



## Montana Department of Agriculture Celebrates Montana Cider Industry

Director Clark and representatives from the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) continued their focus on highlighting the diversity in Montana's agricultural ecosystem yesterday where they joined representatives from the [Northwest Cider Association](#) (NWCA) and local cideries to celebrate a new marketing campaign for the Montana cider industry.

"From Montana's large conventional grain farms to our small acreage orchards, being a producer takes perseverance and devotion" said Director Christy Clark. "It's great to put eyes on the growth of the cider industry here in Montana and hear from cidermakers around the state that are finding success in a true Montana value-added ag product. I commend the entrepreneurial spirit, passion, and craftsmanship of the Montana cidermakers and cider industry."





Director Clark joined representatives of the NWCA for a tour of the Western Cider orchard in Stevensville to hear about successful apple varieties as well as challenges for the Missoula based cider brand. The group then visited one of the “Montana Cider” billboard locations that is part of a multi-month marketing campaign directed at increasing awareness surrounding the Montana cider industry. “Consumers are looking for cider” said NWCA Executive Director Emily Ritchie. “While the overall spirit industry saw a decline in the last year, the cider industry saw considerable growth.”

Western Cider’s flagship location and taproom is located on the banks of the Clark Fork River in Missoula, Montana. Their dream was seeded in 2012 when co-founder Michael Billingsley planted 2,500 cider apple trees in Montana's Bitterroot Valley - just south of Missoula. Now, they have nearly 5,000 trees and over 50 varieties of apples. They use those apples, as well as apples from Northwest orchards, to produce “easy going and traditional ciders” at nearly 40 cans per minute (when canning).

Also joining the tour was Kalispell based Big Mountain Ciderworks, Lockhorn Hard Cider of Bozeman, and Northwest Mobile Juicing of Lolo.



## August Gleanings from the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee

### New Directors

MWBC recently welcomed two new directors to our team. Cindy McKamey and Courtney Herzog were appointed by Governor Gianforte to replace retiring directors Charlie Bumgarner and Denise Conover, respectively. We will certainly miss Denise and Charlie and their contributions to MWBC, but we're also excited to get Cindy and Courtney on board and we're looking forward to their involvement.

### Trade Team Season

In Montana, August translates to harvest season and trade team visits. MWBC hosted three trade teams during the month all representing the Japanese wheat and flour milling industry. Japan is historically the third/fourth largest buyer of US wheat with approximately 85 percent of the hard red winter wheat and 60 percent of the hard red spring wheat originating from Big Sky Country. MWBC is always excited and motivated to welcome customers to Montana so they can meet growers; view harvest first-hand; ride on combines; tour commercial grain elevators, seed plants and flour mills; and learn about grading procedures at the State Grain Lab. Each trade team is unique in its makeup with varying levels of interest regarding facets of the industry they would like to focus on. However, a common thread is consistently their desire to meet growers and visit their farm operations. For many team members, it is their first trip to America. We roll out the red carpet and make sure they have a great time and learn as much as possible while they are in Montana. MWBC appreciates the time and effort of everyone involved from the commercial grain industry, the State Grain Lab and especially the growers who welcome the teams to their farms, shops and bin sites. While combines and tractors might seem second nature to many, the Japanese visitors are always excited and impressed when they have the opportunity to check out the equipment and go for a ride.



## **BNSF Update**

MWBC welcomed Mike McKay, Montana's BNSF ombudsman, and Matthew White, general director of agricultural products, to our office for a visit and opportunity to discuss BNSF rail operations in the state. Mike and Matt addressed performance issues related to car placement and velocity. They noted that shuttle sets offered to the marketplace were reduced from 155 to 140. Their objective is to turn fewer shuttle sets faster (velocity) while improving customer service and their overall performance. Issues related to cross border logistics with Mexico were also addressed. The slow return of empties and the damage to hopper cars while in Mexico are creating multiple problems for the railroad.

