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## Media Release



### EDS congratulates Government and Conservation Minister on DOC funding increases

The Environmental Defence Society has welcomed the budget announcement of increased funding for the Department of Conservation. Finance Minister Hon Grant Robertson announced a \$181.6m increase in DOC's funding over four years. This represents a 16 per cent increase on the current departmental allocation.

"Finally, we have some realistic funding for the Department's core financial needs," said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart.

"EDS has been arguing for some years that DOC has been chronically underfunded for the job it does. The Department is responsible for roughly one-third of New Zealand's land mass, for providing infrastructure for a burgeoning tourism sector, for conservation of seabirds, mammals and other life in our enormous marine environment, as well as acting as an advocate for nature on private land. This is a very big job.

"We see the increased funding as a vote of confidence in the DOC leadership team. After some years of debilitating and distracting restructuring, the Department is finally settled and able to manage an expanded budget with the clear expectation that additional outputs will be delivered efficiently and effectively.

"We expect to see expanded staff levels within the Department with increased policy, science and RMA capability.

"More funding for predator control, announced last weekend, is especially welcome. We need to push on hard with ridding New Zealand of introduced predators that decimate our native birds.

"We are also delighted to see additional funding allocated to the protection of the Mackenzie Basin's unique landscapes and biodiversity values. EDS has been working hard to halt the ongoing degradation of the Basin, so additional resource to help achieve this is much appreciated.

"There are other pluses for the environment in the budget. Environment Minister Hon David Parker announced the creation of a Resource Management Act oversight unit to improve council enforcement efforts. Last year, EDS highlighted the highly variable council enforcement practices in our *Last Line of Defence* report, so it's great to see timely action to help rectify this.

"There is funding for the previously announced initiatives on climate change including the establishment of an independent Climate Change Commission and a Green Investment Fund.

"The budget has also allocated funding to support an independent review into the fisheries management system as well as to upgrade fisheries monitoring and compliance efforts. EDS has been calling on Labour to honour its election promise of establishing an independent fisheries review, so it is excellent to see that the government plans to move on this issue.

"Overall, this budget represents a huge step forward for New Zealand's environment," concluded Ms Peart.