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National Objectives Framework for Freshwater a good start but needs strengthening

The Environmental Defence Society has welcomed the release of the proposed National Objectives Framework (NOF) for Freshwater.

“This is the critically important keystone to the entire freshwater reform process,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“When EDS initiated the Land and Water Forum process in 2008, we had no idea it would take so long to get to this important stage. We finally have a draft of the much-needed national guidance for freshwater management in New Zealand.

“The overall NOF framework appears to be consistent with the recommendations of the Land and Water Forum. That much is welcome.

“However the actual standards and bottom-lines proposed are incomplete and those that are there will need strengthening.

“In particular, we are aware the Science Panels and the Reference Group recommended that macroinvertebrates (small living critters in freshwater systems) should be included – but they haven’t been. We think this can and should be fixed in the final version.

“Overall, some of the other bottom-line standards appear weaker than expected and in many cases are considerably lower than current water quality. We will need to take scientific advice on what adjustments are required. We have to have standards that ensure that no further deterioration in freshwater quality occurs and that we are on an overall improvement pathway especially in lowland streams and rivers.

“Overall, New Zealand’s freshwater should be swimmable and fishable as a minimum.

“The government is running a series of workshops and consultation feedback has been sought with a closing date in February.

“On this occasion the government is generally on the right pathway which will be welcomed by my colleagues on the Land and Water Forum as being in accord with the consensus position we arrived at. EDS stands by that consensus,” Mr Taylor concluded.