

**10 August 2017**

**Conference Communiqué 2**  
**Day 2 from EDS Conference *Tipping Points***

Nature would have legal status under a government with the Greens “at its heart,” day two of the Environmental Defence Society’s *Tipping Points* conference heard.

MP Eugenie Sage, standing in for party leader James Shaw, said that nature has a fundamental right to life, and a Green government would order a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Resource Management Act.

“The Productivity Commission’s review of the RMA has focused on economic efficiency, rather than social and environmental outcomes,” she said.

“It hasn’t had the broad public engagement which changes to our major environmental and planning law deserve. Royal commissions enable robust and thoughtful independent analysis which inform Parliament’s law making.”

Sage said the royal commission could recommend modification of the RMA or that it would be thrown out and replaced with something new, but the bottom line would be that humans exist within the environment.

Much of the rest of the day 2 of the conference was dominated by discussion about taking an ecosystems-approach to environmental management.

WWF New Zealand campaigns head Peter Hardstaff said it was “bloody hard to do”, but worth doing.

Te Ohu Kaimoana chief executive Dion Tuuta said it isn’t a new thing – Maori have been doing it for centuries, and it’s the principle needed to complete the Quota Management System.

Integrated Kaipara Harbour Management Group programme manager Willie Wright said holistic, ecosystems-based management was the aim of the harbour’s management plan, bringing together the health of the harbour and the land.

Sanford chief Volker Kuntsch said that much of damage occurring in the oceans has its roots in land management issues, including sediment loss and excessive nutrient load.

EDS policy director Raewyn Peart said that looking after wetlands and creating more of them would be an effective way of stopping sediment and nutrients getting to the sea.

Landcare Research and Auckland University ecologist Professor Bill Lee ran a ruler over the cost of planting the riparian margins of all New Zealand’s waterways, and found that for every dollar spent, \$3 of benefits would be gained – up to \$5.2 billion worth of benefits.

The University of Otago’s Professor Marc Schallenberg said it was all very well recognising tipping points once we have passed them, but it’s much better to see them before we get to them.

NIWA freshwater research manager Dr Scott Larned said that was possible, citing the Montreal Protocol on the ozone hole as an example.

Auckland University's Professor Simon Thrush - using the collapse of the Canadian cod fishery as "the poster child" of the impact of going past environmental tipping points – said that New Zealand needs better information if it wants to identify tipping points before we get to them.

"New Zealand's data isn't good enough to identify tipping points," he said. "We need to build up capacity if we want to move to ecosystems-based management."

Eric Jorgensen, who chairs the Marlborough Sounds Integrated Management Trust, said the disconnect between communities and between government agencies is the biggest challenge facing groups like his.

"We are waiting for agencies to catch up," he said. "At the moment their approach is very ad hoc."

EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart outlined the benefits of the Seachange marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf and called for agencies to implement it.

At the end of the day, there was a "pitch a policy" session in which members of the audience suggested election ideas.

Earlier, EDS CEO Gary Taylor had spelled out an election "wishlist" of policies on behalf of EDS that were well received by most of the audience. The wishlist is:

#### **The resource management system**

- Set up a process to review New Zealand's entire resource management system.
- Consider a Royal Commission or similar to conduct an independent, evidence-based national conversation on the way forward.
- Include legal, administrative and pricing elements.

#### **Terrestrial biodiversity**

- Substantially ramp-up investment in Predator Free NZ.
- Place a moratorium on tenure review and land clearance on pastoral leases.
- Commence a thorough review of High Country policy.
- Implement the outcomes of the collaborative process on NPS Biodiversity.
- Ramp up DOC's core funding.
- Value ecosystem services in any cost-benefit analysis for development.
- Protect outstanding landscapes and avoid watering down the NZCPS.

#### **Freshwater**

- Speed up implementation of freshwater reforms.
- Implement the balance of the LAWF recommendations.
- Price all use of freshwater (not just bottling) and invest revenue in clean-ups.
- Require land use consents for all intensive farming (so environmental impacts can be fully considered).
- Include sediment in the National Objectives Framework.
- Expand Water Conservation Orders to cover associated land (to ensure the values protected by the Order are not compromised by land-sourced impacts).
- Assist rural NZ with transition to lower impact land uses.
- Stop irrigation subsidies for intensive agriculture.

- Provide funding support for small town wastewater plant upgrades.

### **Marine**

- Enact Marine Protected Areas legislation that includes the EEZ.
- Enact the Kermadec Oceans Sanctuary Bill.
- Amend the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act to create a stronger governance body for the Hauraki Gulf.
- Implement the Seachange Tai Timu Tai Pari marine spatial plan (shameful tardiness from agencies).
- Roll out marine spatial planning to other areas in New Zealand (Marlborough Sounds, Bay of Islands, Stewart Island, Bay of Plenty etc).
- Initiate a full independent review of the fisheries management system.
- Phase out fishing methods which damage the seabed (trawling and dredging) through spatial restrictions.
- Invest in the development and application of environmentally-friendly harvest methods.

### **Environmentally sound development**

- Review the Business Growth Agenda, to reduce our dependence on environmentally-damaging activities for economic growth.
- Develop an urban development strategy, emphasizing compact settlements aligned along public transport corridors with congestion pricing.
- Prioritize energy efficiency investments in business and home environments.
- Investigate the potential for offsetting unavoidable development impacts.

### **Climate Change**

- Set up a Climate Change Commission as recommended by the PCE.
- Task it with developing a transition plan to net zero emissions.
- Task it also with responsibility for developing adaptation strategies.

EDS's next conference is the *Australia-New Zealand Climate Change and Business Conference* which is being held in Auckland on 10-11 August 2017 [www.climateandbusiness.com](http://www.climateandbusiness.com)

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