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**Media Release**

**EDS welcomes first stage of freshwater action plan**

The Environmental Defence Society welcomes today's announcement by Ministers Adams and Guy that the Government has finalised the first stage of an action plan to improve the way freshwater is managed.

"The Government has adopted the Land and Water Forum's recommendation that a collaborative planning process be made available for freshwater issues," said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

"This will give councils an alternative to the current plan making process. Collaboration is quite different from consultation. It engages parties in constructive dialogue, rather than adversarial behaviour and litigation. And having limited appeal rights incentivises people to engage.

"The first stage of the reforms will also involve the creation of a National Objectives Framework, which was a key recommendation of the Land and Water Forum.

"The development of a robust National Objectives Framework is critical to the future of freshwater policy, as it will guide objective and limit setting around the country. If the objectives are too weak, the package of reforms simply won't achieve the improved water quality New Zealanders are seeking.

"EDS is looking forward to the opportunity to engage on the content of the National Objectives Framework.

"Ministers have also dropped the idea of changing the process for Water Conservation Orders. That is a very good thing. Water Conservation Orders are important protection measures for wild and scenic rivers and need to be retained.

"What would be helpful now would be for Ministers to release a timeline for implementation of the balance of the Land and Water Forum's recommendations," Mr Taylor concluded.