

**Media Release – embargoed until June 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Exciting new developments at the NZ Dryland Forests Initiative**

On June 25<sup>th</sup> 2014 the NZ Dryland Forests Initiative will hold its AGM at the Marlborough Research Centre in Blenheim. At this meeting, NZDFI project chairman, Shaf van Ballekom, will announce three exciting developments:

- New propagation facilities available to advance NZDFI breeding work
- A \$50,000 donation to support research by the NZDFI
- Funding for up to four PhD scholarships to focus on NZDFI work

Together these developments represent a great boost for the NZDFI, already recognised as one of the most innovative and exciting developments in NZ forestry today.

- **State of the art propagation facilities available at Proseed**

Good news for NZDFI is that Ngai Tahu-owned seed company Proseed, is well advanced with building a new propagation facility at its site in Amberley, Canterbury. Proseed has been a partner in the NZDFI since its inception. This new facility, together with skills and resources, enhances NZDFI potential to undertake controlled pollination of selected parent trees and develop techniques for the propagation of cuttings.

Proseed manager Shaf van Ballekom is excited about collaborating with NZDFI in the new facility.

*“This is a significant investment by our owners and reflects Proseed’s commitment to the durable eucalypt programme. Not only will the facility allow us to graft new orchard selections from the breeding programmes, but also we intend investigating techniques for early flowering, and creating hybrids, as well as propagation techniques.”*

- **Marlborough beekeeper donates \$50,000 to support NZDFI research**

Marlborough beekeeper James Jenkins, of Marlborough Gold Honey, has made an unsolicited donation of \$50,000 to the project. James’s donation comes without obligation, but James has an interest in two aspects of the NZDFI’s work – growing high-value, durable timber as an alternative to radiata pine, and the potential for using eucalypts as part of a strategy to provide pollen and nectar to support bees year-round.

*“Initially I backed this project from the timber perspective,” says James “I am fascinated by the potential of these trees, and the exciting markets and returns to growers. But now I realise that they*

*have the potential to provide pollen and nectar in the autumn and winter off-season. For beekeepers this means more beehives can be kept, which will be good for individuals, the region and the country.”*

James acknowledges that he works with many farmers in Marlborough who are happy to have his hives on their property and not be paid because they value the bees as crop pollinators. James considers that the money he would otherwise be paying to these farmers is a significant part of his donation to NZDFI.

- **Funding for four new PhD scholarships**

The University of Canterbury School of Forestry has secured forestry commodity levy funding of \$50,000 per annum for up to four new PhD scholarships that will focus on NZDFI work. The School of Forestry is a foundation partner of the NZDFI, and a number of academics and students are already contributing to the rigorous science which underpins all the NZDFI's work.

Three students have already been selected to start work on projects looking at breeding for heartwood properties, measuring timber durability and inter-site variation in tree growth, and further projects will come on stream soon.

School of Forestry head, Professor Bruce Manley, says:

*“We are pleased to be a partner in a project that is attempting to broaden the base of plantation forestry in New Zealand and enabling the planting of new species on new sites. The project provides exciting research opportunities for our students - both postgraduate and undergraduate. The energy and enthusiasm associated with NZDFI makes it a stimulating initiative to be part of.”*

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More photos available to media on request.



Above: The new Proseed propagation facility takes shape, Amberley.



Left: Paul Millen (left) and members of the NZDFI Extension team Clive Paton and Sean McBride inspect trial plantings of ground-durable eucalypts.

## Notes for media

### The New Zealand Dryland Forests Initiative

#### Breeding select eucalypts for naturally durable timbers

The New Zealand Dryland Forests Initiative (NZDFI) is a commercially-oriented research and development project. It aims to develop genetically improved planting stock and management systems for ground-durable eucalypt species suited to New Zealand's dryland regions.

#### Our vision

Our vision is for New Zealand to be a world-leader in breeding ground-durable eucalypts, and to be home to a valuable sustainable hardwood industry based on eucalypt forests, by 2050.

In practical terms, the NZDFI aims to develop a valuable, complementary land-use for farmers in the warmer parts of eastern New Zealand where rainfall is low and unreliable.

We are:

- selecting elite trees from within our diverse genetic resource to provide growers with superior planting stock for NZ dryland.
- researching and developing sustainable management systems for growing ground-durable eucalypts to produce high quality hardwood.
- developing techniques to screen young trees for desirable wood quality characteristics, so that selection and breeding work can yield the greatest end-use benefits.

The NZDFI is a unique, exciting project with a strong focus on strategic research goals. It is backed by an effective scientific programme, extensive on-farm trials, and an expanding industry network. We have a clear vision to deliver sustainable benefits to New Zealand's dryland farmers.

The NZDFI is a collaborative cross-sector research and development project. Its progress relies on the work of closely integrated management, science, and extension teams. Key contributors to these teams include the Marlborough Research Centre, the University of Canterbury, Proseed, and a number of experienced independent consultants. Our teams work closely with landowners and other trial site managers. The NZDFI also works in partnership with many other organisations.

#### **NZDFI and Trees for Bees research**

Eucalypts have huge potential to be part of the solution to maintaining healthy bee populations in New Zealand. Many species are precocious flowerers, and may also flower at times of year when other species, including manuka, are not flowering. However, there is a dearth of knowledge about the flowering behaviour of different eucalypt species in different parts of the country, and also the quantity and quality of pollen produced by different species.

The NZDFI is collaborating closely with other organisations working to protect the future of honey bees in New Zealand. Together we are planning a nationwide research project to address the following questions:

- What are the flowering times of durable eucalypt species in New Zealand and do these change from north to south?
- Which durable eucalypt species (and genotypes) offer high quality pollen and nectar?
- How many of these species are needed in a woodlot or shelterbelt to support the bees on my property?

Our aim is to begin work on this project in 2015.

#### **Ends**