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Media Release

EDS welcomes strong line up for the environment

The Environmental Defence Society (EDS) is delighted with the portfolio allocation in the new Government.

“We are witnessing a sea-change in the priority attached to conservation and the environment in the cabinet appointments,” says EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“It is not an exaggeration to say that from an environmental perspective, this is the most progressive line-up of Ministers we have ever had. The signals that it gives are that we are heading into an exciting period of economic transformation that will overwhelm the incrementalism that has characterised previous administrations.

“It’s good to see David Parker, a very senior and experienced Minister, taking on the environment and economic development portfolios. He may have lost the battle over the freshwater tax but the coalition agreements all signal much faster progress in cleaning up our waterways by more tune-ups of regulation and incentives.

“Eugenie Sage is one of the most knowledgeable members of Parliament on conservation and environment and it’s great to see her experience recognised by appointment as Minister of Conservation. The coalition agreements signal a significant increase in DOC funding, which must be used to best advantage. She is also Minister of Land Information, which brings together the key portfolios in High Country tenure review, a process in urgent need of fundamental review.

“James Shaw takes on the key Climate Change role and is tellingly also an Associate Finance Minister. He will drive the creation of the Climate Commission and a carbon budget for New Zealand. This is a vital economic transformation role that finally will give greenhouse gas mitigation the priority it needs.

“Putting housing, urban development and transport together is clear recognition that transport shapes cities and access is a key driver for urban form and housing development. Phil Twyford is a very experienced operator who will get moving on addressing housing supply.

“Finally it’s good to see the behemoth of the Ministry for Primary Industries being split between Fisheries, Agriculture and Forestry.

Fisheries needs to modernise its approach after 30 years of the quota management system so a close focus by new Minister Stuart Nash is welcome. Agriculture will be part of the wider economic transformation agenda and having Damian O’Connor help develop an equitable pathway to lower intensity farming that doesn’t tip over into gross subsidies is important. And planting more trees is good for both the environment and for climate change. Ensuring we maximise native afforestation and limit exotics will be an important challenge for Minister Shane Jones.

“Overall, this new line-up looks pretty darned good for the environment,” Mr Taylor concluded.