

# Embracing Change At Young's Farm

By Gary Young

Embracing change is always difficult. What often helps is understanding the past and the evolution of events that brings us to today. I am going to take a moment to try to clarify the last few years.

In 1999, we learned that for every year we continued to farm and refused to extinguish our irrigation water rights, the value of our farm would decrease by approximately four percent. We were stunned! We immediately went to work trying to change what we still believe to be a misguided rule.

A ten-year reprieve signed by the governor and called the Young's Farm Bill passed the 2000 state legislature. Instead of four percent each year the value of our farm would decrease by approximately forty percent at the end of the ten years.

Using this time to try and "Save the Farm" gave us some hope. Trying to sell the farm's development rights seemed like the best opportunity to preserve our land. I speak from the heart when I say we love this farm and believe the rich soil of this valley deserves to be farmed and produce food.

The creation of the Arizona Agriculture Protection Act was the first success of our efforts. Codified as Title 3 Chapter 18 of the Arizona Revised Statutes, it gives state recognition and definition to "Protected Farmland".

Then, because the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) had decreased our Water Duty from 4.3 acre feet per acre per year to 2.9 acre feet, we believed the 1980 water code needed to be opened and changed. Most everyone advised us that this would be impossible and controversial. However, we succeeded! Now "Protected Farmland" is recognized in state water law and ADWR cannot take any more irrigation water rights away from "Protected Farmland". (ARS 45-483)

Friends, customers, and visitors to our annual pumpkin festival donated over 150,000 dollars to the Central Arizona Land Trust and the Trust for Public Lands to finance a capital fundraising campaign.

Working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the "Save Young's Farm" effort was able to obtain Arizona's first ever Federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection grant for over half the money needed. However, due to the economic downturn coming with the new century, the state's struggle to balance an over-extended budget, and other factors, raising the other half proved to be out of reach.

I think the final blow came in September of 2004 when four of the seven State Transportation Board members denied our Highway Enhancement grant proposal even though it was overwhelmingly endorsed and recommended by the Northern Arizona Council of Governments and the State Transportation Board's own advisory committee.

In the fall of 2004 we were approached by the town of Prescott Valley essentially asking us to annex Young's Farm into their town. City services would be valuable ... but we were still trying to remain hopeful about saving the farm, and we believe the rich history of Dewey-Humboldt deserves a chance to develop with its own unique character.

In January 2005 we officially ended the "Save Young's Farm" effort and started working toward:

- Finding another property where we can continue in production agriculture because that is what we want to do;
- Ensuring the continued availability of Young's Farm products desired by our customers; and
- Finding a buyer who appreciates the value of our farm and offers the best hope for a quality project highlighting the history and reflecting the character of our community with appropriate scale and services.

We are excited to have found a ranch and farm operation in central Oregon approximately 80 miles east of Bend. Protected on the north by the Blue Mountains and watered by two streams running year-round, the land now produces hay and cattle.

**We are proud to announce a new partnership with the Basha Family to carry Young's Farm products in their AJ's Fine Food Stores and we have started our own "online store" at [www.youngsfarminc.com](http://www.youngsfarminc.com).**

We believe that Don Allison of Monogram Companies and Tom Chambers are the right partners to buy the farm, work with the community and create the next chapter for Young's Farm. We plan to work with them to build a smooth, positive transition.

For updated farm status information please check our web site at [www.youngsfarminc.com](http://www.youngsfarminc.com) or email us at [information@youngsfarminc.com](mailto:information@youngsfarminc.com).

