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Media Release

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NZ environmental groups join forces to oppose weakening of RMA

The Environmental Defence Society, Forest & Bird, Fish & Game, Greenpeace New Zealand, Ecologic, and WWF-New Zealand have released an open letter to Hon Amy Adams, Minister for the Environment, expressing profound concerns with the recent Technical Advisory Group report on the core sections of the Resource Management Act.

“All the major New Zealand environmental groups have come together to express their collective alarm at the recommendations contained in the TAG report. Implementation of its recommendations would lead to real environmental harm and significant deterioration of living standards for all New Zealanders,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“The recommendations do not result from any identified deficiency in the RMA and have nothing to do with improving environmental management.

“The new provisions would need to be litigated in court, bringing uncertainty and increased costs and delays for communities and businesses for years to come,” Mr Taylor said.

Forest & Bird Conservation Advocate Claire Browning said that the most progressive and important thing the RMA did in 1991 was to recognise nature’s limits and the need to manage and live within them.

“The RMA was the result of combined efforts by Sir Geoffrey Palmer (Labour) and Hon Simon Upton (National) with both major parties supporting its core provisions for 21 years.

“The TAG proposals would be a huge backwards step for environmental law in NZ.

“These sections of the RMA are like a constitution for our environment, and the foundation of our economic and social well-being. We can’t have them politicised and amended every time there’s a change of government,” Claire Browning said.

Chief Executive of Fish & Game New Zealand, Bryce Johnson, said that the recent Horizons One Plan decision of the Environment Court, which establishes limits around pollution and injects some real environmental sustainability into agriculture, shows the current system is working.

“The Act isn’t broken and doesn’t need fixing. What it needs is consistent and forthright implementation by those responsible for its administration”.

Greenpeace New Zealand's Chief Policy Advisor Nathan Argent said that the RMA sets global standards for environmental protection. Those standards are now at risk of being abandoned.

"The TAG is proposing to re-write environmental legislation to suit our biggest polluters at the cost of New Zealanders.

“The Advisory Group's proposals could signal yet another assault on our land, our air, our rivers and our coastlines which would deliver a hammer blow to our global reputation and be a huge setback to building a cleaner, smarter economy,” Nathan Argent said.

“If the Government wants to get economic growth it’s not going to achieve that by polarising New Zealanders over environmental issues,” said Guy Salmon of Ecologic.

“A better answer is to improve the speed and certainty of the RMA’s processes. This reform seems to be romping off in the opposite direction.”

Gary Taylor said that the combined environmental groups have sought a meeting with the Minister for the Environment to discuss the report.

“We note that Government has not yet endorsed the recommendations and hope that continues to be the case,” Mr Taylor concluded.

A copy of the open letter to the Minister for the Environment can be viewed [here](#) and the alternative EDS TAG report referred to in the letter [here](#)

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