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Media Release: EDS has big win on Tukituki Case

The Board of Inquiry released its Draft Report and Decision on the Tukituki Catchment Proposal this afternoon.

The draft decision significantly strengthens the freshwater management regime which will apply to the Tukituki catchment. It also proposes to grant consent to the Ruataniwha irrigation dam subject to conditions.

“We are delighted that the Board of Inquiry appears to have addressed our primary submission which raised serious concerns about freshwater quality,” said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart.

“During the hearing, EDS presented expert evidence to support our view that the single nutrient management approach proposed in Plan Change 6 was deficient. We submitted that a dual management approach, which included controls on nitrogen as well as phosphorus, was needed to protect freshwater quality.

“In its draft decision, the Board of Inquiry indicates that the evidence in favour of a dual nutrient approach was “compelling” and that the hands off approach to the control of nitrogen proposed in the plan change “would not give effect to the NPSFM [National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management]” It has decided to amend the plan change to incorporate dual nutrient control.

“This finding is a big win for the Tukituki Catchment and also has wider implications for the management of freshwater quality elsewhere in the country.

“We note that the Board of Inquiry proposes to grant consent to the Ruataniwha dam subject to conditions. We have yet to form an assessment as to the implications of the higher water quality requirements on the commercial feasibility of the project.

“We note that the Board of Inquiry has adopted an “overall broad judgement” approach to the issues in this case. We are not convinced this is the correct approach. We consider that there are some environmental bottom lines that should have been applied.

“We are still working through the detail of the decision, and will be lodging substantive comments with the Environmental Protection Authority next month.

“EDS would like to thank all those who have provided support for our case and enabled us to achieve a significant finding on the need for a robust approach to water quality management,” concluded Ms Peart.