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Media Release

New Hauraki Gulf pollution alarming

At the Environmental Defence Society's conference *Navigating our Future: addressing risk and building resilience*, a NIWA Scientist this morning revealed some serious new problems affecting the Firth of Thames in the Hauraki Gulf.

Dr John Zeldis, Principal Scientist, Marine Ecology, NIWA described how recent work has identified a substantial increase in dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) since 2005.

"This indicates that there has been a very recent deterioration in the state of the Firth of Thames," said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

"DIN is pollutant that leads to eutrophication of the waters of the inner gulf. We heard that most of that load coming from the land is agricultural in origin.

"We know that the inner Gulf is under stress from historical land use patterns but this very recent indication of further deterioration is very disturbing.

"There is a clear need to improve the national framework for estuarine management but the Waikato Regional Council does have existing responsibilities under the Resource Management Act

"The Council has responsibility to manage freshwater runoff to prevent pollution. We understand that improving things is a big challenge but here we have evidence of a substantial deterioration of very recent origin.

"The Regional Council should be taking urgent action to bring this pollution load under control," Mr Taylor concluded.