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**Media Release**

**RMA Advice Service cancelled by government**

The Environmental Defence Society, an environmental law-based ENGO, has revealed that the government is discontinuing funding of its RMA Advice Services from July this year.

“The government has advised us that a strategic relationship agreement EDS has had with the Ministry for the Environment since 2010, under which we provide a nationwide advice service on the Resource Management Act to individuals, groups and iwi, will not be renewed,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“Under the agreement EDS hosts a plain-English guide to the RMA website; provides free RMA and legal advice to individuals, iwi and community groups; publishes community guides on key environmental issues; and runs RMA community workshops around New Zealand.

“In some form or other, we have been providing this capacity-building for more than 10 years and it has proved valuable and appreciated by those that we serve.

“Plan-making shapes the communities we live in and it’s important that people understand how to get involved and be effective in those RMA processes – which can be daunting for non-experts.

“The Ministry has told us that in light of the proposed changes to the Resource Management Act, it is reviewing the extent to which it provides advice to external stakeholders and the way this advice is provided. It says that “things have moved on” since our 3-year agreement with the Ministry was signed in 2010.

“We respectfully disagree and think that there is a bigger need than ever for such advice especially given the RMA reforms in the pipeline.

“To be clear, EDS considers that there is a real need for the kind of capacity-building we have been doing with communities around the country. People need to understand the RMA in order to participate effectively in plan-making processes that shape their communities.

“Feedback from clients and communities has been overwhelmingly positive and appreciative of the service.

“We are now looking for replacement funding so we can continue to provide the service to New Zealanders,” Mr Taylor concluded.