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## **Media release: EDS supports a better future for our fishing**

The Ministry for Primary Industries has released a consultation document 'The Future of Our Fishing' as part of its ongoing review of the fisheries management system.

"It's great to see MPI exploring ways to improve our fisheries management system," said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart. "The Quota Management System has been in place for over 30 years and has long been overdue for an overhaul.

"The consultation document covers a wide range of important issues including discarding, shared fisheries, certification, information gathering, ecosystem based management, commissioning of research and delegation of decision making.

"MPI has included specific options for the implementation of an integrated electronic monitoring and reporting system on fishing vessels and for changing regulations to enable new trawl technology.

"MPI is also proposing the establishment of a National Fisheries Advisory Council to provide independent advice to the Minister and MPI.

"The document acknowledges the Government's commitment to moving towards an ecosystem approach to fisheries management by 2020, which is positive. However, we expected to see more developed policy thinking on how this might be achieved.

"We are also pleased to see that the proposals support finer-grained spatial management and devolved decision-making which potentially align with processes such as *Seachange Tai Timu Tai Pari* in the Hauraki Gulf.

"There are some notable gaps in the matters addressed by the consultation document.

"The lack of sufficient investment in good science to guide fisheries management remains unaddressed. For many stocks we still lack basic information on stock size, structure and recruitment dynamics, despite having a quota management system in place for 30 years.

"This means that we are flying half-blind in many cases.

"The document is also silent on habitat degradation which is likely having a significant impact on the health and productivity of many fish stocks.

"In many places, including the Hauraki Gulf, Kaipara Harbour and Marlborough Sounds there has been significant degradation of habitats of importance to fisheries from stressors such as accelerated sedimentation and/or use of seabed-damaging fishing gear.

“Of considerable concern is the failure of the consultation document to recognise that the environmental sector has an important role to play in the nation’s fisheries management system.

“Although the Fisheries Act specifically recognises environmental interests alongside Māori, commercial and recreational interests, we were unable to find any reference to the environmental sector in the consultation document.

“EDS is currently undertaking independent research into the strengths and weaknesses of the current fisheries management system and we will be feeding the initial findings of our work into the MPI review process.

“We look forward to working with MPI and the natural resources sector to further flesh out the proposals.

“How our fisheries are managed is of great national interest. We encourage all those with a stake in the future of our coastal and ocean areas to read the document and make a submission,” concluded Ms Peart.

*Submissions on the consultation document close on 23 December 2016. Further information is available at <https://mpi.govt.nz/news-and-resources/consultations/future-of-our-fisheries#proposals-docs> .*