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Media Release: Dodgy process for King Salmon expansion



The Ministry for Primary Industries has initiated a process to give King Salmon Ltd an “easy ride” for approvals for new salmon farms in the protected Outer Marlborough Sounds, says the Environmental Defence Society.

“MPI is essentially acting as a co-applicant for approvals that will override the Marlborough Council’s plans that prohibit aquaculture development in the Outer Sounds and that protect scenic and landscape values,” says EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“The special process allows the Minister for Primary Industries to make regulations that bypass normal RMA processes in a way redolent of the National Development Act of the early 1980s.

“The Marlborough Council is currently reviewing its plans and that is the proper place for decisions about aquaculture to be made. The issue should be subject to independent, strategic assessment and Environment Court scrutiny, not an ad hoc Ministerial decision that lacks planning integrity and has a narrow focus.

“The process is a very questionable one. It invites people to make written submissions, which will be considered by a panel appointed by government. There is no provision for cross-examination of experts and so the hearing lacks robustness.

“The panel makes recommendations to the Minister who decides, and can impose his own provisions directly into the Council plan, with no rights of appeal. It looks very much like going through the motions.

“Judging by the information provided on the website, there’s very little weight being attached to landscape impacts and acknowledgement of the earlier Supreme Court decision in EDS v King Salmon Ltd. That decision is binding law and at least 3 of the 6 sites proposed should not even have got this far.

“Unfortunately King Salmon, a company that has always sought special treatment, has got it from our Government once again.

“This pitches those concerned about the landscape and tourism values of the Sounds against a powerful coalition of interests: a largely foreign owned company with a financial stake in the outcome together with the Government that makes both the rules and the decisions.

“However EDS will still be submitting in opposition to the proposals. Even Ministerial decisions are subject to the rule of law,” Mr Taylor concluded.