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Media Release

EDS welcomes Labour's Conservation Policy

The Environmental Defence Society has welcomed Labour's Conservation Policy including the key objective of halting the current pattern of indigenous biodiversity decline within ten years.

"Labour has committed to completing the draft National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity as a matter of priority. This is welcome news. With biodiversity (including kiwi) continuing a rapid decline, we must identify national bottom lines for protecting biodiversity as soon as possible," said EDS Executive Director Gary Taylor.

"Labour has also committed to reinvigorating DOC's role as an independent statutory advocate in decision-making processes as set out in the Conservation Act. In recent years NGOs have had to pick up the slack.

"On the conservation estate, Labour has committed to effectively resourcing pest control, as well as exploring collaboration with private and community sectors. Pests are one of the biggest challenges facing our indigenous biodiversity so this is an essential component for any conservation policy. We would also see under-represented ecosystems added to the conservation estate. This recognises that lowland ecosystems are critically under-protected.

"Labour has also committed to a systematic classification of stewardship land. While this is supported, it is important that the classification is based on conservation value, not potential economic uses.

"On wild rivers, Labour would protect remaining free flowing rivers from being dammed and amend the NPS Renewable Electricity Generation to encourage renewable energy with low environmental impacts.

"On private land, Labour has also committed to provide support to private landowners who protect conservation values on their land. This recognises that conservation land is only 30% of our terrestrial land area, and biodiversity decline must be addressed across public and private land.

"On oceans, Labour has committed to establishing a network of marine protected areas in the territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone. This is well overdue.

"Labour has also committed to limiting fishing to dolphin-safe methods throughout the natural range of Maui's dolphin. Labour would also create a Kermadec Island world sanctuary area. This is good news.

“On Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act, Labour would remove the ability for a Minister to remove land from Schedule 4 and would add ecological areas, world heritage areas and marine mammal sanctuaries to the Schedule.

“Labour has also committed to returning the power to determine applications for minerals activities to occur on conservation land to the Minister of Conservation alone and aligning the legal test for allowing mining activities on conservation land with the legal test for allowing concessions for other activities.

“Labour would conclude tenure review, while completing the high country parks network by direct purchases. It also supports the 2013 Mackenzie Agreement in principle and would protect the Mackenzie basin from inappropriate water use and irrigation. These policies are great news for our high country and tussock landscapes.

“Overall our analysis shows that Labour’s conservation policies have much to commend them,” Mr Taylor concluded.

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