Julie Jaksha
Regional Director
Courtney Loeffler
Business Advisor

headwaters
RESOURCE CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT

Butte Regional SBDC

Montana Craft Malt

Butte, MT



"Working with Julie and the team at Headwaters RC&D has made all the difference for Montana Craft Malt. As a small business with a big vision, we've relied on the Butte SBDC for financial, networking, and business planning support. Because of them, we've been able to complete our research lab, procure equipment, and tighten our business plan -- setting us on the trajectory to realize that vision. A true partner who is always checking in on us, Julie is committed to helping us prove out a value-added agricultural model in Butte, with the promise of job creation, and all the downstream benefits that come with it, right here in BSC."
Jennifer O'Brien, *President*

Montana Craft Malt is a Butte-based malthouse designed to produce diverse varieties of malted barley for the craft brewing industry, using barley sourced exclusively from Montana growers. Montana Craft Malt broke ground in the spring of 2018 and finished construction of a 30,000 sq. ft. building in January 2020. One of Montana Craft Malt's goals is to help brewers differentiate themselves by providing malts that appeal to their sensibilities and a product they can market as a locally grown malted ingredient. The new facility will produce small and custom-batched malt, which will benefit craft brewers and microbreweries with limited buying power.

Butte businessman Ron Ueland started the process of creating Montana Craft Malt in 2017 with the idea of catering specifically to Montana's craft breweries and microbreweries after being inspired by a market analysis report done by the Research and Information Services Bureau at the Montana Department of Commerce. After Ron's sudden death in 2018, his daughter Jennifer O'Brien took over as president of the company and turned to the Butte SBDC for assistance. Julia Jaksha, Butte SBDC Regional Director and Courtney Loeffler, SBDC Business Advisor, worked together with Jennifer and her team to successfully apply for a $50,000 Growth through Agriculture grant. Julie and Courtney helped Jennifer with Montana Craft Malt's financial projections, marketing, and business plan preparation. Then, Headwater's RC&D, Butte SBDC Host, helped the company access the Department of Commerce's Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund planning and job creation grant programs. With the SBDC's assistance, Montana Craft Malt also accessed Commerce's ExportMontana STEP Grant program, and financing through the Montana Board of Investments.

Additionally, Julie and Courtney, working in tandem with Bozeman SBDC's Tom Walker, were able to help Montana Craft Malt get approved for a $3.5 million bank loan to finish construction. Montana Craft Malt completed its grand opening of the $25 million facility in January 2020 and plans to hire 15 employees by the end of the year and produce 10,000 tons of malt per year from Montana–grown barley. Already, the company is consulting with potential customers — craft brewers and distillers from across Montana and beyond. Montana Craft Malt is strategically located in the Montana Connections Business Development Park, allowing Montana Craft Malt to make lasting business relationships within the Development Park, in-turn strengthening Butte's industrial industry.