



Poplar and willow ambassadors launched around New Zealand

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A group of top farmers have joined forces with the Poplar and Willow Research Trust to help promote the value of poplars and willows on New Zealand farms.

"Poplars and willows have an important role in developing greater resilience in our farming systems, so we're using the knowledge and experience of some top farmers who know the true worth of poplars and willows on their land," Trust chairman Bruce Wills says.

A range of farmers have been invited to become ambassadors.

"Their role is essentially one of education; they could be invited to speak at field days or other rural events, talk one-on-one or accept visits with farmers wanting advice about poplars and willows, or be a point of contact for regional council land managers or other rural professionals offering extension services to farmers such as DairyNZ, Beef + Lamb NZ or fertiliser companies.

"Each of the ambassadors will act on their strengths or areas of knowledge. Most of them have been planting poplars and willows for decades, some have won environment awards and held positions on catchment groups and other industry organisations. Their point of difference is their belief in the value of poplars and willows on their farms."

The ambassadors to date are Tom Mandeno and Bill Garland from Waikato; Brent Mountfort from Bay of Plenty; Rob Faulkner and Bill Busby from Gisborne; Dave Read, Philip Holt and James Hunter from Hawke's Bay; Mark Shaw and Roger Pearce from Taranaki; Shane Carroll and Ash Rodie from Horizons; Robert Alloway, Hamish Sims, Guy Williams and Andy Renton from Greater Wellington; and Hunter Harrison from Tasman.

More ambassadors would be welcomed in the South Island and the northern North Island.

The Trust was formed in 2012 to improve the quality, suitability and use of poplars and willows through research by breeding, testing and releasing new poplar and willow clones.

Approximately 700,000 hectares of pastoral hill country in New Zealand needs space-planted willows or poplars for erosion control. Their deep root systems provide the best means of minimising soil erosion and in turn, help to keep rivers healthy. Most rivers require willows for bank stabilisation to manage flooding, and waterways need shade. Poplars and willows provide shade and shelter for stock and can also be used for fodder in summer; willows also provide food for bees in spring. When planted appropriately, space planted poplars and willows can qualify for the ETS.

Click for more information and contact details for the [ambassadors](#) or the [trustees](#) or more general information about the [work of the Trust](#).

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