



IMCG Punta Arenas Statement

9th December 2025

The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) with the collaboration of National University of Tierra del Fuego, Wildlife Conservation Society-Chile (WCS-Chile), Instituto de la Patagonia - Universidad de Magallanes, Cape Horn International Center, Millenium Institute Biodiversity of Antarctic and Subantarctic Ecosystems, and Planeta Agua Foundation, organized the International Field Symposium “Peatlands of Magallanes 2025” (1-9 December) as part of IMCG’s annual assessments.

Our group of 32 participants in the IMCG International Field Symposium, including experts from 15 countries, representatives of the Chilean nature conservation network and the Ministry of the Environment of Chile, visited the Magallanes Region. We explored the diversity of peatlands and assessed their conservation status, threats and opportunities for protection, restoration and sustainable management. We are impressed by the integrity of the landscapes and the low level of human disturbances.

We acknowledge the efforts Chile has made in peatland conservation, such as the recent Law on Peatland Protection. We hope the following considerations and suggestions will help further strengthen peatland conservation in Chile:

1. The peatland landscapes of Karukinka Natural Park in Tierra del Fuego have remarkably high ecological integrity; keeping them in this condition is of highest priority. We recognize the work carried out by WCS–Chile in the conservation of Fuegean peatlands and in promoting their recognition and protection throughout the country. We applaud the efforts made to strengthen collaboration with the Selk’nam community of Chilean Tierra del Fuego. We recommend adopting a similar conservation model as Karukinka Natural Park to continental peatland landscapes of Southern Patagonia.
2. The presence of North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) which is an invasive species in Tierra del Fuego creates conservation challenges. Its impact on peatlands differs from forests. Strategies must separate forest management from peatland management. We recommend further research into long-term consequences of beaver impacts. We caution against undertaking standard interventions, such as dam removals, as abrupt hydrological changes may destabilize these systems and cause further ecological damage.

3. The peatlands of Chilean Tierra del Fuego represent a promising destination for sustainable ecotourism, which must be developed under high-quality standards. The peatlands of Karukinka Natural Park clearly deserve international recognition and comprehensive protection under the Ramsar Convention and UNESCO World Heritage frameworks.
4. Existing regulations on *Sphagnum magellanicum* collection taking place in Última Esperanza provide an important starting point for safeguarding peatland ecosystem services and ensure long-term sustainability, but they remain insufficiently detailed, and enforcement is largely lacking. We acknowledge and value the involvement of local indigenous communities in managing and collecting these resources, and emphasize that their collaboration and traditional knowledge are vital for the development of equitable and sustainable practices. At the same time, scientific understanding of sustainable collection levels and recovery dynamics remains limited. We observed collected sites where collection occurred almost a decade ago, yet visible recovery of the peat-forming vegetation was still lacking. This highlights the urgent need for research to establish science-based thresholds for collection frequency and intensity, and for restoration measures to be implemented where degradation has occurred.
5. Rewetting of peatlands after peat extraction, such as in the extracted peatland that we visited in the Magallanes province, is recommended by blocking the ditches that have been open for decades. This will help recover a high water table that supports peat-forming vegetation with *Sphagnum* and accompanying biodiversity, while also reducing the risk of catastrophic peat fires in these drained landscapes.
6. During our field visits, we observed that the peatland landscapes of Magallanes are not limited to ombrotrophic bogs but also include minerotrophic fens, both within the peatland complexes and as distinct ecosystems embedded within the surrounding landscape. These fens are highly diverse and ecologically significant, yet they remain under-investigated and underestimated in current conservation frameworks. Their recognition, as integral parts of the regional peatland mosaic, is essential for developing effective conservation and management strategies. Peat core observations suggest that several of the examined *Sphagnum* peatlands may have only recently (e.g. 2,000 years ago) developed their *Sphagnum* cover over long-standing fen stages dominated by brown moss and graminoids. Further studies are needed to determine whether this reflects a broader regional or global environmental shift.
7. We noted clear signs of degradation in some areas caused by grazing and trampling from domestic and feral animals. In peatland areas, particularly within bogs, wild horses and cattle have caused surface damage, erosion, and hydrological disturbance. In the steppe landscapes containing fens, livestock husbandry—especially with sheep and cattle—has led to similar effects. We recommend targeted management actions to control grazing intensity and to restore damaged sites, while supporting sustainable pastoral practices compatible with peatland conservation.
8. Some peatlands in the Magallanes region form part of important watershed systems that provide drinking water to nearby urban areas, including Punta Arenas. Drainage and degradation of these peatlands could have serious implications for water quality and long-term water security. We emphasize the need for strict protection of these

ecosystems, effective enforcement of existing regulations, and the integration of peatland conservation into watershed and drinking water management plans. We recognize the importance of ongoing scientific research and its contribution to addressing local and global environmental challenges. We stress the need to strengthen research capacity and capability, collaborative networks, and technical infrastructure for monitoring. Within the Magallanes National Reserve, we observed clear damage from off-road vehicles, such as motorcycles and four-wheel drive vehicles, operating on peatlands. Such activities disturb the surface layers, accelerate erosion, and threaten both water quality and quantity within the catchment. These practices must be eliminated from the Reserve to prevent further degradation of its peatlands and to safeguard the region's drinking water supply.

9. A focus on local academia and on educating new generations of researchers for these critical ecosystems is necessary. This is to ensure continuity and to address existing knowledge gaps in areas such as inventories, taxonomy, restoration techniques, and other aspects relevant to peatlands in the Magallanes region of Chile. In this regard, we consider it essential to support the development of long-term monitoring infrastructure, and to provide the means and support for local researchers in Chile to fulfill its National Determined Contribution (NDCs) commitments.



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