### **Challenging Growing and Harvest Season**

It seems every year is different in production agriculture, and that has not changed this year. Favorable fall seeding conditions resulted in excellent stand establishment for the 2024 Montana winter wheat crop. Mild June temperatures, average precipitation, modern farming practices and ever-improving varieties resulted in an excellent crop in terms of quantity and quality. While protein levels are below average, statewide yields have been excellent. The most recent USDA estimate of 51 bushels per acre matches record yields established in 2020 and 2023. Growing conditions changed significantly after July 8 when a blistering stretch of hot, windy weather and limited precipitation took a toll on all spring planted crops. As we approach September, harvest of spring crops continues. Unfortunately, untimely rainfall interrupted harvest on multiple occasions and caused crop damage in some areas of the state. We are all disappointed and frustrated with the hand Mother Nature dealt us during the second half of the growing season. Perhaps the silver lining is the rainfall will improve conditions as seeding is rapidly approaching.

We are all in this together. Please keep your head up, be safe and best of luck this fall.

-- Kent Kupfner, MWBC Executive Director



## USDA Announces Funding Awarded to Montana to Support Specialty Crop Growers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced over \$3.1 million in funding awarded to Montana through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). Through this program, the Montana Department of Agriculture will fund projects that strengthen Montana's specialty crop industry through marketing, education, and research.

"We are happy to once again be partnered with Montana on the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program," said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt. "The innovative projects funded through this program will strengthen U.S. specialty crop production and markets and ensure Americans have sustained access to fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops and support the region's specialty crop growers to help ensure their long-term success."

Through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, the Montana Department of Agriculture will fund 16 projects. Among the department's projects is funding to Montana State University to design and plant a teaching and outreach space at the Bozeman Horticulture Farm that demonstrates fruit crops and cultivars that perform well in Montana. Additional funded projects focus in areas such as disease management, fertilizer research, and marketing.

"Montana's producers are the backbone of our state," said Montana Department of Agriculture Director Christy Clark. "These grants support outreach efforts and vital research that directly help our farmers and ranchers to diversify, innovate, grow their operations, and drive Montana's largest industry."

The funding to Montana is part of a total of \$72.9 million in non-competitive FY 2024 funding awarded to 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The funding supports farmers growing specialty crops, including fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and nursery crops. USDA's support will strengthen U.S. specialty crop production, expand markets, and ensure an abundant, affordable supply of highly nutritious fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops is available to all Americans.

View more information on the [2024 SCBGP Awarded Grants](#).



## Montana Department of Agriculture's AgCorps

AgCorps, the AmeriCorps program housed under the Montana Department of Agriculture, is in its first year of operation and boy, has it made an impact!

AgCorps' main mission is to serve Montana by providing Ag literacy and environmental stewardship education to create resilient healthy and engaged communities. Eight members joined the program in January and will wrap up in November. From January to now, these members have assisted in recruiting over 170 volunteers, trained more than 70 individuals across different topics, taught over 700 students throughout the state, and helped build the capacity of almost 30 different organizations.

Some of the AgCorps programs include Harvest of the Month, Noxious Weeds outreach and education, and Adopt-A-Trailhead to name a few. Next year the program is expanding and partnering with more organizations across the state including Helena Food Share, Farm to School of Park County and MSU's Western Ag Research Center.



If you are interested in learning more about the program, or know someone who may be a good fit, check out our website at [agr.mt.gov/AgCorps](http://agr.mt.gov/AgCorps). We are currently recruiting for the 2025 term (January-November). Make sure to like and follow us on Facebook too!



