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Media Release: Tukituki Catchment Proposal hearing nearing conclusion

The Board of Inquiry hearing into the Tukituki Catchment Proposal, a freshwater plan for the Tukituki Catchment and a resource consent application for the Ruataniwha irrigation dam, resumed in the Hawkes Bay this week.

The Environmental Defence Society filed its final submission, which responded to a report, prepared by planners representing various parties, setting out two versions of the freshwater plan.

“The first version supports the The Hawkes Bay Regional Council approach of utilising a single nutrient management approach to water quality. This would rely on phosphorus management to control nuisance periphyton,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“The second version supports the EDS and Fish and Game approach and would utilise both phosphorus and nitrogen management.

“These two approaches are the most keenly disputed aspects of proposed Plan Change 6. The choice of option in many respects will determine whether the proposed dam consents should be approved or not.

“Earlier in the hearing, EDS presented expert evidence showing that a single nutrient management approach would not be effective in reducing nuisance periphyton, an indicator of nutrient pollution. Maintaining or improving water quality is a key objective of the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management.

“EDS’s submissions also responded to a planning report prepared for the Board of Inquiry by Hill Young Cooper. EDS disagrees with opinion of the author that an environmental objective may also ‘enable’ or ‘provide for’ the use of water for primary production.

“EDS agrees however that the question of whether the single nutrient approach gives effect to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management will depend upon the Board of Inquiry’s findings on the technical evidence,” Mr Taylor concluded.

The hearing is expected to conclude with the closing submissions of Hawkes Bay Regional Council on Tuesday 21 January. EDS is represented at the hearing by Nicola de Wit (EDS) and Robert Enright (DLA Phillips Fox).

EDS submissions are available on the EPA website (www.epa.govt.nz)