



PUELO
PATAGONIA

2025

ANNUAL
REPORT

PUELO PATAGONIA NGO | Puelo River Basin, Northern Patagonia, Chile



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

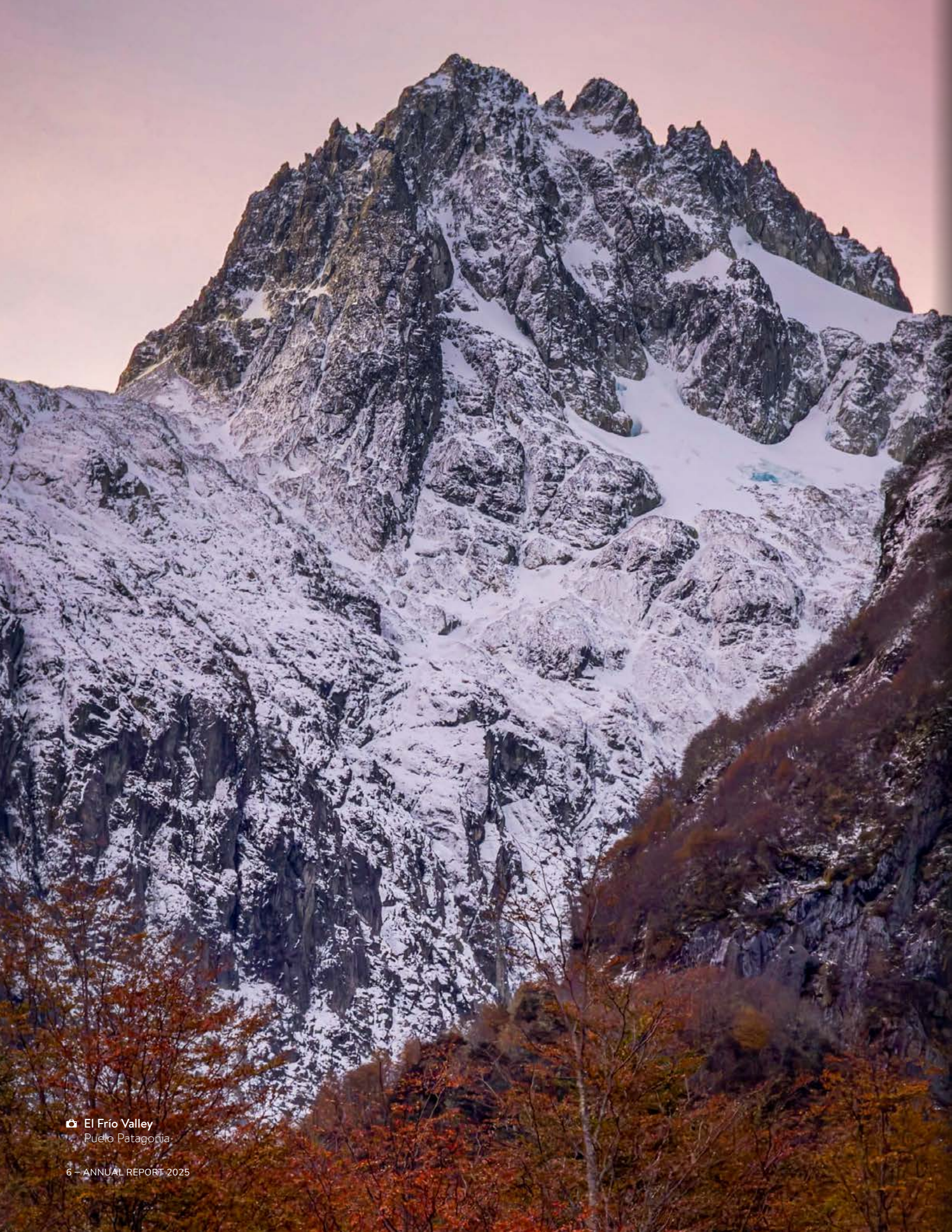


📷 Vizcacha de la Patagonia (*Lagidium wolffsohni*)
Urs Leuthäusser

TABLE OF CONTENTS



- 07 Letter from the Executive Director
Andrés Díez Prat
- 09 Who are we?
- 10 Our team
- 12 Our history
- 15 How do we work?
- 19 Our work in numbers
- 20 Why Puelo and Cochamó?
- 22 2025 Milestones
- 27 Events 2025
- 31 Puchegüín Special
- 32 » How a Bunch of Hippies Revolutionized Conservation Efforts in Chile
- 35 » Unprecedented Sighting of Huemules at Fundo Puchegüín: Population is Believed to be the Northernmost of Chilean Patagonia
- 38 » From Visitors to Guardians: The Visits That Connect People to Cochamó Conservation
- 43 Projects and Progress
- 44 » Conserva Puchegüín
- 48 » Community Engagement and Multiple-Use Protected Area Planning (Puchegüín)
- 50 » Water Reserve and River Protection
- 52 » Study and Conservation of Wildlife and Endangered Species
- 54 » Participatory Wildlife Monitoring
- 56 » Environmental Education: Discovering the Natural and Cultural Riches of My District
- 58 » Cordillera Puelo Patagonia Volunteer Program
- 60 » Tourism Regulations for the Cochamó Valley and La Herradura Circuit
- 62 Headlines that Defined Our 2025
- 65 Next Steps
- 67 Financial Statements



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE BIGGEST STEP HAS ALREADY BEEN TAKEN. THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE IS JUST BEGINNING.

Five years ago, we were three people and a part-time position working at Puelo Patagonia, with a long list of dreams and just one concrete achievement in hand: having stopped the Mediterráneo hydroelectric project. Today we are fourteen, and those dreams have been turning into real tools for protection: the definitive declaration of the Cochamó ZOIT, the creation of the district's first protected area with the Santuario de la Naturaleza Valle Cochamó, the first Ecological Flow Reserve for ecosystem preservation in the Río Puelo basin, and the purchase of the 133,000 hectares of Puchegüín. Had someone told me then, it would have been hard to believe.

But it's not just the size that changed. Everything has changed. The scale of the challenges, the complexity of the alliances, and the trust that communities have placed in us. That responsibility is an honor, and we feel it every day.

The year 2025 had one clear star: Puchegüín. A place of forests with ancient alerce trees, glaciers, wetlands, huemules, and a way of life deeply connected to the land. Today, this place cannot be sold to the highest bidder. However, I want to be honest about something that is often overlooked: buying land is not the same as conserving it. The purchase was a huge step, yes, but the most important part is what comes next.

We do not have all the answers. We are gaining a deeper understanding of how biodiversity functions and how people live here: the distribution of wildlife, the carbon sequestration capacity of primary forests, and traditional practices passed down for generations - such as livestock farming - and more recent ones - such as climbing. This information is not just a context; it is the

knowledge with which we build and strengthen nature conservation and the ways of life that have kept this place intact for generations.

With that same conviction — that protecting means first understanding — in 2025 we reached another milestone that took us eight years: the first Ecological Flow Reserve for ecosystem preservation in the Río Puelo basin. Eight years of technical, legal, and political work to ensure the river has a legally protected flow guaranteed by law. The river is not just landscape. It is water to drink, to fish, to irrigate. And now, it is also a precedent for river conservation in Chile.

None of this would be possible without the people involved. The Puelo Patagonia team is constantly on the ground in the district. The residents who participate in workshops, monitoring activities, and difficult conversations. And the allies and donors who support this work with patience and trust. To all of them, thank you. Without that network, this simply wouldn't exist.

The most challenging period we have ever faced lies ahead: managing our achievements responsibly, upholding new legal frameworks, and continuing to build trust in our beloved Cochamó district. To accomplish this, we must continue to rely on the people who believed in this work from the beginning.

I never cease to be amazed by what we have built together. And I know the most challenging and interesting part is still ahead of us.

Andrés Diez Prat
Executive Director
Puelo Patagonia





📷 Cometocino patagónico (*Phrygilus patagonicus*)
Urs Leuthäusser

WHO ARE WE?



We are a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving the natural, cultural and scenic heritage of the Cochamó district. We strive to promote responsible and comprehensive development for local communities.

OUR TEAM

We are a team driven by the mission of conserving the nature and culture in the Cochamó district.

