



YAKIMA CHIEF HOPS®

MEET YAKIMA CHIEF HOPS' NEW BOARD CHAIR: A Q&A FEATURING KEVIN RIEL



Yakima Chief Hops (YCH) is proud to announce an important leadership transition with the appointment of Kevin Riel as the new Chair of the Board of Directors. A highly respected leader in the hop growing community and owner of Double 'R' Hop Ranches, Riel brings decades of hands-on experience, a strong personal dedication to sustainable agriculture, and a passion for strengthening the connection between growers and brewers.

Introducing, Kevin Riel of Double 'R' Hop Ranches, the New Chairperson of the Yakima Chief Hops Board of Directors!

Q: Tell us a little about your background in hops.

A: My great-grandfather immigrated from Canada to the Yakima Valley to work for the Moxee Hop Company in 1897. His son, my grandfather, started our current farm in Harrah, Washington. My mother's family were also hop farmers in Moxee. Other than my time obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Information Systems, I've been a hop grower all my life. My daughter Jessica has been on the farm for almost 10 years and is starting a new generation for our family farm.

Q: What does becoming the new Chairperson of the Yakima Chief Hops Board of Directors mean to you?

A: Yakima Chief Hops is vitally important to our family farm, as almost all of our product is handled by YCH at this time. We are big supporters of YCH and its culture. So, it is very important to both me and my family that I devote as much time as needed to help lead and govern YCH. I've learned from other experiences how valuable leadership is to an organization, so I'm very willing to put in time to make YCH as successful as possible.

Q: How has your experience as a hop grower shaped the perspective you bring to the Chair position, and how will those insights help guide the governance of Yakima Chief Hops?

A: I feel the biggest lessons I've learned as a hop grower that I bring to this leadership position are the importance of a quality product and great people. If you can bring both of these critical pieces to the marketplace, you will be successful. I also feel I've learned a few other lessons about leadership from my time on boards of agricultural finance cooperatives. Keeping alignment with stakeholders is another key to success.

Q: Can you share what is unique about Yakima Chief Hops' Board of Directors structure?

A: YCH has an amazing governance model. The Board of Directors is made up of 11 individuals, with seven directors elected from Yakima Chief Hops' base of grower-owners, with an additional four independent directors from outside of the company. It introduces some of the most dedicated hop growers in the industry to the board, along with a good share of very capable outside folks who bring varied and incredible skills to the table. When strategic decisions are made, they are made with the business experience and passion of the grower-owners, along with the critical outside viewpoints of some of the best businesspeople around, who are also fully engaged in the company. This is our key to success.

Q: What are your key areas of focus for the next three years at the helm of the Board?

We are seeing changes in the hop market and industry that are somewhat expected, but also new in this cycle. There is an opportunity for disruption and innovation within the marketplace. My focus will be to help lead the discussions that will be needed to navigate this environment and create an atmosphere that will be conducive to positioning YCH to be a market leader.

Q: What does leadership mean to you?

A: A great leader is one who understands how to support people and create a learning environment, so that all involved continue to grow. Getting the best out of myself and those around me is the key.

Q: Who is your leadership inspiration?

A: It would be easy to list one or several famous leaders or businesspeople to answer this question. But honestly, it's quite simple—I'm a big fan of personal mentorship. I've had several great mentors throughout my life, and they have helped me to become the person I am. I also believe in trying to be a mentor for others and find that I learn the most from trying to help others in their leadership journey.

Q: What impact do you hope to make as Chairperson?

A: It's been exciting to watch the governance model "bloom" at YCH over the past several years. Mike Smith, along with the Board of Directors, did a great job of leading this journey, and it's my goal to continue along this path. I recognize that our board is made up of some very busy individuals. I respect the time that they have to give to YCH and also know that they are capable of great things! The next several years will be exciting to watch develop.