## MDA On the Road & Where to Catch Us

- Western Ag Research Center Field Days - Corvallis, MT | Sept 12
- Americas Food & Beverage Show - Miami, FL | Sept 13 - 19
- USLGE Inbound Mission & Angus Tour - Billings, MT | Sept 15 - 22
- Pesticide Disposal Event - Havre, MT | Sept 17
- Pesticide Disposal Event - Great Falls, MT | Sept 18
- Pesticide Disposal Event - Lewistown, MT | Sept 19
- Pesticide Disposal Event - Columbus, MT | Sept 20
- Organic Seed Days - Hamilton, MT | Sept 21
- Organic Seed Days - Plains, MT | Sept 22
- Western Sustainability Exchange Conference - Billings, MT | Sept 23 - 25
- AGR All-Staff Meeting - Helena, MT | Oct 4



## Montana Department of Agriculture Announces 2024 Fall Pesticide Waste Collection Events

The Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is facilitating pesticide disposal events in its Central District during the week of September 16th, 2024.

Annual pesticide waste collection events have collected close to 780,000 pounds of pesticide waste from over 1,800 participants since the program's inception in 1994.

“Montana has very limited options to get rid of pesticide products,” said Carli Davis of the MDA’s Pesticide Disposal and Container Recycling Programs. “This program is one way of assuring the waste product is properly disposed in a manner that is also environmentally friendly.”

The MDA program was designed to assist individuals with disposing of any pesticides that are unusable as originally intended, or cannot be used for any other purpose, in an environmentally responsible way. In effect, the Pesticide and Waste Disposal Program protects Montana's ecosystems and groundwater, as well as families, pets, livestock and drinking water from potentially hazardous materials.

### 2024 Pesticide Waste Collection Dates and Locations:

- Tuesday, September 17th – Havre, MT
- Wednesday, September 18th – Great Falls, MT
- Thursday, September 19th – Lewistown, MT
- Friday, September 20th – Columbus, MT

The pre-registration deadline is September 9th, 2024. Registrations for pesticide waste collection events are accepted on a first come, first-serve basis. There is no charge for the first 200 pounds of material; amounts over 200 pounds are assessed at \$1.00 per pound, and products are weighed on site. Additional fees may apply to pesticides with dioxins or dioxin precursors.

Please visit the Montana Waste Pesticide Disposal Program page or click [HERE](#) to register. For more information, please visit [agr.mt.gov/Pesticide-Waste-Disposal-Program](http://agr.mt.gov/Pesticide-Waste-Disposal-Program) or contact Carli Davis at (406) 465-0531.



## 2024 EconoQuest Career Expo

EconoQuest is a ground-breaking international economic literacy program that excites high school students about real-world economics and career opportunities. The program fills a gap in statewide economic education and explores college-to-career pathways with Montana industries with a unique opportunity to engage with local companies and government leaders about economics, international trade, and workforce development.



**MONTANA WORLD  
AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

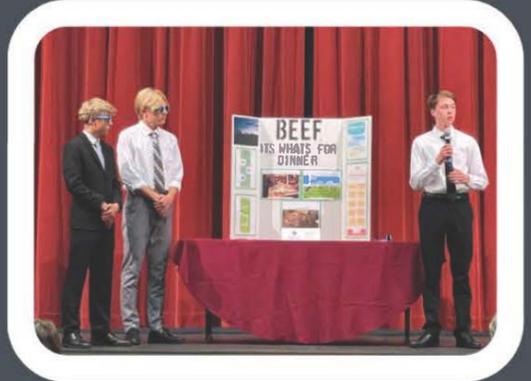
# ECONOQUEST CAREER EXPO

We hope you will join us at the third annual EconoQuest Career Expo at Montana State University Ballroom, engaging with MSU students and high school students from every corner of Montana. This year, companies will be able to interact with students on their EconoQuest competition projects - listen to students pitch their product on the global market!

Monday, October 28th, 2024  
Montana State University Ballroom  
3:00 - 5:00 PM

Companies are welcome to join the EconoQuest banquet with Consul General Gupta of India as keynote speaker.