BOARD



José Claro
President



Klaus Kosiel
Vice-President



Andrés Amengual
Secretary



Rodrigo Condeza
Treasurer

EXECUTIVE TEAM



Andrés Diez
Executive Director



Josefina Vigouroux
Director of Communications



Tatiana Sandoval
Director of Community Engagement



Nicolás Amadori
Director of Administration and Project Management



Guillermo Sapaj
Director of Conservation



Bernardita Ortiz
Content Coordinator



Sofia Riveros M.
Territorial Coordinator



Camila Cartagena
Administrative Assistant



Fernando Novoa
Wildlife Specialist



Niccolo Caruso
Operations and Logistics Coordinator



Leyla Musleh
Designer



Patriks Chávez
Puchegüin Park Ranger



Cristopher Cerón
Territorial Coordinator



Rodrigo Hevia
Conservation

COLLABORATORS



Campo Aventura
Puelo Patagonia

MEMBERS LONG-STANDING

Our members are individuals committed to making monthly contributions toward the conservation and responsible development of Puelo and Cochamó. Thanks to the support and commitment of our members, we remain an independent and autonomous NGO.

WORKING GROUPS AND ALLIANCES

- Conserva Puchegüín
- Grupo Patagonia Mar y Tierra
- Organización del Valle Cochamó
- ZOIT Cochamó Hualaihué
- Club Andino de Cochamó
- Ríos protegidos

PUELO COMMUNITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA



+52,000
Instagram followers



+26,000
Facebook followers



+5,834
Newsletter subscribers

OUR HISTORY

PROTECTING
COCHAMÓ AND
PUELO IS PART OF OUR
HISTORY

2006

HYDROELECTRIC THREAT IN COCHAMÓ

Plans are underway to build seven hydroelectric dams in the Cochamó district. These dams would threaten the rivers and valleys of one of the most pristine regions in northern Chilean Patagonia.

2013

PUELO PATAGONIA IS FOUNDED

A group of Cochamó enthusiasts created the NGO Puelo Patagonia to protect the Puelo River from the Mediterráneo hydroelectric project. The organization's mission is to preserve the natural, cultural, and scenic heritage of the Cochamó district while promoting responsible community development.

2016

DEFENDING THE PUELO RIVER

Thanks to legal actions, strong community pressure, and technical support from Puelo Patagonia, the Mediterráneo hydroelectric plant lost its environmental permit. However, the Fundo Puchegüín, which covers one-third of the district, remains in the hands of some of the plant's owners and those who hold water rights on the Manso and Puelo rivers.

SERVICES IN THE COCHAMÓ VALLEY COLLAPSE

The Cochamó Valley receives more than 15,000 visits each summer season, causing a collapse of services and infrastructure in La Junta, the heart of the valley. In response, the community has organized to mitigate the effects of mass tourism by founding the Organización Valle Cochamó (Cochamó Valley Organization, CVO).

2009

COCHAMÓ RIVER WATER RESERVE

The community organized through the citizen group Conservación Cochamó succeeded in having the Cochamó River and its tributaries declared a water reserve by presidential decree. The Cochamó River is one of the first rivers in Chile to receive this protection.

2011

THREAT OF A MEGA-HYDROELECTRIC
PROJECT ON THE PUELO AND MANSO
RIVERS

The Central Mediterráneo project has been proposed, which would involve damming the Puelo and Manso rivers and installing 211 high-voltage transmission towers that would cross the Reloncaví Estuary and more than 60 km of the district.

2017

TOURISM REGULATIONS IN THE COCHAMÓ VALLEY

The community has organized itself to manage tourism, and in partnership with Puelo Patagonia, a reservation system has been implemented with the help of students and volunteers to support on-site management, control access to the valley, and provide visitors information on how to care for the area. The initiative is beginning to show significant improvements in the management of responsible tourism in the area.

2019

FIRST SIGHTINGS OF HUEMULES IN THE PUELO RIVER BASIN

Puelo Patagonia has launched a scientific research project in the Puelo river basin, confirming the presence of huemules in the Cochamó district based on reports from local residents and the installation of camera traps. This discovery confirms that the area is a key site for the conservation of this critically endangered species.

2021

CAMPAIGN TO KEEP THE ZOIT IN THE DISTRICT

Following attempts by the owner of the Fundo Puchegüin to exclude 133,000 hectares from the Area of Tourist Interest, the community – with technical support from Puelo Patagonia, through the ‘Soy o No Zoit’ campaign- succeeded in updating of this designation, which aims to promote nature-based tourism in a responsible and planned manner for the benefit of the residents of Cochamó.

2023

309 HECTARES PRESERVED IN COCHAMÓ

After the sale of a property that included 80% of the trail to La Junta, Puelo Patagonia facilitated its acquisition by the Freyja Foundation, securing historical access and use of this trail for arrieros, climbers, visitors, and the local community.

COCHAMÓ VALLEY NATURE SANCTUARY

11,400 hectares have been designated as the district’s first and only official protected area. The site is now administered by the Organización Valle Cochamó, which is responsible for regulating tourism and protecting the area.

THE CONSERVATION OF PUCHEGÜÍN IS PARTICIPATORY

Before announcing the campaign to acquire and protect Puchegüin, Puelo Patagonia began conducting field trips and interviews with members of the local community to understand their vision and aspirations for this important area, developing a collaborative conservation project from the beginning.



2022

REAL ESTATE THREAT IN LA JUNTA

A 309-hectares real estate has taken the community by surprise, threatening 8 km of the historic Paso El León trail, one of the main access routes to the Cochamó Valley, which is also used by mountain communities for transportation and supplies. The community is organizing to prevent the project from moving forward.

A THIRD OF THE COCHAMÓ DISTRICT UP FOR SALE

The owners of the vast Fundo Puchegüin – of 131,859 hectares, which accounts for one-third of the district - are putting the property up for sale through the Christie’s auction house in New York, generating concern in the community and the world of conservation.

2024

CONSERVA PUCHEGÜÍN, PROTECT COCHAMÓ

The Conserva Puchegüin initiative, led by Puelo Patagonia in partnership with international allies, has been launched, and a purchase option agreement has been signed that grants a two-year period to raise funds, acquire the 133,000 hectares and implement and finance a long-term conservation plan.

2025

HUEMULES IN PUCHEGÜÍN

A subpopulation of huemules has been recorded in the Manso valley, expanding their range in northern Chilean Patagonia and reinforcing the importance of conserving this area to ensure a biological corridor of global significance.

PUELO RIVER WATER RESERVE

After years of collaboration between local communities and civil society organizations -including Puelo Patagonia– the Puelo River has been designated a Water Reserve for ecosystem preservation purposes.

TOGETHER, WE MADE HISTORY

Thanks to the support of people in Chile and the world, we raised US\$78 million to acquire and protect 133,000 hectares, marking the beginning of a new phase in transforming them into a future multiple-use protected area.



HOW DO WE WORK?

At Puelo Patagonia, we are committed to preserving the natural, cultural and scenic heritage of the Cochamó district. Through an independent approach, we aim to promote responsible and comprehensive development for local communities.



CONSERVATION

We promote conservation programs that strengthen the protection of the environmental assets within the district, through the implementation of conservation tools and mechanisms. Our goal is to preserve the area’s scenery, biological diversity, and cultural heritage while advancing scientific research and environmental education.



COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

Our goal is to strengthen local capacities and promote opportunities for participation to encourage community involvement in land management processes. This contributes to the conservation and preservation of local culture and traditions.



RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

Our goal is to promote local economic development by creating more opportunities for the community residents through sustainable and responsible initiatives.



TERRITORY PROTECTION

Through our technical and legal areas, we contribute to the conservation of the territory and the protection of its natural, cultural, and landscape values, promoting initiatives compatible with environmental balance and the permanence of local life.



 Pinturas rupestres Torrentoso
Puelo Patagonia

OUR WORK IN NUMBERS



+144k

hectares of protected
land in the district

+40

registered species

+ 319k

hours of monitoring
with camera traps

+49

participants in participatory
wildlife monitoring

1

ecological river flow
reserve declared for
ecosystem preservation

+70

volunteers who helped
families in the mountains

+21

workshops in
local schools

WHY PUELO AND COCHAMÓ?

