

Floyd A. Boyd Co. owner works weekends to keep up with refinancing requests

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H&N photos by Andrew Mariman Donnie Boyd, owner of Floyd A. Boyd Co., says equipment sales are down by more than half from this time last year.

MERRILL — At Donnie Boyd's implement dealership the phones are quiet. There is no line at the parts counter.

If this were a normal spring, Boyd would be busy helping people at his store just outside Merrill. The phone would be ringing constantly.

But it's not a normal spring. There is little irrigation water. Farmers are worried about planting.

"It's tough opening the doors at 7 a.m. and realizing you're likely going to lose money that day," he says.

Boyd is the sole owner of Floyd A. Boyd Co., and his business relies on the needs of local farmers and ranchers.

The service department, so far, has seen 12 percent less demand for services compared to the same time last year, and the parts department is down 10 percent from the year before.

Equipment sales, from tillers to tractors, are down more than half. Boyd is still making a profit, but it's a fraction of what he would see in regular years. And this is usually the busiest time of year.

"The only reason we have a profit is layoffs," he says. "Our parts people, our mechanics are working three days a week."

Boyd says he can't lay off all of his skilled workers because he'll likely need them when times get better. To do so, he makes unemployment payments to the state so his employees working less than 40 hours a week can claim the benefits.

And his workers are bringing home smaller paychecks, and that impacts whether they go out to eat with their family or go see a movie.



Doug Wills works fewer hours and brings home less money, cutting into what he can spend on his family.

"This water shutoff isn't just affecting the agriculture-related businesses, it affects every business in the Klamath Basin," Boyd says.

Producers are calling, looking for ways to minimize equipment payments. Boyd works weekends to keep up with refinancing requests.

He says the business will survive this water shortage, like it has survived others. He has 30 more years before he can retire and that, he says, is manageable.

Unlike his father and his father's father, he's not encouraging his children to take over the business, not with the unpredictability of agriculture in the Basin.

"This business is part of me, its part of my family," Boyd says. "It's pretty tough to see this part of your family go through this."

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DONNIE BOYD, 46, owner, Floyd A. Boyd Co.

Background: Born and raised in the Klamath Basin, Boyd is the third generation of his family to own and run Floyd A. Boyd Co. He worked there as a kid and went to work full time when he returned from college in 1985. He bought his father out in 2006 and became the sole owner.

Family: Married with two children.

Side Bar

Don Boyd Sr.: 'It could tear the community apart'

Rising cost of fuel. Low prices for crops. Difficulty attaining credit. Don Boyd Sr. said it's becoming harder for farmers and ranchers to be successful over the long term, making it difficult for farming to be a sustainable way of life. "They don't have a lot of extra resources to fall back on," he says.

Boyd Sr. is former owner of the implement dealer Floyd A. Boyd Co., now owned and operated by his son, Donnie.

He's seen agriculture in the Klamath Basin go through tough times before. The 1970s was a difficult period, and the 2001 water crisis dealt some tough blows.

The difference was there weren't so many other factors adding pressure to farmers' and ranchers' situations, he says.

When irrigation water was shut off in 2001 many farmers had a financial cushion from previous years to rely on, he says. But the recession dealt a blow last year. It's also become harder to obtain credit, Boyd says, and operation costs continue to increase.

He fears the cumulative effect of all those factors may be too much to bear.

"It could tear the community apart."

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