

Chronicles: WATER AND DROUGHT

‘I think it’s the American dream to want your kids to have a better life’

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H&N photos by Andrew Mariman Donnie Boyd, owner of Floyd A. Boyd Co., is not encouraging his two children, including son David, pictured below, to take over the family’s farm implement business.



DONNIE BOYD Background: Born and raised in the Klamath Basin, Boyd is the 46, owner, time third in generation 1985 after to returning own Floyd from A. Boyd college Co . He . He bought started his work father there out full in - Floyd A. Boyd Co. 2006 and became the sole owner. Family: Married with two children.

Donnie Boyd has never considered doing anything else.

The third-generation owner of Floyd A. Boyd Co. worked in his family's business throughout his youth before leaving for college. It was a foregone conclusion that he would return to it afterward.

"It was a good lifestyle. It was a good business," Donnie said.

His son, David, who will be a senior at Klamath Union High School in the fall, is looking at his future.

But unlike his father, he said, he doesn't expect the family's farm implement business to be a part of it, given the tumultuous nature of the industry it serves.

"I think if it was a viable business and had better hours, I could," David said.

The company took hits this summer as a drought in the Klamath Basin kept more than half the land in the Klamath Reclamation Project out of production.

Revenue in everything, from sales to parts, is down because area farmers have no money or reason to buy anything.

"It's the uncertainty over agriculture," Donnie said.

Though Donnie's family was glad he returned to the business, he acknowledged that his work is one of big efforts and small rewards.

And those rewards have gotten smaller with the hits to agriculture from the water shortage this year and in 2001, and other intrusions from the federal government, he said.

He and his wife have encouraged David and his older sister, Lauren, to pursue an education before deciding what they'll do with their lives.

While Lauren at one time expressed an interest in taking on the family business, Donnie isn't counting on it.

"We're 70 years old," he said of the business. "If David or Lauren stayed, we could make it to 120 years."

David said it would be cool to carry on the tradition, but there's just too much risk for it to provide a stable quality of life these days.

Donnie understands the position.

"I'd love for the kids to come back, but I think it's the American dream to want your kids to have a better life," he said.

Side Bars

Business down at feed store

Business keeps slipping for Robert Rice, the owner of Rice Feed & Supply Store in Dairy.

“Pretty slow,” he said. “We’re down about 60 percent from a year ago. Of course, expenses don’t go down. They go up.”

Rice, who normally sells thousands of pounds of seed, said his usual customers in the Poe and Langell valleys rented out their fields to potato farmers from the Merrill, Malin and Tule-lake areas.

Because they’ll receive only about a third of their usual water allocations, spud growers leased lands in the Dairy area that use well water for irrigation.

Because his business is a one-man operation — he works from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., six days a week — there’s little he can do to cut costs.

“There are not many ways you can cut, so try everything,” said Rice, who’s turned off lights on the soda machine and some of his overhead lights.

Rice also has been careful about what he has and hasn’t restocked.

A seed supplier from Eastern Washington recently visited and asked Rice, who normally orders through the supplier, why he hadn’t made his usual purchases.

TRACEY LISKEY, farmer and rancher, Lower Klamath Lake Road

Highest cost of the water crisis? The next generation

This year's water shortage reminds Tracey Liskey of the highest cost of the 2001 water crisis: the next generation.

Liskey's son planned to take over the family's agricultural operation. He worked on ranches in Kodiak, Alaska, and in western Oregon in preparation for that duty.

He returned in early 2001 to start working in the Klamath Basin again. Then the water was shut off.

"He saw what happened," Liskey said.

His son, thinking he needed to find a more stable career, moved to Idaho and started doing mechanical work. He now works as a diesel mechanic.



H&N photo by Andrew Mariman Tracey Liskey, a farmer and rancher on Lower Klamath Lake Road, talks about the impact of water shortages on the next generation. His son, needing a stable career, moved to Idaho and now works as a diesel mechanic.

Liskey said the two of them talk about his eventual return, but if it does happen, it would be years from now.

For now, Liskey's son needs to stay in Idaho for his wife and child. And unless he returns, there's no one to continue the family business into the next generation.

Like some others in agriculture, Liskey now mentors young farmers and ranchers.

"My kids aren't coming back, so I want someone to still be around," he said.

GARRETT ROSEBERRY, Off-Project cattle rancher, Bly

Drought likely to hurt weight of cattle for off-Project rancher



Garrett Roseberry expects the cattle he grazes on his 9,000 acres near Bly will not weigh as much as they should come fall.

The off-Project irrigator said rains late this spring helped, but without a good winter, the impact of drought will be felt in the upper reaches of the Klamath Basin, which is typically drier and has poorer soil. Many cattle are grazed on national forest land, and Roseberry said that's where some of his concern lies.

"A lot of the native vegetation just hasn't had the chance to grow," he said.

Roseberry said he will manage to grow a hay crop on another 500 acres, but he expects his tonnage will be down.

He uses both surface and groundwater resources, but will depend heavily on his wells because surface sources won't be able to provide enough for his irrigation needs.

— Ty Beaver

**T.J. WOODLEY, district manager, Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District
Number of irrigators seeking assistance more than triples**

The district manager of the Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District said three to four times as many farmers and ranchers than last year are seeking assistance this year.

"A lot of farmers and ranchers are trying to find programs that can keep them in business this year," said T.J. Woodley, who helps with drought-relief programs.

The Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District provides advice and tutelage about land and water conservation and management practices, and helps farmers and ranchers locate grants for conservation projects.

Many irrigators who have asked for help this year are looking for grants to dig new wells, fix old wells or buy irrigation equipment.

Woodley said grants have been hard to obtain due to the recession, but there is some funding available because a drought has been declared in the area.

"It's just our hope that the Klamath Basin can weather this storm, and irrigation in the Basin starts to improve," he said.

The increase has put extra pressure on Woodley and his staff, not that it bothers him.

“It’s a service that we’re glad to provide — anything we can do to help,” he said.
— Joel Aschbrenner

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