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Media Release

EDS welcomes Green Party freshwater policies

The Environmental Defence Society has welcomed the Green Party's freshwater policy, which was announced this morning in Hamilton.

"I'd have expected the Greens to have a progressive policy stance on freshwater management," said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

"But what's particularly welcome is the respect shown to the Land and Water Forum and the support for the Forum's recommendations. Those recommendations represent cross-sector agreement by iwi, industry, environmental, and recreation interests and constitute a blueprint for reform. All political parties should be willing to stand behind the Forum's work.

"What's different here though is an indication that the Greens would speed up implementation and work towards an earlier improvement in water quality.

"We also welcome the undertaking to review the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management. Whilst the government's recent review did introduce some bottom lines for freshwater quality, the list is incomplete for some important indicators and has some internal contradictions.

"It's clear that improvements can be made to the national policy instruments and we would be pleased to work with the Greens on that.

"The idea of a new initiative to protect wild rivers is interesting. Some more clarity about how it would fit with the existing water conservation orders would be helpful.

"Finally, the undertaking to work towards making rivers suitable for primary human contact – swimming – is an improvement on the government's target of secondary human contact – wading.

"New Zealanders expect to be able to swim in our rivers, lakes and streams without getting sick. How long it will take us to get there will depend on how fast we can implement new freshwater management policies," Mr Taylor concluded.