The district of Cochamó is a unique place, featuring ecosystems rich in biodiversity, breathtaking landscapes, and a culture that reflects the history and spirit of its communities. This territory is not only valuable for those who live there, but also to the world, due to its high ecological value.



44,000 HECTARES OF ALERCE TREES | REFUGE FROM CLIMATE CHANGE

Scientific evidence confirms that protected or minimally disturb areas of Chilean Patagonia can store carbon per hectare more efficiently than Amazon forests, thanks to peatlands and their primary forests. The district of Cochamó is home to 20% of Chile's Alerce trees, ancient trees capable of storing large amounts of carbon, which gives them a crucial role in mitigating the effects of the climate crisis.

ENDANGERED SPECIES | UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY

The Cochamó and Puelo basins are home to endemic and endangered species, such as the Huemul (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*), Pudú (*Pudu puda*), Vizcacha Patagónica (*Lagidium wolffsohni*), Ranita de Darwin (*Rhinoderma darwinii*), Güiña (*Leopardus guigna*) and the Monito del Monte (*Dromiciops gliroides*), an endemic marsupial that represents one of the oldest and most unique evolutionary lineages in South America. With its vast and pristine mountain range, Cochamó is not only a biological corridor that allows wildlife to move throughout Patagonia, but also a vital refuge for their survival.

1,800 KM OF RIVERS, LAKES AND LAGOONS | FRESHWATER RESERVE

Cochamó is home to more than 1,700 hectares of ancient glaciers and over 10,000 hectares of wetlands and peatlands, which are powerful carbon sinks and are vital elements for the world's freshwater supply.

At the local level, the district's rivers provide for its residents and enable food production. They supply water to animals and people alike, and many communities still use them for transportation.

ARRIERO-GAUCHO CULTURE | LOCAL COMMUNITY

The district of Cochamó is home to communities with a rich arriero-gaucha culture. Even local muleteers were recognized as Living Human Treasures by Chile's Ministry of Cultures and Arts. Much of its community subsists on agriculture, livestock farming, and nature-based tourism. The descendants of settlers who came to live here almost two centuries ago have preserved many of the traditions of the "antiguos" (elders), and keep this legacy alive through mate, rural life and self-sufficiency.

Río Puelo 
Vicente Llanos



STUDENTS FROM PUELO AND COCHAMÓ KICKED OFF THE SUMMER SEASON WITH AN EDUCATIONAL CAMP AT LA JUNTA

On December 1, the Centro de Visitantes del Valle Cochamó (Cochamó Valley Visitor Center) officially opened. Among the first visitors we had a group of students from schools in Puelo and Cochamó participating in the program “Discovering the Natural and Cultural Riches of My District”, an environmental and cultural education initiative that seeks to connect young people with the land where they live.

2025 MILESTONES

THE YEAR COCHAMÓ MADE HISTORY



VOLUNTEERS PROVIDED SUPPORT TO FAMILIES IN THE MOUNTAINS FOR 21 DAYS

The fourth edition of the rural volunteer program benefited more than nine families of older adults living in remote areas of Puelo river.



COCHAMÓ COMMUNITY MADE PROGRESS ON THE PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OF THE FUNDO PUCHEGÜÍN CONSERVATION PLAN

Even before the launch of Conserva Puchegüín, residents from various localities within the district participated in the process that will define the future use of the Fundo Puchegüín, contributing their vision and knowledge to the development of the conservation plan and conducted participatory mapping aimed at identifying and integrating the historical uses of the territory into the plan.





RESIDENTS AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS MADE NEW SIGHTINGS DURING THE PARTICIPATORY WILDLIFE MONITORING IN THE COCHAMÓ VALLEY

In our Participatory Monitoring program, now approaching its third year, we have made significant sightings of the Vizcacha Patagónica (*Lagidium wolffsohni*), Cóndor (*Vultur gryphus*), Pudú (*Pudu puda*), Gato Guiña (*Leopardus guigna*), Zorro Culpeo (*Lycalopex culpaeus*), Chingue (*Conepatus chinga*), puma (*Puma concolor*) and Carpintero Negro (*Campephilus magellanicus*), among others.

WE'VE SPOTTED HUEMULES IN THE NORTHERNMOST PART OF CHILEAN PATAGONIA!

Thanks to our huemules conservation program, we confirmed the presence of a subpopulation of huemules in the Fundo Puchegüin. This is the northernmost record of this iconic species in Chilean Patagonia, which helps redefine its known range and provides valuable scientific evidence for the conservation of this critically endangered species.



Benjamín Valenzuela

PUELO AND FUTALEUFÚ RIVERS BECAME THE FIRST RIVERS PROTECTED THROUGH WATER RESERVES FOR ECOSYSTEM PRESERVATION PURPOSES

The conservation of these two rivers in the Los Lagos Region is a historic victory led by local communities and organizations that have worked for years to safeguard ecosystems essential to their culture, well-being, and economic development.



HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT: THANKS TO DONATIONS FROM CHILE AND AROUND THE WORLD, WE'VE MANAGED TO PROTECT 133,000 HECTARES IN COCHAMÓ!

And saving the best for last! We're ending the year with the big announcement that we've raised the funds and purchase the Fundo Puchegüin, making the start of a new phase for this place after seven years of work to implement a participatory conservation and management plan.



Austin Siadak



📷 Evento Alta Motivación
Benjamín Goluboff

EVENTS 2025

FROM COCHAMÓ TO THE WORLD



JANUARY 27

ALTA MOTIVACIÓN (HIGH MOTIVATION)

The Alta Motivación (High Motivation) event was held in Puerto Varas as part of the visit by international climbers to the big walls of the Cochamó Valley to support the efforts of Conserva Puchegüin. The athletes shared their experiences in the Cochamó Valley and discussed the role of climbing in conservation. The event included a panel discussion with representatives from the initiative and the outdoor community.

MAY - SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

COCHAMÓ POR SIEMPRE TOUR (COCHAMÓ FOREVER TOUR)

Updates on the initiative were shared through the short film Cochamó por Siempre (Cochamó Forever) and a panel discussion featuring members of the Puelo Patagonia and Conserva Puchegüin teams. This tour visited cities in Chile, Argentina and the United States, bringing together hundreds of people to advocate for the protection of Cochamó and Puchegüin.



JULY 3

SEMINARIO VOCES EN CONFLUENCIA (VOICES IN CONFLUENCE SEMINAR)

We participated in this event, which brought together communities, government officials, and scientific organizations to promote watershed protection in southern Chile. There, we shared our experiences working in Cochamó and Puelo. We were honored to have the mayor of Cochamó attend the event and sign a bi-regional agreement to strengthen river protection in Los Lagos and Los Ríos regions.





JULY 12

HUEMULES IN PUCHEGÜÍN, EL FRÍO VALLEY

Before Huemul Day, we presented our huemul findings at the Neighborhood Council meeting in the El Frío Valley area of the Cochamó district. We shared the results of our monitoring efforts with residents and their families before making them public.



OCTOBER 14

5TH NATIONAL MEETING ON PROTECTED AREAS

In October, we attended the 5th National Meeting on Protected Areas and Portal Communities at the La Moneda Cultural Center. There, we presented the Puchegüín conservation model as an example of replicable territorial governance.



SEPTEMBER 25, 26 AND 27

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF NOLS

As part of the 60th anniversary celebration of the National Outdoor Leadership School, held in Lander, USA, two directors of Puelo Patagonia received the Alumni Achievement Award, an honor that recognizes the impact alumni have on their communities.

OCTOBER 1

REDLAC

In October, we participated in the RedLAC 2025 Conference in Santiago and Frutillar. The conference brought together stakeholders from Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss conservation financing. During the event, Rodrigo Condeza, a member of our board, presented the Conserva Puchegüín initiative and its community-based conservation model during a panel on private conservation.



NOVEMBER 28, 29 AND 30

LADERA SUR FESTIVAL

To wrap up the year, we participated in this year's Ladera Sur Festival, which brings together thousands of people to celebrate nature and culture. As we do every year, we set up a booth, and this time, we took part in two panel discussions on the Patagonia stage. Our executive director, Andrés Diez, discussed the importance of collective action to protect places like Cochamó. Our board president, José Claro, and Mercedes Ibáñez, presented the short film "Cochamó por siempre" (Cochamó Forever) and shared updates on the latest phase of Conserva Puchegüín project.



