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**Media Release: EDS expresses deep concern at Department of Conservation job losses**

The Environmental Defence Society has expressed its deep concern at today's announcement that there are to be sweeping job losses at the Department of Conservation.

"This is the latest in a string of restructurings and job losses at DOC," said Chairman of the Environmental Defence Society, Gary Taylor.

"It is also the most recent manifestation of a series of recent Government policy announcements that will harm our environment. New proposals to amend the RMA will weaken the legislation and lower environmental standards on private land, whilst this announcement will impact adversely on the one-third of our country administered by the Department.

"The Department of Conservation has been chronically underfunded by government. In the last six or seven years, the Department's budget in real terms has decreased or at best, remained static, whilst the cost of maintaining New Zealand's natural environment has gone up.

"Of course operational efficiencies are important, but being in a permanent state of change is incredibly debilitating and demoralizing for staff. Not only that, when you lose good people you lose valuable institutional knowledge.

"It really is time for DOC to enter a settled phase. The one-third of New Zealand it administers is the best part in ecological and landscape terms. Our unique natural heritage is of vital importance – it not only supports our primary industries and provides recreational opportunities but it is also part of our national identity.

"With the budget so tight, the Department is being forced to go cap in hand to the business sector to try to obtain funding to undertake its legislative duties. There would be outrage if the health budget was treated in this way.

"DOC needs more support from the government, not less. We need to ensure that the Department retains the staff and resources to protect our natural heritage for future generations of New Zealanders," Mr Taylor concluded.