

# Proximity Malt plans to 'get rolling' soon

## STAFF REPORT

**MONTE VISTA** — Proximity Malt, setting up shop in the former Staley starch plant near Monte Vista, will be drawing on area barley farmers for much of its raw materials.

This is one of the main reasons the company chose the Valley to build a plant, Proximity Malt Regional Manager Jack Capron told attendees at the 2017 Southern Rocky Mountain Agricultural Conference and Trade Fair in February.

As the company's name indicates, he said, Proximity Malt chose Monte Vista to be "in proximity" to the raw materials of the region, namely barley.

"It's no surprise that we ended up in the San Luis Valley," Capron said. "There's a lot of barley in the San Luis Valley ... We keep our costs down by being where the barley is."

The company, headquartered in Milwaukee, is in the process of repurposing the old starch plant into a modern malting facility.

"We will really plan on getting rolling in April," Capron said. "We will start commissioning in the second quarter of this year."

He said Proximity is working with Rio Grande Commodities to get contracts going.

In full operation Proximity will require 28,000 metric tons of barley and will employ about 21 workers at the plant, according to Capron.

He said Proximity focuses on quality and flexibility.

"If there's something out there that customers want, we have the flexibility to provide specific malts," Capron said.

He said any grain can be malted,



Courtesy Photo

**This is an aerial photo of the Proximity Malt site near Monte Vista.** but Proximity will primarily be using barley. Barley provides the right balance between protein and starch, he explained.

Capron discussed the characteristics Proximity is looking for in the barley it will use in the malting process, such as pure, clean and disease free.

"It is a food process we are doing, so we have to keep it clean."

Capron described the malting process from removing the chaff and cleaning the barley kernels to steeping, which takes about 30 hours, to germination, which takes about 96 hours, to kilning, which takes about 24 hours.

The barley is then roasted. Proximity Malt's roaster can handle a metric ton an hour, Capron explained.

He added that Proximity Malt will also market the malting byproducts, for example for animal feed.

In addition to providing another market for local barley growers, the plant itself will permanently employ more than 20 people when it is operational, Proximity Malt, LLC spokesperson Amy Germershausen had said last fall.



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