PUCHEGÜÍN SPECIAL



OPINION COLUMN

How a ‘Bunch of Hippies’ Revolutionized Conservation Efforts in Chile

The purchase of Puchegüin marked a milestone for conservation in Chile and sparked urgent conversation about environmental philanthropy, local development, and Chilean’s role in protecting their country’s natural and cultural heritage.

On May 1, 2024, The New York Times ran the following headline on its front page: “How a Bunch of Hippies Saved the Yosemite of South America.” At that time, we had just begun a seemingly impossible campaign: purchasing and protecting the 133,000 hectares of the Fundo Puchegüin. The story behind that headline is the technical and legal opposition we mounted against an electricity project in the heart of Puchegüin, positioning ourselves on opposite paths putting us at odds with the party who was also the landowner. When the property was listed for sale in New York City in 2022, we made an offer despite having virtually no resources. As the NYT reporter put it, it was a true David versus Goliath story.

That remarkable story led us to finalize the purchase of Puchegüin in December 2025, thanks to donations from Chile and the world. However, the story alone is not enough. Behind that achievement lay 13 years of work by Puelo Patagonia in the Cochamó district and sustained collaboration with the community.

Additionally, key allies helped us connect with donors, and extensive field research was conducted to collect technical and scientific data demonstrating the importance of protecting this place.

While many thought achieving that was an impossible mission, we challenged ourselves to establish a new model when we planned the structure of this project: financing a project led by a Chilean organization based in Chile using Chilean capital.

When we launched the Conserva Puchegüin campaign, our hope was to raise half of the funds from Chile.

Were we a little naive? Yes.

Historically, environmental projects in Chile have been financed mainly with foreign capital. When they were financed locally, they were usually private parks.

Over the past two years of our campaign, we have invited Chilean business leaders and organizations to join us in a collective effort. We



have asked them to put their trust in a different model, one that protects ecosystems and creates jobs, while strengthening local economies and contributing to the country's development. This model offers a real alternative.

According to a report by the World Tourism Organization, tourism employs more than 691 thousand people in Chile, accounting for 7.4% of national employment. Against this backdrop, the campaign called for support of a collaborative conservation model that would bring economic benefits to the district. The model recognizes that Chile can envision a future beyond extractive industries.

Throughout that process, we didn't always receive monetary donations. However we did receive interest and advice. This is a necessary step for environmental philanthropy to flourish in Chile, even if the process takes longer. There is still a need for incentives, education, and culture of giving.

Eventually, even the most conservative donors were convinced

that this conservation initiative had a wide-ranging impact and that we have brought tangible and measurable educational, social, economic, and cultural benefits to the district over the years. As a result, we secured 15% of the donations from Chileans. While we didn't meet our goal, we succeeded in convincing many Chileans, including high-net-worth families, to donate to conservation. That was precisely the path we were hoping to set in motion.

We know Cochamó isn't going to save the world, but it can inspire others to take action in their own communities. Beyond the purchase of Puchegüin, if this campaign achieved anything, it was to spark a conversation that has just begun and to demonstrate that sometimes all it takes is a few hippies to shake up seemingly unchangeable structures.

José Claro
President of the NGO Puelo Patagonia.



Circuito La Herradura
Matthew Scott



Alerce (Fitzroya cupressoides)



Huemul (Hippocamelus bisulcus)
Puelo Patagonia

FEATURE STORY

Unprecedented Sighting of Huemules at Fundo Puchegüin: Population is Believed to be the Northernmost of Chilean Patagonia

Findings from the camera traps reveal a new northern boundary of the huemul's range in Chilean Patagonia, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding this region to create a 1.6-million-hectare biological corridor spanning Chile and Argentina.

A study led by the NGO Puelo Patagonia confirmed the presence of a subpopulation of huemules on the Fundo Puchegüin. This is the northernmost recorded sighting of this iconic species in Chilean Patagonia. It helps redefine the species' known range and provides valuable scientific evidence for its conservation. The huemul is critically endangered.

The discovery was made on the 133,000-hectare property, located in the Cochamó district.

Camera trap monitoring was conducted in January of this year as part of the efforts to protect the property, which has been up for sale since 2022. The NGO and other organizations aim to permanently protect the property through Conserva Puchegüin initiative.

A total of 88 images and videos were recorded regarding the discovery, confirming the presence of six to eight huemules, including adult males, a juvenile male and an adult female.



“This study confirms the presence of huemules in this area and demonstrates that this site is a vital part of a binational biological corridor spanning over 1.6 million hectares of protected lands between Chile and Argentina,” said Andrés Díez, executive director of the NGO Puelo Patagonia.

The images were taken in high mountain areas with lenga forests, high Andean steppes, and rocky terrain. Most of the images show solitary individuals. However, two instances show a pair photographed on the same day by different cameras, which suggests reproductive behavior.

These previously unrecorded sightings are part of Puelo Patagonia’s ongoing effort to study and protect huemules in the Puelo river basin, an endeavor that began in 2019. After decades without official records, the organization successfully documented the presence of huemules in the Cochamó district for the first time, marking a milestone in the species’ conservation in the area.

“For over a decade, we have been working to protect the natural heritage of Cochamó.

Conserving the huemul has been an integral part of this commitment. This new record underscores the urgency of safeguarding the habitat as the home of this species and as part of a unique ecosystem in need of protection,” said Andrés Díez, executive director of Puelo Patagonia.

Science and community join forces to save huemul

The huemul (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*), a deer species endemic to the southern Chilean and Argentinian Andes, is currently classified as Endangered by the IUCN red list. It is estimated that fewer than 2,000 huemules remain worldwide, distributed across fragmented and vulnerable populations.

Its conservation is crucial because its intrinsic value and its role as an umbrella species. Protecting it benefits numerous ecosystems and other species.

Fernando Novoa, the head of the Wildlife Program at Puelo Patagonia, noted that although the recorded populations are small, the animals appear to be in good health.



“The presence of huemules in this area indicates that it is a well-preserved place, thanks to the lifestyle of its residents, who have lived in harmony with species like the huemul for a long time.”

In that vein, the results of the monitoring were shared with the local community in July 2025. The community emphasized how proud they are to share the mountain range with this species: “There are few places left in the world as beautiful and natural as this, with species like those that live here. We must take care of them and be aware of that,” said Victor Masías, a Cochamó district mountain resident.

He also noted that the huemul is a very elusive species and that he has never seen one in person. However, “I knew that they existed here, that there had been sightings, as people did long ago, and there were some tracks here and there, but it is really hard to spot them. Now we have proof that they’re here, and that’s excellent news,” Masías concluded.

For Puelo Patagonia, community participa-

“The presence of huemules in this area indicates that it is a well-preserved place, thanks to the lifestyle of its residents, who have lived in harmony with species like the huemul for a long time.”

Fernando Novoa, Wildlife Specialist

tion is essential in these processes. “Communities contribute unique local knowledge, help gather information in the field, and strengthen their role as key players in conservation,” Novoa adds.

This discovery is a first step toward recognizing this subpopulation. The NGO’s team plans to expand its monitoring efforts using camera traps and collaborate with the local community. The team also plans to strengthen its joint efforts with Argentina to study the behavior of this species and its binational biological corridor.



📍 Valle La Bestia
Matthew Scott

TESTIMONIAL STORY

From Visitors to Guardians: The Visits That Connect People to Cochamó Conservation

Over the past three years, Puelo Patagonia has welcomed more than 162 philanthropists to the Cochamó and Puchegüín regions, encouraging them to immerse themselves in the area and become active allies in its conservation.



Alerce (*Fitzroya cupressoides*) 📍
Matthew Scott

I have been exploring the Cochamó region for over 20 years. I have ventured into its valleys, navigated its rivers, walked through its forests, and trekked its mountains. I have also viewed the region from the air while spending time with the people who live here year-round.

Honestly, I have never entered the Cochamó Valley without being deeply moved. Without a doubt, it is the most beautiful place on earth.

It's a place that transforms you.

The silence of the forest, interrupted only by the songs of chucaos, hues-hued or fio-fio in the summer. The ancient Alerce trees, some of which are over 3,000 years old, make you feel small in the face of time and nature. Massive granite walls, shaped by ancient glaciers, rise from one of the most pristine temperate rainforests remaining on the planet.

