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Great Falls Montana Development Authority Chosen as a Montana Food & Ag Development Center

Designation by the Montana Department of Agriculture will boost economic development efforts in food and agricultural processing as well as renewable energy

Great Falls, MT - October 25, 2017 - The Great Falls Montana Development Authority announced today that it has been selected by the Montana Department of Agriculture to be one of the state's four Food & Ag Development Centers. Food and agricultural processing has long been a target industry to grow and diversify the Great Falls regional economy, support the creation of higher wage jobs, and expand the region's tax base. The announcement was made at Mighty Mo Brewing Co., one of Great Falls Montana Development Authority's client successes, in downtown Great Falls.

"Standing up the Great Falls Food & Ag Development Center will boost our long-standing efforts to expand and diversify food and agricultural processing in Great Falls, the Golden Triangle and beyond," says Brett Doney, President & CEO of the Great Falls Montana Development Authority. "Our new Center will allow us to increase efforts to help existing businesses and entrepreneurial start-ups, and to attract out of state businesses to expand into Montana."

"Montana ships 85% of its agricultural production out of state without adding more value, creating tremendous opportunity for ingredient and product production," says Jolene Schalper, Vice President and interim director of the new center. "We have enjoyed many successes in winning private investment in this critical industry sector, including MaltEurop, Timeless Seeds, The Front Brewing Co., Windrift Hill, Pasta Montana, Montana Specialty Mills, Cut Bank Creek Brewery, Montana Eggs, and more!"

The Montana Food and Agricultural Development Center Network helps Montanans innovate and grow businesses that produce and commercialize food, agricultural and renewable energy products and processes, creating wealth and jobs in our communities and on our farms and ranches.

"Montana farm and ranch earnings were down over 50% in 2016, making it even more important to create new local markets for our world-class agricultural production," says Kim Mangold, Deputy Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture. "We are proud to have the Great Falls Center join the statewide Network."

The Great Falls Montana Development Authority has partnered with the Montana Department of Agriculture to target niches in food and agricultural processing that offer growth opportunities for the Great Falls region. With funding support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and the Montana Growth Through Agriculture program, the Authority has published eight business cases in targeted niches. These include: Pulse Fractionation; Pulse Butters, Dips and

Spreads; Pulse Snacks; Specialty Malting; Sprouted Grains; Specialty Pasta; Wheat Ingredients; and, Barley Ingredients.

"We're using these business cases to help convince local entrepreneurs, existing businesses and companies outside the state that our region offers numerous market opportunities to process food and agricultural ingredients and products right here where it is grown," Schalper said. The Great Falls Montana Development Authority, known locally as GFDA, offers business coaching, technical assistance, gap and bridge financing, site selection and other assistance to businesses.

Cut Bank Creek Brewery worked with GFDA and recently opened in Cut Bank, Montana. "The service GFDA provided was invaluable. Without their help, Cut Bank Creek Brewery wouldn't be a realization. I don't know if we would have ever made it," says co-owner Louis Stoltz. "You are priceless to us," says co-owner Kim Stoltz.

"Being part of the Montana Food and Agricultural Development Center Network will extend the resources and connections we can offer to clients, leading to more investment and higher wage jobs," continues Doney. "We are honored to be chosen by the Montana Department of Agriculture and look forward to working with the Network to generate results on the ground throughout the Great Falls region and across Montana."

In 2016, GFDA opened the Great Falls AgriTech Park to provide fully-served heavy industrial sites for food and agricultural processors, as well as other industry. The 197-acre AgriTech Park offers customized heavy industrial lots ranging in size from seven to 300+ acres. It's the region's first industrial park to offer ready to build lots with access to utilities and rail.

The Great Falls Montana Development Authority invested more than \$8 million in the construction of AgriTech Park. Earlier this year, the site was given an Excellence in Regional Transportation Award for its rail system by the National Association of Development Organizations and was certified by the BNSF as part of its Premier Parks Program.

Current AgriTech Park tenants include a cross section of local and foreign direct investments including Montana Specialty Mills, FedEx Ground, Pacific Steel & Recycling and Japanese-owned Helena Chemical.

About the Great Falls Montana Development Authority

Founded in 1992, the Great Falls Montana Development Authority is an economic development organization that works to create higher paying jobs and promote growth and diversification throughout the Great Falls region of Montana. The public-private partnership includes a trade area of 13 counties that extend from the Eastern slope of the Rockies to the Canadian border. The Great Falls Montana Development Authority sees its role as engaging, leading, guiding and facilitating regional efforts to build a prosperous and sustainable future for its community.

<http://www.GFdevelopment.org>

About the Montana Food & Ag Development Center Network

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The centers - located in Great Falls, Havre, Joliet and Ronan - operate as a statewide network serving community-based businesses throughout Montana. The centers support economic development by ensuring that more of the state's food, agricultural and energy dollars circulate in Montana. The network provides training, coaching and technical assistance, including: product development, testing and analysis; regulatory compliance training; food processing; business planning and development; market research; business networking; access to financing; cooperative development; and, education on industry dynamics and technologies.

<http://agr.mt.gov/FADC>

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