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**Media Release**

**EDS congratulates Conservation Minister on approval of Akaroa Marine Reserve**

The Environmental Defence Society has congratulated the Minister of Conservation, Hon Dr Nick Smith, for finally approving the Akaroa Marine Reserve.

“We are delighted that the Minister seems to have found a formula that works and we look forward to the formal Order-in-Council that will complete the process,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“It is a reversal of the original decision by the previous Minister, who refused the application.

“EDS earlier assisted the Akaroa Harbour Marine Protection Society to challenge that decision in the High Court. That challenge was successful and the decision was referred back to the Minister for reconsideration.

“Now new Minister Smith has approved the application, albeit with a small reduction (55 hectares) in its size to partly address local iwi concerns.

“We are respectful of the views of Ngaitahu and hope that they will see the potential for the existing taiapure and the new marine reserve, which are adjacent, to work together for conservation.

“Marine reserves are a vitally important way of managing and understanding our precious marine environment. They create an undisturbed habitat that acts as a natural reservoir for adjacent areas. In Akaroa Harbour, which has been heavily fished, there is the added presence of the threatened Hector’s dolphins and other marine mammals and a burgeoning nature tourism industry.

“We note that this marine reserve has been a very long time coming. Brian and Kathleen Reid from the Akaroa Harbour Marine Protection Society are to be congratulated on their persistence over the past 20 years.

“There is a clear need for legislative reform in this area to broaden the grounds for marine reserves. In addition more collaborative and less confrontational processes are needed so that communities can constructively engage in the formation of new reserves.

“We hope to work with the Minister to improve management of our marine environment which is a strong focus of EDS’s current policy research work,” Mr Taylor concluded.