**To register:  
Contact Nikki Geiszler at  
[ngeiszler@montanaworldaffairs.org](mailto:ngeiszler@montanaworldaffairs.org)**





## 2024 Montana Food & Beverage Show

Don't miss out on your chance to showcase your product at the Montana Food and Beverage Show!

The show will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn, Missoula, MT, Monday, October 14, 2024. Show hours will be from 11am – 5pm. Learn more and register at: <https://agr.mt.gov/Food-and-Beverage-show>

### Important Dates

Deadline to sign up for Montana Food Show – September 18th

This show will give you a chance to showcase and provide samples of your products to buyers from distributors, restaurants, hotels, bars, retail stores, and more! This show will be open to professional buyers only.

### New for This Year

The Montana Department of Agriculture will partner with the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center to help host the Food and Beverage Manufacturing Summit. The summit is a one-day educational forum focused on essential topics to grow or improve your business. You will learn directly from industry experts and government officials about key steps in developing a successful food business. Our program of workshops and speakers will cover the most frequently asked questions on packaging, labeling, fill control, process control, food safety, distribution, manufacturing efficiency, and more. The summit will take place the day after the Food Show. Tuesday, October 15th, 2024 at the Hilton Garden Inn. 8am to 5pm with a Networking session to be held the evening of Monday, October 14th following the food show. Cost is \$25 for registered vendors and \$100 for summit only.

Find more and register here: <https://agr.mt.gov/Topics/E-G/Food-Beverage-show-pages/Manufacturing-Summit>

We are excited to once again host the Montana Food and Beverage Show. If you have any questions, please contact Marty Earnheart at [mearnheart@mt.gov](mailto:mearnheart@mt.gov).



## Montana Beef Council's "Team Beef"

Team Beef Montana is a group of beef-loving fitness enthusiasts supported by Montana Beef Council and over 10,000 cattle ranchers across the Big Sky State. Our athletes are committed to living active, healthy lifestyles and are dedicated to serving their community and helping others lead healthier lives. Together, Montana Beef Council and the Team Beef Montana are working toward inspiring a healthier Montana.

TEAM BEEF members understand and believe in the nutritional benefits of lean beef and the vital role they play in physical training, being healthy and staying active. TEAM BEEF members and supporters have the opportunity to share information with those who seek advice on health and nutrition, as well as how cattle are being raised by Montana producers in a humane and sustainable manner.

TEAM BEEF is a community of runners, triathletes and health enthusiasts who will pick several races during the year to compete in. Team members do not have to participate in all races, but are encouraged to stay active and promote the beef community!



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Learn more at: [montanabeefcouncil.org/nutrition/team-beef-montana](http://montanabeefcouncil.org/nutrition/team-beef-montana)



## What We Have Been (responsibly) Drinking Lately:

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

As Summer winds down, we’re going to take an opportunity to highlight a local staple out of Bozeman’s MAP Brewing.

### The “STrange Cattle” from MAP Brewing (Yes, it’s STrange)

This NEIPA is tropical, juicy, and all around delicious. Strong notes of pineapple and stone fruits abound, thanks to the Azacca & Mosaic hops.

This style of beer utilizes heavy dry hopping and less kettle hopping, so the bitterness is subtle, but the rich and juicy hop flavors and aromas come through nicely.

STrange cattle crossing here!

More info at: <https://www.mapbrewing.com/>

## What We've Been Listening To Recently:



### Welcome to Zach Top

A Cure For Your September Listing Needs

1. Sounds Like the Radio - Zach Top
2. I Never Lie - Zach Top
3. Cold Beer & Country Music - Zach Top
4. Cowboys Like Me Do - Zach Top
5. Dirt Turns to Gold - Zach Top
6. Busy Doin' Nothin' - Zach Top
7. Justa Jonesin' - Zach Top
8. I Don't Mind - Zach Top
9. Like It Ain't No Thing - Zach Top
10. There's the Sun - Zach Top

## 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 September Friends!