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EDS welcomes Labour's environmental commitments

Deputy Labour Leader Hon David Parker outlined his Party's environmental policy during a speech at the Cashmere Club, Christchurch last night.

"It is great to see Labour committing to repeal any changes to the Resource Management Act passed by National which weaken environmental protections. The RMA is fundamental to maintaining high environmental quality in New Zealand and any attempts to weaken it need to be strongly opposed", said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart

"Labour has also committed to beefing up environmental safeguards for deep sea oil and gas including providing for broader public participation in decision-making and requiring capping devices to be readily available.

"This is a positive move. EDS is strongly opposed to National's current proposal to exclude public scrutiny of deep sea exploratory well drilling. This is a risky activity which could result in serious reputational damage to New Zealand if we experienced an oil spill. It needs to be assessed through an open and transparent process rather than behind closed doors.

"EDS also supports Labour's commitment to beef up the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management in order to ensure that all our lakes and rivers are swimmable, fishable and safe for food gathering. We consider that the limits currently proposed under the draft National Objectives Framework, which are to be incorporated into the existing NPS, to be too weak to ensure this.

"Under Labour we would also see the roll out of additional national policy statements addressing the management of our estuaries and indigenous biodiversity. The recent Supreme Court decision on King Salmon has highlighted the important role that these documents play in establishing strong environmental bottom lines at a national level and EDS supports greater use of them.

"On oceans, whilst Labour has committed to improving the process to create marine protected areas, we would like to see provision for broader oceans policy. This needs to include beefed up governance arrangements and a legislative framework for marine spatial planning.

“Our current ad hoc approach to oceans is already creating significant problems such as the current conflict between proposals to mine phosphate on the Chatham Rise, deep sea fishing, and benthic protection areas.

“EDS is convening a political forum at our forthcoming *Navigating Our Future* conference in Auckland on 5-7 August 2014, where we have invited political party leaders to discuss their respective environmental policies. Further information on the conference can be accessed [here](#).

“The environment will be an important consideration in the upcoming election and we want to ensure that people are well informed on the choice between different party policies,” concluded Ms Peart.