that we didn't cover this month? Let us know! We'd love to hear from you.

Until then, happy October Friends!