Standing before a thousand-year-old Alerce tree is thrilling. It captivates the mind and connects with the deepest part of us.

It is difficult to describe what happens when someone visits this place for the first time.

Something stirs inside.

The landscape has a profound ability to connect us with what truly matters: silence, wonder, and a sense of responsibility.

In 2024, while exploring fundraising strategies to acquire and protect Puchegüín, we asked ourselves what motivated us to preserve this place.

We were all visitors at one time at Puelo Patagonia. None of us arrived thinking that we would dedicate a large part of our lives to conservation. But this place has that power: it can profoundly transform people.

As you get to know the community, share a mate, listen to their stories, and explore the pristine forests and mountains their families - and before them, the Tehuelche communities - transversed and inhabited for generations, you realize your only desire is to protect this place.



Valle Ventisquero
Matthew Scott

That's how we came to create philanthropic trips, to share this land with people who can connect deeply with it and commit to protecting it. We believe that people protect what they know and love deeply. That's exactly what happened to us.

We were visitors who became guardians of this place. We deeply believe the same can happen to many who visit Cochamó and Puchegüín for the first time.

Over time we came to understand something very simple yet powerful: when someone gets to know this land, they can be transformed from a visitor into a guardian. This transformation is of immense value to future generations.

Over the past three years, we have organized 27 trips and welcomed over 162 people to the area. Many of these individuals have become key conservation allies, contributing their time, skills, networks, and funding to protect the Fundo Puchegüín and work towards its permanent preservation.

Our philanthropic trips stem naturally from our experience: sharing the land with people who can connect deeply with it and commit to its protection.

We offer various itineraries, ranging from seven-day expeditions to shorter, two- or four-day experiences. These trips are tailored to the different needs of our allies and donors.

These experiences include tours on foot, on horseback, water and air. They allow visitors to grasp the scale and complexity of Conserva Puchegüín's efforts to protect more than 133,000 hectares of virtually untouched wilderness.

From the air, visitors can appreciate the vastness of the many valleys, high-altitude lakes, granite mountains, primary forests, and more than 80 kilometers of border that comprise this remote and wild territory. This territory connects to a network of 1,600,000 hectares of protected areas between Chile and Argentina.

These trips aren't traditional tourism: they are intimate, transformative experiences.

Members of the Puelo Patagonia board of directors or executive team always accompany us because building real relationships, sharing honest conversations, and developing a shared vision for the future of this region are important to us.

We want people to experience this place for themselves. To walk through it. To listen to it. To feel it. We also want them to meet the local communities that have cared for these valleys for generations and remain the territory's best guardians and park rangers.

We want people to understand that we still have a long way to go.

True conservation is more than just buying land. It requires establishing effective, long-term protection through solid legal safeguards, robust governance, and careful, innovative, and responsible public use.

We want visitors to Cochamó and Puchegüín to take away more than just a photograph. We want them to contribute to the conservation of this extraordinary place. At the same time, we want conservation to be a concrete benefit for the local communities that have cared for this land for generations.

Cochamó and Puchegüín are places unlike anywhere else in the world. Having the opportunity to work toward conserving them is likely the greatest privilege of our lives.

We want to protect these places forever. We also want to share it respectfully with people who feel called to be part of that mission.



Rodrigo Condeza
Director of the NGO Puelo Patagonia



Campo Aventura
Puelo Patagonia



Río Cochamó
Matthew Scott



Sendero histórico Paso el León
Matthew Scott



PROJECTS AND PROGRESS



CONSERVA PUCHEGÜÍN



Conserva Puchegüín is an initiative led by a coalition of national and international organizations working to protect the Fundo Puchegüín, a 133,000-hectare property located in the district of Cochamó, in the Los Lagos Region. Until 2022, this site was on the market without any protection and under constant threat of being purchased for purposes other than conservation. Considering this situation, Puelo Patagonia launched an action plan to mobilize support in Chile and around the world. The plan aims to ensure the area's permanent protection by combining conservation, local development, and a community-led participatory model.

After a two-year campaign, we exceeded our fundraising goal in 2025 thanks to donations from individuals and organizations in various countries. This enabled us to complete the purchase and begin a new phase focused on implementing a long-term,

participatory conservation and management plan.

The future protected area will be created under a model that will combine strict conservation areas with spaces intended for sustainable uses, preserving and promoting current and historical uses.

The protection of this place also makes it possible to strengthen the ecological connectivity of one of the most important biological corridors in southern South America, integrating about 1.6 million hectares of protected areas between Chile and Argentina. At the same time, the project seeks to protect high-value ecosystems, such as primary forests and habitats of endangered species, along with ensuring the continuity of cultural practices and traditional activities of the communities that inhabit the sector.

“It was very compelling to see the kind of organizations, NGOs and national and international philanthropists joined in. That speaks not only to the seriousness of the proposal, but also its credibility on a global level. Without a doubt, it is an exemplary and unprecedented effort in Chile”

Del Río Alamos family
Donors of Conserva Puchegüín.





📍 Lago Vidal Gormáz
Martín Schöner



📍 Cañón del Río Puelo
Matthew Scott

2025 PROGRESS

- » **Fundraising campaign implementation:** a national and international fundraising strategy was implemented to advance toward the US\$78 million target, including public positioning milestones, one-on-one meetings, and philanthropic outreach trips, which helped sustain campaign momentum and ultimately achieve the fundraising goal.
- » **Philanthropy trips:** immersive experiences were organized in Puchegüín and Cochamó to connect prospective donors and partners with the territory, providing firsthand exposure to its biodiversity, culture, and conservation challenges. These visits were designed to foster long-term relationships and inspire support for the permanent protection of this area.
- » **Support for the creation and structuring of the foundation:** The Conserva Puchegüín Foundation was established as a Chilean non-profit organization created to protect the property in perpetuity for conservation purposes, ensuring its legal protection.
- » **Building and strengthening strategic partnerships:** collaboration with key partners was consolidated, combining local knowledge and international expertise. This helped support the technical work, fundraising efforts, and the development and implementation of the conservation plan.
- » **Community engagement with local communities:** interviews, meetings, informational activities, and participatory workshops were conducted with more than 300 residents of the district to support the development and implementation of the area's Conservation Plan.
- » **National and international communications campaign:** a strategy was implemented that positioned the project as a conservation priority, achieving broad visibility and media coverage while advancing messages on biodiversity, local development, and the urgency of conservation.

NEXT STEPS

- » **Participation in strategic events and speaking engagements:** the project was showcased at national and international forums, including seminars and public events, expanding its reach, building support networks, and creating new opportunities for collaboration.
- » **Launch of a participatory planning process:** the development of a participatory methodology was initiated to guide the future conservation and management model for the area, integrating environmental and community considerations.
- » **Fundraising goal achieved:** the process successfully reached the full fundraising target of US\$78 million, enabling the close of the campaign and the completion of the acquisition as a major milestone of the project.

With the fundraising target achieved and the acquisition of Fundo Puchegüín completed, the project is entering its implementation phase, focused on ensuring the area's effective long-term protection. This phase includes the consolidation of the Conserva Puchegüín Foundation as the entity responsible for safeguarding the property, and of Puelo Patagonia as the manager of the area and the organization responsible for developing the Conservation Plan, based on international standards and integrating science, monitoring, and local participation.

In parallel, the participatory process will continue to advance to define governance arrangements, land-use zoning, and compatible uses, while

safeguarding both priority ecosystems and traditional practices. In addition, work with local communities and partners will continue to be strengthened, and communication and transparency efforts will be maintained to provide updates on progress and sustain the project's legitimacy throughout the implementation phase.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING FOR THE MIXED PROTECTED AREA (PUCHEGÜÍN)



From the outset, Conserva Puchegüín recognized that the acquisition and protection of the area needed to be accompanied by a formal participatory process that would incorporate the experience and perspectives of local communities into future conservation and management decisions. Puchegüín is located in an area where traditional livelihoods, nature-based tourism, and historical land uses coexist. As a result, the design of a protected area requires the collection of local knowledge which, together with technical and scientific information, can help establish a legitimate model that ensures its long-term sustainability.

