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Media Release

EDS welcomes aspects of National's Environment and Freshwater Policies but expresses disappointment at Climate Change initiatives

The Environmental Defence Society has welcomed aspects of National's Environment and Freshwater policies, announced earlier this week, but expressed disappointment at its stance on climate change.

"In freshwater policy, the provision of \$100 million over 10 years to buy especially sensitive areas of land, recognises that retirement from all farming is required in some places to improve freshwater quality," said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

"This does not diminish the responsibility of farmers to manage their activities in a way that maintains or improves water quality. Much farmer-led and Fonterra-encouraged progress has been made in planting riparian strips and in fencing waterways and that should continue. And meaningful limits need to be established for farming.

"I note that there has been some criticism of National's proposal to regulate that dairy cattle should be kept out of freshwater systems. It has been argued that this is a voluntary target anyway. But we see a clear need to regulate as a backstop to ensure laggards comply with this important measure. So EDS is strongly supportive of the policy.

"We also welcome National's continuing commitment to collaborative processes and to implementation of the Land and Water Forum's recommendations. There have been ups and downs with some of that work but overall the direction of travel has been positive.

"EDS is however extremely disappointed to see National still intends to amend sections 6 and 7 of the Resource Management Act.

"This reflects an out-dated and erroneous understanding of the existing law (post the Supreme Court decision in *EDS v King Salmon*). The proposed amendments would lower environmental standards across a range of environmental domains including, ironically, freshwater. It is disturbing to see a proposal of this kind included in a major Party's platform.

"Other aspects of National's Environment Policies are good. There is a range of sensible process improvements to the RMA proposed; National will progress the Environment Reporting Bill; and it has to its credit enacted the first environmental regulation in our Exclusive Economic Zone.

"However the climate change policies proposed are weak. National's Emissions Trading Scheme is so hollowed-out of any meaningful price signal as to be worthless as a measure. Our international stance is embarrassing.

“I note that the Prime Minister made two relevant undertakings to us at a recent meeting with leading ENGOs. He agreed that it would be sensible to “hit the refresh button” on both RMA reform and on climate change policy if he leads the next government.

“We would certainly welcome that and would seek to hold him to it. The debate over RMA reform has been seriously confrontational and a more collaborative approach is called for. And New Zealand’s climate change stance, both domestically and internationally, needs some serious recalibrating.

“Overall, National’s Freshwater, Environment and Climate Change policies are a mixed bag: some very good, but unfortunately some in need of more considered thought,” Mr Taylor concluded.