
[Gondwana Forests Sanctuary Campaign Launched in Chile](#)

In April 1998, forest activists and scientists from Chile, Argentina, New Zealand, Scotland and the U.S. met in Santiago and Pucon, Chile to launch the Gondwana Forest Sanctuary Campaign, the goal of which is "to protect, reconnect and restore the life of Gondwana by creating an international sanctuary of Earth's southernmost forests."

The forests of Gondwanaland are found in portions of South America, Australia and New Zealand. In South America, they are situated in south-central Chile and on both sides of the Andes from Patagonia to Tierra del Fuego in Argentina. These regions contain the major gondwanic biodiversity, including tree species as southern beech (*Nothofagus* spp), larch (*Fitzroya cupressoides*) and araucaria (*Araucaria araucana*). In Australia, Tasmania hosts the largest extent of Gondwanic forests, while significant remnants are found on the mainland in the states of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. These forests grow also extensively on the South Island of New Zealand, and in small portions of the North Island.

Herquehue National Park, in Chile's Lake District, is a token of gondwanic vegetation habitat. The Cani Sanctuary provides an example at a small scale of how the ever more rare and precious southern forests can be conserved and restored. Due to be logged in 1990, the 500 hectares of the Cani Sanctuary were instead purchased with the assistance of Ancient Forests International, spurring the formation of Fundacion Lahuen, that has been the first NGO dedicated exclusively to forest protection and conservation. Lahuen now administers the sanctuary and manages a number of projects related to it. Some of them are: a native tree nursery at Pichares, local education projects in which schoolchildren raise and plant native trees, and guided tours of the area. These kind of projects counteract, at least partially, the severe process of destruction by uncontrolled logging activities that Chilean southern forests are undergoing.

The first goal of the Gondwana Forest Sanctuary Campaign is to protect the primary forests of Tierra del Fuego, southernmost forests on Earth, in both Chile and Argentina. These sub-antarctic forests are threatened by the Rio Condor logging project initiated by the U.S. based Trillium Corporation. Composed of 360,000 hectares of 10,000-year old lenga forest, this boreal forest region is highly fragile.

The Gondwana Campaign has begun the process of creating an international system of inter-continental Gondwanic forest reserves starting at the tip of South America, in Tierra del Fuego, and spreading northward and outward. Tierra del Fuego will serve as the model for the Gondwana Campaign, which will prepare a comprehensive forest conservation and land use plan for this huge island. The plan's purpose is to defend local communities from large-scale industrial development projects like Rio Condor, and to face ongoing unsustainable economic and trade policies which promote export of natural resources as mere raw materials. Efforts are also underway to create a "Trans-Andean Wildlands Complex", that with its 5 million hectares is potentially one of the largest protected areas in the world, including the Argentinian provinces of Neuquen, Rio Negro and Chubut and the Chilean regions of Lake District, Valdivia and North Patagonia.

The campaign will also work toward an international environmental agreement within temperate forest countries to end logging and other industrial activities in primary forests. The Gondwana Campaign will also monitor the impacts on forests from economic and trade policies in the framework of globalization promoted by Northern governments and international agencies, as the World Trade Organization (WTO), Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Free Trade of the Americas Summit. Environmentally and socially sustainable proposals will be put forward instead.

Those interested in receiving further information on the campaign are invited to contact:

In Chile: Defensores del Bosque Chileno, Adriana Hoffmann/Malu Sierra, In Argentina: Finnis Terrae, Graciela Ramacciotti.

Source: Tim Cadman, Native Forest Network