During 2025, the focus was on establishing a participatory methodology and advancing structured conversations with different stakeholders across the area in order to develop inputs that can help guide future decisions, including conservation priorities, threats, management criteria, and conditions for compatible uses. This work helped organize the process into distinct phases, combining open forums, interviews, and community-based workshops.

“For us young people, it is important to keep improving, implementing new ideas, opening new routes and developing new services. When you leave home in search of opportunities elsewhere, you often find them and do very well, but in the end, your land always calls you back.”

Andrés Delgado
Resident and tourism entrepreneur Lago Vidal Gormaz (La Herradura Circuit).



2025 PROGRESS

- » **Launch of participatory working groups (April 2025):** a formal and open phase of community engagement was launched across eight localities, creating spaces for dialogue and gathering perspectives on the future of the area and its priorities.
- » **Participatory design of the model (July 2025):** the process was advanced through interviews, meetings, and open workshops aimed at developing inputs for the future conservation and management model, taking into account both ecological and community dimensions.
- » **Workshops on conservation pressures and strategies (August 2025):** a second round of workshops was conducted focusing on the specific pressures affecting conservation targets and the potential strategies to address them, including issues relevant to the area such as wildfires, land subdivision, unregulated tourism, invasive species, and other risks associated with land use.
- » **Participatory mapping workshops (November 2025):** workshops were held with mountain communities neighboring Puchegüín to identify the areas they use and their historical uses of the land, with the aim of respecting and incorporating them into the planning process, advancing the zoning of sustainable-use areas, and beginning joint work on the development of sustainable management plans.

NEXT STEPS

The participatory process with local communities will continue, expanding opportunities for dialogue and co-design to further deepen the work already underway. In parallel, the results of surveys, workshops, and monitoring activities will be systematically analyzed and consolidated to ensure their effective integration into the planning of the conservation area. These inputs will support the collaborative development of governance arrangements, zoning proposals, and conservation strategies that balance biodiversity protection with community well-being, while also establishing clear criteria for compatible uses. In the final stages of this process, the Conservation Plan will undergo a validation and refinement process with local communities and partner organizations, ensuring its relevance and long-term viability.

WATER RESERVE AND RIVER PROTECTION



The protection of the rivers of the Cochamó commune has been a strategic focus of Puelo Patagonia since its inception, based on the understanding that water sustains ecosystems, everyday life, and local small-scale livelihoods. In this context, an Environmental Flow Reserve is a tool that helps ensure a minimum streamflow for ecosystem purposes, safeguarding the river’s natural functioning and reducing the risk of interventions that could alter the watershed. In practical terms, this measure strengthens conservation from the ground up by maintaining water availability for the ecosystem and supporting compatible uses that depend on healthy watershed conditions, such as nature-based tourism, recreational fishing, and traditional activities.

In this context, and following years of coordinated efforts among local communities, conservation organizations, government authorities, and other key stakeholders, the Environmental Flow Reserve for the Puelo River was formally established in 2025 for ecosystem preservation purposes. This designation granted legal protection to a significant portion of the river’s waters and reinforced the long-term sustainability of the watershed. This designation safeguards the river’s natural flow without affecting previously granted water-use rights, contributing to the continuity of local livelihoods and reducing the risk of large-scale interventions that could alter its natural dynamics.

“This is an important milestone for us, but an even greater milestone for all the communities working to ensure that these natural waterways are recognized as free-flowing and protected. It is also a milestone for the country, for a society facing increasing pressure on its natural resources. Protecting them is a way of leaving something truly valuable for future generations.”

Darío Urrutia
Resident and defender of the Puelo River.



2025 PROGRESS

- » **Official designation of the Environmental Flow Reserve for the Puelo River:** following years of technical, legal, and community-based work led by local communities, organizations, and various public-sector stakeholders, the decree establishing the Environmental Flow Reserve for ecosystem preservation purposes in the Puelo River watershed was officially published in 2025. Together with the Futaleufú River, the Puelo River became one of the first rivers in Chile to be protected under this mechanism.
- » **Technical and legal validation of the measure:** the designation was supported by hydrological and environmental studies developed by the General Directorate of Water and validated by the Ministry of the Environment, establishing monthly flow levels intended to safeguard the ecological functioning of the watershed and strengthen the conservation of its ecosystem services.
- » **National and international recognition of the Puelo River case:** this milestone was highlighted by specialized media outlets and international organizations dedicated to the protection of free-flowing rivers, positioning the Puelo River as a flagship case for freshwater conservation in Chile and Patagonia.
- » **Strengthening a long-term conservation strategy:** the designation consolidated efforts that began years earlier to protect the rivers of Cochamó through legal tools, the generation of technical information, and place-based collaboration, while also advancing the discussion on new approaches to water protection and watershed management in Chile.
- » **Raising the profile of the river’s ecological, cultural, and community value:** the process helped bring greater public attention to the importance of the Puelo River as a source of water, an ecological corridor, and a foundation for local activities such as recreational fishing, nature-based tourism, and traditional practices linked to life within the watershed.

NEXT STEPS

Continue the technical monitoring of the Environmental Flow Reserve, tracking its implementation and strengthening coordination with local stakeholders involved in the protection and sustainable use of the watershed.

Deepen environmental education and outreach efforts on the importance of freshwater ecosystems.

Systematize and share the lessons learned from this process, contributing to the exchange of experiences on water protection tools and watershed conservation with other organizations, communities, and territories.

WILDLIFE AND THREATENED SPECIES RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION



The wildlife and threatened species study is a workstream aimed at generating evidence on biodiversity, strengthening ecological knowledge of the area, and supporting conservation decisions with reliable information. Within this approach, the huemul is a threatened species that plays a central role as an umbrella species, as its protection contributes to safeguarding entire ecosystems and the many species associated with its habitat. Since 2018, Puelo Patagonia has led a technical effort to assess the conservation status of the huemul in northern Patagonia, particularly within the Puelo River watershed, through camera-trap monitoring and fieldwork. This effort was launched in response to the lack of information on the species' presence in the area and led to the first recorded sightings in the Cochamó commune, providing key evidence to better understand its distribution and the value of the area as a biological corridor.

“ I knew there were huemules here because of stories from older residents —someone had once seen one or found tracks here and there—but they are truly very difficult to spot. Now we have confirmation that they are here, and that is excellent news.”

Víctor Masías
Resident of the mountain area of the Cochamó commune

Building on this sustained effort, monitoring has expanded to different mountain areas, generating information on other little-known and threatened species and strengthening a conservation strategy based on habitat protection. During 2025, efforts were focused on areas within Fundo Puchegüín, where the presence of a huemul subpopulation was confirmed through camera-trap monitoring. This represents the northernmost known record of the species in Chilean Patagonia. This finding reinforces the importance of the area as a refuge for high-value biodiversity and provides technical evidence to support the protection of the territory, contributing to the consolidation of a large-scale biological corridor between Chile and Argentina.



2025 PROGRESS

- » **Scientific record of the Vizcacha Patagónica (June 2025):** new records were obtained through camera-trap monitoring in mountain areas of Cochamó, strengthening the available information on this little-studied species.
- » **Scientific record of huemules in Puchegüín (August 2025):** the presence of a huemul subpopulation was confirmed in Fundo Puchegüín, representing the northernmost known record of the species in Chilean Patagonia.
- » **Expansion of wildlife monitoring:** monitoring efforts were strengthened in new mountain areas, increasing the coverage and continuity of biodiversity data collection.
- » **Generation of information for conservation:** the records obtained provided valuable information to support future conservation and land management decisions.
- » **Engagement with local communities:** progress and findings were shared with residents of mountain communities, strengthening the connection between wildlife monitoring and local knowledge.

NEXT STEPS

Continue wildlife monitoring by expanding the camera-trap network into new habitats and underrepresented areas, while strengthening the participation of local communities and volunteers in its implementation. In parallel, further analysis of the data collected will be undertaken to better understand species presence, distribution, and dynamics, so that these results can provide concrete evidence for defining conservation priorities and designing long-term management strategies and measures.



MONITORING OF PARTICIPATORY WILDLIFE



Participatory wildlife monitoring actively engages residents and organizations from the Cochamó commune in the collection of biodiversity data. Through field campaigns, participants work alongside the technical team to install and check camera traps, jointly selecting monitoring sites across different areas of the Cochamó Valley, including the Cochamó Valley Nature Sanctuary and Fundo Puchegüín.

