It is home to the planet’s second largest temperate rainforest, where you’ll find extraordinary tree species some more than 4,000 years old. In its many freshwater lakes, unique species thrive. The rich coastal waters support more than 50 species of marine mammals, including the world’s largest animal, the blue whale.

No wonder southern Chile is among WWF’s global priority places. There is an urgent need for concerted effort: Huge global demand has seen Chile’s forests and fisheries exploited at unsustainable levels, threatening unique habitats and species. Yet the very markets that have driven this exploitation could hold the key to conserving Chile’s natural treasures.

Chile supplies eight per cent of the global pulp and paper market, around 30 per cent of salmon, 13 per cent of forage fish and three per cent of whitefish. Most of what it produces is exported.

“With three major commodities in one place, our ability to influence how and where they are produced has the potential to make or break other conservation efforts in southern Chile and in other countries of Latin America.”

Ricardo Bosshard
Director, WWF-Chile

Voluntary certification standards are driving conservation in one of the planet’s most important ecoregions.

FOREST RESTORATION

The demand for paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is transforming Chile’s forestry sector. Two companies dominate the pulp and paper market in Chile: Arauco (the world’s second largest pulp producer) and CMPC (the fourth largest).

“Driven by market pressure, the big companies have committed to FSC certification,” says Rodrigo Catalán, who leads WWF-Chile’s forest work. “It was an opportunity to start a dialogue with forest companies after a long period of conflict and virtually no communication.”

In addition to working with WWF and others to bring their operations up to FSC standards, Arauco and CMPC have committed to restoring some previously forested areas that had been converted to plantations.

“Arauco and CMPC are now working on their restoration plans for a total area that we estimate should be around 45,000 hectares,” says Rodrigo. “There is no previous experience in Chile, and very few cases in the world, of forest restoration at this scale.”
**CHILE**


**PRIORITY PLACE FOR CONSERVATION**

- **Terrestrial Conservation** — The Valdivian Temperate Forest is the only temperate rainforest in South America. It is the second largest of the five major temperate forest systems in the world. The forest supports some of the oldest and largest trees on Earth.
- **Marine Conservation** — Exceptional oceanographic conditions cause high levels of productivity and biodiversity, including unique species such as shallow cold water corals.
- **Freshwater Conservation** — Chile possesses one of the biggest fresh water reservoirs on Earth.
- **Key Species** — Chile is an important feeding ground for priority species such as blue whales and is the home of the endemic Chilean dolphin.
- **Indigenous Communities** — More than 80% of the indigenous population is Mapuche: 250,000 live in rural zones of southern Chile, whose lifestyles and local economies depend on native forests and marine resources.

**FISHING AND FISH FARMING**

Similar developments can be seen in Chile’s oceans and lakes. “Around two-thirds of Chile’s fisheries are over-exploited, so we have extensively promoted MSC [Marine Stewardship Council] certification as a mechanism to achieve both environmentally sustainable and economically viable fisheries,” says Mauricio Galvez, WWF-Chile’s Marine Coordinator.

In June 2010, the Chilean hake fishery became the first to enter the MSC certification process, and WWF-Chile is an active stakeholder in this process.

“For the fishery to be certified will require fundamental changes in the decision making process and strong commitment to design and implement a Chilean hake fishery recovery plan,” says Mauricio. The discussions around over-exploited Chilean fisheries have helped put sustainability on the agenda in a whole new way. Government fishery officials are now promoting MSC certification in other fisheries. “We are in a very early stage, but are confident the first MSC-certified Chilean fishery will be a catalyst for others to follow.”

Good fishing practices promoted by the MSC should minimize negative impacts like discards and bycatch of marine mammals and seabirds, and destruction of cold water corals. They will benefit the entire ecosystem.

WWF has also lead the establishment of Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) standards for responsible salmon farming. In a key step to protecting the ecoregion, Chilean companies are interested in applying these standards that reduce the environmental impact of salmon aquaculture, particularly by stopping production in high conservation freshwater lakes and marine areas.

“Standards like FSC, MSC and ASC mean that the production of these commodities, instead of being a threat to our ecoregion, are becoming an opportunity for real conservation in the field,” says Ricardo.

**CONTEXT**

**Threats**

- **Salmon Production** — Chile is one of the largest producers of farmed salmon globally, contributing more than 30% of global production. Salmon farming can have negative environmental and social impacts.
- **Fishing** — Chile is a major fishing country; 3% of the world’s whitefish and 12.4% of forage fish come from Chile. Sustainable stocks cannot be reached at the current exploitation level.
- **Pulp and Paper Production** — Chile produces about 5.2 million tons of pulp and paper, which represents 8% of global pulp market and around 3% of all pulp production. Each year 120,000 hectares of native forest are cleared. About 80% of Chile’s natural forests have been destroyed or degraded.

**Opportunities**

The adoption of best management practices as defined by WWF-supported standards can help reduce negative environmental and social impacts.