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Media Release

EDS congratulates Minister of Conservation on Milford – Dart tunnel decision

The Environmental Defence Society congratulates the Minister of Conservation, Hon Dr Nick Smith, for refusing consent to the proposed Milford – Dart tunnel project.

“This project would involve the construction of an 11km tunnel under two National Parks with portals at each end within the parks,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“The construction impacts would be considerable even with every effort to mitigate them. It would be akin to a mining operation during construction.

“National Parks are our most highly protected lands in the public estate. They are there for their natural and intrinsic values. Commercial concessions within National Parks must necessarily be low impact and consistent with the purposes of the National Parks Act.

“The National Parks Act 1980 requires national parks to be preserved in perpetuity in their natural state. This decision is consistent with that.

“Quite apart from the impacts of the project, the idea of ramping up visitor numbers to Milford is not a good idea. The location is already subject to heavy tourist use and more people will simply detract from the wilderness values that attract people in the first place.

“We consider that approval of the project would have been contrary to the National Parks Act and unlawful. The Minister has done the right thing,” Gary Taylor concluded.