This collaborative effort has helped expand monitoring coverage and record more than 40 wildlife species only in the Cochamó Valley, including the puma, pudú, güiña cat, condor, and the Vizcacha Patagónica.

“Camera traps have been extremely valuable in the valley for understanding which species live here. Based on stories and accounts from older residents who have lived in the area, we had a general idea of what was out there, but we lacked something tangible, such as photographic or video evidence. Through this work, you begin to realize the incredible biodiversity we have in this place—and we are certainly still far from knowing it all.”

Patricia Almonacid
Member of the Valle Cochamó Organization and participant in the Participatory Wildlife Monitoring Program

The results contribute to strengthening knowledge of local biodiversity and supporting conservation decisions with information collected directly in the field, while also promoting hands-on learning and the active involvement of the community in wildlife conservation. Participants not only contribute to the installation and maintenance of camera traps but also strengthen their role as key stakeholders in the protection of the biodiversity of the Cochamó Valley.



2025 PROGRESS

- » **Winter and summer camera-trap deployment:** two citizen science campaigns were carried out, strengthening the connection between the community and conservation.
- » **41 species monitored:** since the Participatory Wildlife Monitoring Program began in 2023, sustained efforts and the results achieved in 2024 and 2025 have made it possible to document 41 species in the Cochamó Valley.
- » **Sharing results with the local community:** results were presented to participants in the participatory monitoring program, students from the Cochamó and Puelo schools through the environmental education program, and other residents of Cochamó.

NEXT STEPS

Strengthen the continuity of participatory monitoring by expanding its reach to new areas of the commune (within Puchegüín) and systematizing lessons learned to help sustain this approach over time. In addition, efforts will be made to prepare and publish monitoring results in the form of academic articles, protocols, and reports, so that they can be reviewed by a wide range of audiences and contribute to evidence-based decision-making grounded in tangible and verifiable information. This includes strengthening hands-on training opportunities, improving local coordination for field activities, and ensuring that the information collected contributes to future conservation and management decisions for the area.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

DISCOVERING THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL RICHNESS OF MY COMMUNE



This initiative was created to connect students from Cochamó and Río Puelo with the commune’s natural and cultural heritage, after it became evident that many of them had never visited iconic places that attract visitors from around the world. The program therefore aims to strengthen young people’s connection to their commune, promote awareness of the local heritage, and foster a sense of belonging.

During the second half of the year, the program includes both classroom-based and hands-on workshops on biodiversity and local geography, arriero culture, rural tourism, camping, first aid, hiking techniques, and Leave No Trace principles.

The program culminates in the educational camp in La Junta, where students take part in guided hikes and field-based experiences that reinforce what they have learned and strengthen their connection to the area.

This program is implemented collaboratively with local schools and organizations, including the Valle Cochamó Organization, the Cochamó Mountaineering Club, the Arrieros of the Cochamó Valley, and Puelo Patagonia. This community-based collaboration expands learning opportunities and fosters a sense of belonging, encouraging younger generations to value and care for the area they call home.

“ I came to this camp because I was curious, but also because it was a personal challenge for me to come here. I feel that what we’re doing today is helping inspire other young people to participate. It’s really enjoyable because it feels like a family, where we all help each other.”

Student of the school of Río Puelo.



2025 PROGRESS

- » **Educational program (August–November 2025):** the Descubriendo la riqueza natural de mi comuna (Discovering the Natural Richness of My Commune) program was implemented, combining classroom-based and hands-on workshops for students from local schools, with an emphasis on understanding the area and learning through field-based experiences.
- » **Educational Camp and Visitor Center (December 2025):** an educational camp was held in La Junta and coordinated with the opening of the Visitor Center, strengthening hands-on learning, fostering a sense of connection to the area, and providing students with direct experiences in iconic natural settings.

NEXT STEPS

Educational activities with schools across the commune will continue, strengthening a learning model based on direct experiences in nature and a strong connection to the local environment. Field trips and hands-on learning opportunities will be expanded, incorporating content that connects biodiversity, culture, and everyday life. In parallel, efforts will be made to consolidate collaborations with conservation and environmental education organizations in order to strengthen methodologies, incorporate new educational tools, and sustain the program over the long term. This work seeks to establish a lasting educational program that not only strengthens knowledge of and care for nature, but also creates opportunities for learning and local development linked to conservation.

CORDILLERA PUELO PATAGONIA VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



The Cordillera Puelo Volunteer Program is an initiative for learning and the exchange of experiences that seeks to highlight the cultural richness of rural life. Through this experience, volunteers from different parts of Chile join host families during the summer—primarily older adults—to help prepare the supplies and resources needed to get through the winter.

For approximately three weeks, each participant lives with a host family and helps with household and farm-related tasks, such as tending the vegetable garden, collecting firewood, storing hay, caring for livestock, and other daily activities.

“They help tremendously with firewood and all the preparations for winter, which is harsh here. It makes us very proud because the volunteers learn things that we are able to teach them. That is something truly wonderful.”

Jorgelina Fernández

Resident of Llanada Grande and beneficiary of the 2025 volunteer program

In addition to providing practical support, the experience promotes firsthand learning about life in the mountains, self-sufficiency, and respect for the natural environment, while preserving local traditions and knowledge.

The program takes place in remote mountain areas and is implemented in coordination with local communities. This initiative not only provides tangible support to families but also fosters lasting relationships and highlights ways of life that have historically contributed to the conservation of the area.



AVANCES 2025

- » **Continuation of the volunteer program in areas of the Puelo watershed (El Manso, Puerto Urrutia, and Segundo Corral):** the program has consolidated its presence in rural and hard-to-access areas following five years of implementation.
- » **19 volunteers:** participants directly supported nine local families with seasonal tasks, strengthening exchange and collaboration with local communities.
- » **Food assistance:** this direct support for host families helps alleviate the costs associated with accommodating volunteers.
- » **More than 1,000 applicants:** a recruitment and selection process attracted more than 1,000 applicants and included profile reviews and interviews to ensure a strong fit with the local communities.

NEXT STEPS

The program is expected to expand into new mountain areas, such as Lago Vidal Gormaz and Torrentoso, incorporating additional host families and diversifying the settings in which volunteers engage and learn. In parallel, the volunteer selection and preparation process will be strengthened, along with logistical coordination and on-the-ground support, with the goal of enhancing the experience for both host families and participants. In addition, the goal is to consolidate the program as a stable initiative supporting rural life, coordinating with other initiatives linked to environmental education, responsible tourism, and conservation.

COCHAMÓ VALLEY AND LA HERRADURA CIRCUIT TOURISM MANAGEMENT



This project seeks to develop planning tools and manage the thousands of tourists who visit the Cochamó Valley and the La Herradura Circuit each year, with the goal of mitigating the impacts of tourism.

Since 2016, this initiative has served as a practical response to mitigate the impacts of the growing interest in visiting this iconic mountain destination.

Thanks to collaboration among local organizations—including the Valle Cochamó Organization, Puelo Patagonia, the Cochamó Mountaineering Club, and the Cochamó Arrieros Association—a reservation system has been in place since 2017 to help manage visitation and protect the area’s carrying capacity. These measures have been key to reducing waterway pollution, the accumulation of waste, camping in unauthorized areas, and the risk of wildfires, while promoting a safer and more responsible visitor experience.

“We want to guide visitors by helping educate them about good practices through the Leave No Trace Principles and the respect they should show toward the communities that live in these areas.”

Dominga Hasbún
Intern, La Herradura Circuit

In addition to regulating visitor flows, the project includes ongoing activities such as infrastructure maintenance, volunteer training, wildlife monitoring, and the presence of park rangers at various locations throughout the valley.

The 2024–2025 season began with a high level of demand. In response, we supported the Valle Cochamó Organization in improving accommodations for Visitor Center volunteers and added trail signage, among other measures.

In addition, for the first time, eight nature tourism interns supported visitor registration and patrol activities in strategic areas such as Lago Vidal Gormaz and Torrentoso, strengthening stewardship of the La Herradura Circuit. Finally, during the 2025–2026 season, we welcomed Puchegüin’s first park ranger.



