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## Media Release

### Environment Report shows need for major reform

The Environmental Defence Society (EDS) welcomes the release of the latest report under New Zealand's national environmental reporting regime. The report, *Environment Aotearoa 2019*, was produced jointly by the Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ and is a four-yearly synthesis of domain-specific reports. It looks at the state of our environment as a whole.

"What it shows is that most environmental indicators are getting worse and so there's a need for some fundamental rethinking of the way we manage our natural and built resources," said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

"The report identifies nine priority issues under five themes, relating both to the kinds of effects we are seeing and the categories of human activity that are producing alarmingly adverse outcomes for our environment.

"The report paints a grim picture and, as with previous reports, should be seen as a real wake-up call. It is unacceptable that in the last 15 years the extinction risk has increased for 86 species, that wetlands continue to shrink, soils are in decline and impacts on freshwater from both farming and urban activity are huge. Sadly, none of this comes as a shock," said Mr Taylor.

"From an economic perspective, we are continuing to erode the natural capital on which all of our primary production is based," said Dr Greg Severinsen, a senior policy advisor at EDS.

"But environmental decline is not just about provisioning services – the ability of the natural world to sustain life – it is also about who we are as a country and the ability of Māori to exercise their cultural rights. As the report says, our identity suffers when we experience damaged or lost native species and ecosystems.

"Some change is beyond our control, notably due to climate change, and we need to be creative and proactive in how we respond and adapt. But most adverse change can be avoided if we are clever and committed enough," said Dr Severinsen.

"Overall the report drives home the urgent need for an overall change in the way we manage our environment," said Gary Taylor.

"The present legal and administrative set-up is clearly not working. I look forward to the Government's resource management reform initiative getting underway later this year. It must be bold in its scope and aspirations. Otherwise *Environment Aotearoa 2019* will be followed by successive reports that continue to chart a distressing decline in most environmental indicators," Mr Taylor concluded.