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Media Release

EDS welcomes successful outcome of Mackenzie Country forum

The Environmental Defence Society welcomes today's public launch of the Mackenzie Agreement in Twizel by Conservation Minister Nick Smith.

"It is gratifying to see that the collaborative process over the future of the Mackenzie Country has borne fruit," said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

"The Mackenzie is a truly iconic part of New Zealand with its sweeping vistas and mountain surrounds. The tussock grasslands of the basin are highly valued by all Kiwis and the agreement to protect a large proportion of them is especially welcome.

"The agreement proposes 100,000 hectares of the Mackenzie be protected for landscape and biodiversity conservation, with 26,000 hectares being agreed for intensified land development.

The method of conservation will be unique in New Zealand – establishing a Trust to negotiate joint management agreements with private landowners and high country run-holders. This is similar to the private land conservation arrangements practiced in some European countries.

"The process has, like all collaborative exercises, posed some challenges. It is hard to get over old enmities and beyond position-stating into constructive dialogue. So I'd like to acknowledge the roles played by Richard Thompson (facilitator) Guy Salmon (Project Manager) and Kelsey Serjeant (EDS representative).

"I'd also like to thank the Mackenzie and Waitaki District Councils for their support. Local MP Jacqui Dean has been an effective broker between the participants and the government.

"This process had its genesis at an EDS Workshop we held in Twizel in November 2010. At the end of that day, the parties agreed that dialogue was better than litigation and a long-term vision for the area should be agreed between the landowners and interest groups.

"Over two years later, we have finally got there.

"The ball is now in the government's court to introduce the recommended legislation to create the Mackenzie Country Trust, and make a contribution to funding its work."