

Marine Reserves reform

A surprising outcome from EDS's *Wild Places* conference last week was the revelation that there is a likely parliamentary majority to extend the anticipated marine protected areas legislation to embrace the Exclusive Economic Zone. In the Government's discussion paper, which received around 5000 submissions, the proposal was limited to the territorial sea.

Extending marine protection to the EEZ makes good sense. Development activities (oil, gas, mining and fishing) can take place there so why not protection? Labour, the Greens, NZ First and the Maori Party all agree. If United Future joins in then there's a majority in the parliament.

You'd expect National to come to the party as well. After all, it was one of their pre-election commitments.

Fishing

The fishing industry is taking on the Government again. The sector is highly litigious and is now challenging the Kermadec Oceans Sanctuary via two sets of proceedings in the High Court.

As reported in our last newsletter, EDS has applied for leave to join the proceedings to support marine protection in our oceans. Crown law has applied to have one set of proceedings struck out and the other put on hold until the Bill is passed.

Seafood New Zealand's chairman has been in the wars as well, responding to reports of large numbers of seabird and marine mammal deaths including dolphins as a result of getting caught in trawl nets. George Clement's response was to say:

Nobody wins by dolphins or seals or birds putting themselves at risk near our fishing boats and causing themselves harm. So we treat it very seriously.

We assume he'd now claim to have 'mispoken.'

Mackenzie Country tussock grasslands destroyed by tenure review

Another terrific presentation at the EDS Conference showed the alarming loss of tussock grassland in the Mackenzie Country. The truly iconic landscapes are rapidly disappearing, largely as a result of dairy

conversions and irrigation. The presentation, by Landcare Research scientist Dr Susan Walker, is available [here](#).

EDS is a party to Plan Change 13 in which the Mackenzie District Council is trying to bolster protection in its plan. The evidence exchange process is currently underway and our experts have just completed a team site visit. We'll push hard for better protection.

But there is clear evidence that tenure review is seeing much of the lowland areas that could make up a dryland park being privatized. The consequences of this are that what were formerly public lands are being privatized and having their landscape and ecological values destroyed.

EDS contends that tenure review should stop while a strategic way forward for the Mackenzie basin is developed by the newly established Mackenzie Country Trust.

We'll be putting this proposition to the Prime Minister when we meet him next month.

Australia-New Zealand Climate Change and Business Conference

The conference is slated to take place in Auckland on 11-12 October. The programme is pretty well complete and will include presentations from Minister Paula Bennett, key New Zealand and Australian officials, business leaders and sector group representatives.

The conference is targeted at a business audience and is an opportunity to get up to date with fast-moving developments in climate policy, both here and overseas. It will examine how businesses should be addressing risks and will exemplify how many are reconfiguring the way they do business and report to shareholders.

Local government, insurance and finance sectors will dig deeply into the adaptation challenges here and in Australia. You can see the programme and register [here](#).

Unitary Plan

The biggest plan-making exercise in our history has reached a conclusion this week. Well, perhaps it'd be more accurate to say it's reaching the end of the current phase, as there's likely to be several truckloads of

litigation to follow. The Auckland legal fraternity, well rested after a collective post-hearings sojourn on various Pacific Islands, will be girding its loins for Environment Court and High Court appeals, depending on the outcomes of the council deliberations.

EDS has focused on the environmental provisions in the plan. You'd be forgiven for thinking that the plan was only about housing if you relied on the media for information. Our first wade through the recommendations indicates that it's a mixed bag. Especially disappointing is the decision to open the door to more subdivision in the Waitakere Ranges, a door that was firmly shut after 15 years of litigation.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Coromandel next planning battleground

We reported last time on the disappointing decisions on the review of the Thames Coromandel district plan. How qualified commissioners can make decisions so clearly unlawful (and how the council can ratify them) is beyond understanding.

EDS has filed a comprehensive appeal in this case. It underlines how important an independent Environment Court is, a body able to sit above local politics and available to rehear key issues. We have assembled a great team to fight our appeal led by EDS lawyer Madeleine Wright and Barrister Bianca Tree, and mediation is scheduled for September.

Supporters who wish to help fund our efforts to protect the Coromandel coast can make targeted donations [here](#).

Seachange Tai Timu Tai Pari about to deliver

It's been a long haul, but the Seachange process is about to deliver New Zealand's first marine spatial plan for the Hauraki Gulf. It has been a difficult and complex process but the end is now in sight. The plan is to be presented to the Project Steering Group within the next few weeks.

We have been incredibly impressed by the leadership shown by the Stakeholder Working Group members who, despite challenges from

various quarters, have kept a strong focus on delivering what is in the best interests of the Gulf. Watch this space.

Tourist tax

The Green Party's idea of a border tax on inbound tourism has merit. It is a way of getting some additional funding into the pot to help manage the Conservation estate and deal with increasing visitor pressures.

Surprisingly, key tourism sector entities are opposed and instead run a tired argument about how the sector should be able to access GST revenues from international visitors. Good luck with that one.

Given the Prime Minister's receptiveness to the concept, this is looking a gift horse in the mouth.

The Greens' proposition was for the revenues from the levy to be split between tourism facilities and conservation work. But if the sector doesn't want to buy-in to the idea then we say let's put all the funding into direct conservation.