2025 PROGRESS

- » **Visitor Center volunteer accommodations:** accommodations were rented for volunteers from the Valle Cochamó Organization, improving their living conditions and strengthening on-the-ground operations throughout the season.
- » **Installation of 158 signs and trail improvements along the La Herradura Circuit:** the signage was designed to help manage visitor flows, minimize environmental impacts, and encourage low-impact recreation practices.
- » **Incorporation of eight nature tourism interns into the La Herradura Circuit:** the interns supported visitor registration and patrol activities in strategic sections of the trail.
- » **Hiring of Puchegüin’s first park ranger:** on-the-ground presence was strengthened, enhancing stewardship and protection of the area during the peak season.

NEXT STEPS

Plans call for strengthening management of the La Herradura Circuit through expanded signage and maintenance of existing infrastructure, together with the consolidation of the on-the-ground team through volunteers, interns, and park rangers. In parallel, efforts will be made to improve visitor registration and monitoring systems in order to obtain more accurate information that can be used to adjust management measures. In addition, coordination with local organizations and public agencies will continue to strengthen management of the circuit, reduce impacts, and maintain a visitor experience that is compatible with conservation and local development.

HEADLINES THAT DEFINED OUR 2025



JANUARY 25

Nearly 50 % of Funds Raised by Campaign to Save an Iconic Ecological Area in Cochamó

The conservation campaign launched by the local community to acquire Fundo Puchegüín has raised nearly 50 % of the funds needed. The initiative seeks to acquire more than 133,000 hectares and protect a significant portion of the Cochamó Valley.

SOURCE: BIOBIO CHILE



MARCH 19

Cochamó forever

Inside the efforts to protect Chile's Cochamó Valley from developers and over-tourism.

SOURCE: PATAGONIA (USA)



FEBRUARY 11

Renowned International Climbers Visit Cochamó, Highlighting the Importance of Protecting Its Climbing Routes

Climbers Tommy Caldwell, Döerte Pierson, Sean Villanueva, and Timmy O'Neill traveled to Cochamó—one of the most iconic rock-climbing destinations in Chile and the world—to support the Conserva Puchegüín campaign, an initiative seeking to raise US\$78 million to acquire and conserve a 133,000-hectare private property

SOURCE: LADERA SUR



FEBRUARY 28

Response Efforts Underway: Fire in Argentina Approaches the Border Near Cochamó as Authorities Call for Vigilance

The wildfires affecting El Bolsón, Argentina, are nearing Chilean territory, although they have not yet crossed the border. Authorities have called for calm, emphasizing that the situation is being monitored and that emergency response teams are prepared. At the same time, given the high temperatures forecast for the Los Lagos Region, local organizations are urging visitors to act responsibly and help prevent new wildfire outbreaks.

SOURCE: LADERA SUR



MAY 20

Tommy Caldwell visiting Jackson to preserve Chile's pristine Cochamó Valley

"Cochamó por Siempre in Jackson Hole: An Inside Look at Saving Chile's Cochamó Valley and Puchegüín" will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. tonight at the National Museum of Wildlife Art. It is part of an effort to make this area of Chile a national park. Climbers Tommy Caldwell and Timmy O'Neill will be speaking.

SOURCE: JACKSON HOLE NEWS
& GUIDE (EE.UU.)

JUNE 17

Vizcacha Sighting in Cochamó Could Be Key to Its Conservation

The discovery of a vizcacha colony in Cochamó could play a key role in protecting this vulnerable species and its habitat in Chilean Patagonia.

SOURCE: 24 HORAS TVN



OCTOBER 11

The Untouched Valley Saved from a Christie's Auction by a Group of Hippies

After years of negotiations, they are on the verge of achieving a new milestone in Patagonian conservation.

SOURCE: LA NACIÓN (ARGENTINA)



OCTOBER 20

Futaleufú and Puelo: Chile Legally Protects Two Rivers Through Environmental Flow Reserves for the First Time

The measure secures water for human consumption, safeguards biodiversity, and strengthens activities that support local communities. It will enter into force on November 3.

SOURCE: ADN RADIO



AUGUST 05

Huemul recorded on a private property in the Los Lagos Region: likely the northernmost population of Chilean Patagonia

The discovery was announced on Tuesday by Puelo Patagonia in observance of International Huemul Day.

SOURCE: EMOL



NOVEMBER 14

Puelo Patagonia Invites You to a Three-Week Volunteer Program in Cochamó to Support Mountain Communities

In the heart of the Andes Mountains, in the commune of Cochamó, older adults take advantage of the summer months to prepare the supplies they will need throughout the winter. On November 3, Puelo Patagonia launched the call for applications for the fifth edition of the Cordillera Puelo Patagonia Volunteer Program, an experience that invites nature lovers and those drawn to rural life to work side by side with local communities, strengthening the culture and ways of life that have helped conserve this unique area.

SOURCE: AUSTERRA SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 18

More Than 200 People Gathered for the First Stop of the Cochamó Forever Tour

The event in Puerto Varas provided an opportunity to learn more about the initiative seeking to protect more than 133,000 hectares in this jewel of northern Patagonia.

SOURCE: DIARIO SOSTENIBLE



OCTOBER 24

A Radical Collaboration in Chilean Patagonia

At the heart of the Cochamó Valley, a collective effort is working to protect one of the most valuable landscapes in southern Chile: the Fundo Puchegüín.

SOURCE: THE NATURE CONSERVANCY (USA)

DECEMBER 19

Conservation megaproject: NGOs Purchase a 133,000-Hectare Property in Cochamó for US\$63 Million

Businessman Roberto Hagemann ultimately sold the 133,000-hectare Fundo Puchegüín to the organizations that, seven years earlier, had prevented him from moving forward with a hydroelectric project on the property. In an unprecedented conservation transaction in Chile, these organizations raised US\$78 million in donations to permanently protect this area, known for its ancient alerce forests, towering granite walls, and populations of huemules and pudús.

SOURCE: LA TERCERA



NEXT STEPS

THE FUTURE WE’RE BUILDING



- » **Official Protection for Puchegüin:** While progress continues toward integrating the future mixed protected area into the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP), a Conservation easement (Derecho Real de Conservación, DRC) will be implemented on an interim basis, together with a conservation guarantor organization, to ensure the immediate protection of the territory’s key conservation targets.
- » **Local Government and Public Sector:** Formal agreements with local authorities to advance conservation objectives and support community development.
- » **Area Conservation Plan (Plan de Conservación de Área, PCA):** Complete the remaining workshops and assessments needed to consolidate the technical and community vision and finalize the Conservation Plan for the protected area.
- » **Area Zoning:** Develop the zoning proposal for the creation of the future mixed protected area, ensuring it is validated by the community and aligned with existing environmental legislation.
- » **Area Administration and Operations:** Establish basic infrastructure for property management and implement a pilot park ranger program.
- » **Infrastructure:** Develop a master plan for tourism infrastructure, with a focus on the La Herradura Circuit.
- » **Community Engagement and Local Development:** Conduct tourism and economic assessments, implement working groups with local organizations, and strengthen educational programs, rural volunteer initiatives, and workshops with a range of stakeholders.
- » **Biodiversity Monitoring and Conservation:** Expand participatory monitoring efforts, consolidate monitoring systems for key species, and advance concrete management measures, such as livestock protection strategies to reduce conflicts with wildlife.
- » **Tourism Management and Public Use:** Strengthen management of the La Herradura Circuit and other high-use areas through improved signage, visitor management, coordination with local stakeholders, and enhanced conditions for public use during the peak season.
- » **Learning and Knowledge Exchange:** Develop technical exchanges, study tours, and workshops to incorporate international best practices and advance the consolidation of the project as a replicable model.
- » **Cordillera Volunteer Program:** Expand the program into new mountain communities, such as Lago Vidal Gormaz and Torrentoso, incorporating additional host families and diversifying the settings in which volunteers live and work.



2025 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS & TRANSPARENCY



At Puelo Patagonia, we believe transparency is a fundamental part of our work. Our financial statements are independently audited in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and are publicly available.

Scan the QR code or visit our Transparency page to access our audited financial statements and other institutional documents.



VISIT OUR TRANSPARENCY PAGE

PROTECTING COCHAMÓ FOREVER STARTS TODAY



12 years working to conserve
the nature and culture of
Cochamó and Puelo

Be part of our work
www.puelopatagonia.cl/en

