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Media Release

Port Pegasus salmon canned

The Environmental Defence Society has confirmed that the proposed salmon farm at Port Pegasus, a remote part of Stewart Island, is not going to proceed. At a meeting of the Southland Aquaculture Reference Group earlier this week, it was decided that there were overwhelming difficulties with the proposal.

EDS's CEO Gary Taylor, who was a member of the group, says that it failed to stack up on almost all criteria.

"The technical suitability of the site in terms of flow characteristics was poor. It meant that if salmon farming did proceed it would have to start on very low volumes that would not have been commercially viable," said Mr Taylor.

"Moreover even if higher volumes of output proved possible in the future, small changes in value or costs could render the project uneconomic: even on the best-case scenarios, economic viability was marginal.

"The comprehensive landscape assessment showed that the entire area was an outstanding natural landscape. Because of the earlier decision in the Supreme Court case *EDS v King Salmon Ltd*, that meant that all adverse landscape effects had to be avoided. With present technologies that isn't possible.

"A further insurmountable problem is the presence of New Zealand Sealions which are breeding in Port Pegasus. Under the relevant provisions of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, adverse effects on them have to be avoided too. Given our present state of knowledge, it's hard to see how that could be achieved with the degree of certainty required.

"So overall the group came to a clear decision that the project was not viable and my understanding is that no further central or local government funding will be available for further work.

"EDS was pleased to be involved with the Southland Group which worked through all of the issues in a thorough and considered manner. But in the end the proposal proved uneconomic, unlawful and impractical.

"From an environmental perspective, this is a good outcome and on top of last year's decision by Ministers to not proceed with investigating opportunities in Fiordland, essentially protects some of New Zealand's most pristine and wild coastline from inappropriate aquaculture development," Gary Taylor concluded.