



Stop Electrocuting Patagonia: NRDC's campaign to protect Chile's wild places

Chile's Patagonia is truly one of the most pristine places left on the planet. It is a region of lush fjords and islands, dense rainforests, snow-capped glaciers, powerful wild rivers, and a rich traditional culture. But now Patagonia's unspoiled nature is being threatened by plans for a massive hydro-electric scheme known as HydroAisen. NRDC is putting the force of our BioGems network—more than 1.2 million online activists strong—behind a multi-faceted campaign to support our Chilean partners.

Energy Companies Want to Build Massive Transmission Lines Through Patagonia's Wild Lands

Endesa, the largest electric utility in Spain, and Colbún, a leading Chilean electric company, are proposing a joint project to build at least five dams on two of the region's largest rivers, the Baker and the Pascua. The project, estimated at US \$4 billion, would generate a total of 2,750 megawatts of energy at the expense of Chilean natural resources and to the detriment of local people. The current plan would disrupt communities in the region, harm ranching and agricultural land, and flood thousands of acres of irreplaceable wildlife habitat. If approved, the project would also open the door to damming many other valued rivers in Patagonia.

And the electricity created by the destructive dam won't even be consumed in Patagonia, but instead will be piped out by the world's largest transmission line, proposed by the Canadian company Brookfield Consortium. The transmission line would extend 1,400 miles and cut across extraordinarily valuable terrain, including areas categorized as national parks, reserves, and natural sanctuaries.

NRDC Brings International Pressure to Bear Against the Dams

Since designating Patagonia as one of our BioGems in December 2006, NRDC has mounted a strong multi-dimensional campaign to create international pressure against the dams. We are supporting the activities of a host of organizations at the national, regional, and local levels. And we're already seeing success:

- **We're proposing smarter solutions:** We have recognized from the outset that we cannot defeat the hydroelectric scheme without a viable alternative. Working initially with experts from the California Energy Commission, we have been challenging assumptions about energy growth in Chile, making the case for efficiency, and pushing for serious study of energy demand and viable alternatives.

- **We're bringing together policymakers and environmental groups:** Since last spring when we first met with Bernardo Matte and other Colbun executives, we have been pushing for a study of energy futures that would involve government, industry, and environmentalists. NRDC partnered with the University of Chile's well-respected



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Energy companies are trying to open Chile's Rio Baker to destructive development that would irrevocably alter the region.

NRDC and BioGems

Over the last three decades, NRDC has become one of the largest and most effective environmental advocacy organizations in the United States. With more than 1.2 million members and activists—and a staff of more than 100 scientists, lawyers, and resource specialists—NRDC addresses the broad range of current global environmental challenges. In 2001, we launched the BioGems Initiative to enhance our ability to undertake multifaceted campaigns to preserve threatened wild places throughout the Americas.

energy program to develop a scope of work, and we'll continue to provide international technical assistance.

■ **We're partnering with local organizations:** NRDC is working with a number of Chilean organizations to prevent the current dam proposal from being approved by focusing on the legal, political, technical, and social issues involved. *El Consejo para la Defensa de la Patagonia* (the Council to Defend Patagonia), is taking the lead in organizing detailed technical comments in response to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed dams that is scheduled to be submitted to the National Environmental Commission in 2008. A legal strategy is also being developed for protecting Patagonia in the courts.

■ **We're involving our members and e-activists:** Every one of our action alerts has generated a very high rate of return. NRDC activists have sent more than 100,000 emails supporting Patagonia.

- **We're connecting people on the ground:** A recent strategy session in Santiago, Chile, brought together representatives from the 35 organizations now part of the New Council for the Protection of Patagonia.
- **We're bringing solid business sense to the debate:** Working with our partners at Environmental Entrepreneurs, or E2, we're addressing the gap between environmentalists and the business community in Chile. In January 2008, an E2 group will go to Santiago for meetings on clean-tech and energy alternatives, and we're working with Chilean business leaders to raise awareness of "green business" and begin to identify allies in the business community.

