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**Media Release**

**“Trust us – we know what we’re doing” is confirmed as the Government’s regulatory approach for oil drilling in our deep oceans**

The government has announced that the exposure draft version of regulations made under Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects) Act 2012 are to be passed without substantive change. These regulations make exploratory drilling in our deep oceans a non-notified activity. Environmental approvals will be given by the Environmental Protection Authority via an in-house process.

“EDS argues, along with many New Zealanders, that if we are to have oil and gas exploration in our deep oceans, we should have world class environmental oversight,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“But making exploration drilling non-notified leaves the environmental approvals process up to the Environmental Protection Authority with no public scrutiny, transparency, involvement or hearing.

“We are being asked by the Minister to “trust us – we know what we’re doing.”

“The approach creates a real possibility of regulatory capture by the industry, one of the factors that a Presidential Inquiry found contributed to the disastrous Deepwater Horizons spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

“The Minister for the Environment has said that the level of regulation is “proportionate to the effects”. This assertion is risible: the consequences of a spill in New Zealand’s oceans are enormous and would be devastating to our seabirds, marine mammals, fisheries and coastline.

“This light-touch regulation is clearly disproportionate to the potential environmental effects.

The Minister is putting our marine ecosystems at unwarranted risk by having a closed-shop consenting process. This is not what New Zealanders who support deep sea drilling expected. Several opinion polls have shown that support for the industry is conditional on best practice oversight.

“I am concerned that the debate about these regulations has been conflated into a debate about whether we should have oil and gas activities in our deep oceans. Even allowing that oil and gas exploration should be allowed, these regulations do not cut the mustard.

“We will be looking further into the regulation-making process. We will be also be looking to work directly with the industry in order to influence best practice outcomes,” Mr Taylor concluded.

*See EDS’s original submission on their website – [www.eds.org.nz](http://www.eds.org.nz).*