

CPMC/Forestal Mininco

Conserving native vegetation in Chile



Overview

Forestal Mininco's management approach has helped to conserve natural habitats and biodiversity in Chile on a large scale.

Background

Forestal Mininco, part of the CMPC group, manages more than 700,000 hectares across several regions of Chile. Around a fifth of this land – some 150,000 hectares – is covered by natural vegetation, including native forest. Forestal Mininco does not carry out any conventional forestry operations in these areas, but it includes them within its management plan to ensure ecosystem integrity is maintained and important habitats are protected.

The project

Forestal Mininco has launched a number of initiatives to conserve native forest on its lands:

No conversion of native forest

In 2003, Forestal Mininco signed a voluntary public commitment with various NGOs to safeguard and protect areas of natural vegetation, particularly native forest. The company has undertaken not to replace any natural forest with plantations on the land it owns or manages. It has also undertaken not to encourage conversion of natural forest by any third parties – which means it will not buy land containing plantations that have replaced natural forests. Mapping data from the National Forestry Corporation between 1994 and 1997 is used as the baseline.

Forestal Mininco has reflected this commitment in its Safety, Health, Environment and Social policy, part of its certified management plan, which includes written procedures and instructions to ensure full compliance. The commitment has been externally audited with the active participation of representatives of signatory NGOs. It has also been subject to regular internal and external audits (ISO 14-001, CERTFOR/PEFC and FSC).

The company has also worked with Universidad Austral de Chile on an evaluation of its existing plantations, to determine whether any of them may have replaced native forest. Evaluation results showed around 8,700 hectares of plantations were established by converting natural forest – about 1.2 per cent of the total forest area Forestal Mininco manages, or 1.9 per cent of its plantations. The company is working to mitigate this by restoring an equivalent area of native forest.

As this sort of restoration is a new initiative in Chile, Forestal Mininco is participating in a working group led by FSC Chile to define objectives and criteria. At the same time, it is working with WWF, NGO Ética en los Bosques (Forest Ethics), academics from several Chilean universities and the national forestry corporation to plan the restoration.

The first 70 hectares were restored in 2011; a further 1,000 hectares will be restored over the next five years, with the whole area restored within 15 years.

Fighting forest fires

Fires can be disastrous for native forests. Forestal Mininco has devoted significant resources towards a strategy for preventing, suppressing and mitigating damage from fires that affect or could affect any parts of its property. The company employs highly qualified and experienced firefighters. It has a well-resourced operations centre, air and ground equipment and base camps for combat brigades, and has co-operation agreements with other companies and the state.

Forestal Mininco fights 800 fires per season, both in the company lands and surrounding areas, regardless of the origin of the fire. For example, in the summer of 2010-2011, it fought 395 fires, half of which started or took place outside Forestal Mininco property.

Areas of High Ecological Value

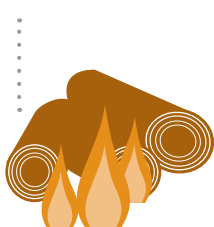
Forestal Mininco works to protect a number of Areas of High Ecological Value (AHEVs) on its land, ranging from 27 hectares to more than 5000 hectares. These include sites that specialists have identified as critical for biodiversity or which are priority sites for CONAMA, the Chilean national environmental commission.

CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

NO CONVERSION OF NATIVE FOREST



FIGHTING FOREST FIRES



AREAS OF HIGH ECOLOGICAL VALUE



Benefits

Forestal Mininco's efforts to protect native forest and other natural habitats on its land are helping to conserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem integrity across a large area. Maintaining AHEVs and other natural habitats will help to protect Chile's unique wildlife, including endemic trees such as araucarias (monkey puzzles), endangered mammals such as the southern river otter (*Lontra provocax*) and birds including the red-headed magellanic woodpecker (*Campephilus magellanicus*).

The benefits go beyond the borders of the company's own property. Forestal Mininco has a direct influence on its neighbours – by fighting forest fires and by helping to maintain healthy ecosystems.

By setting an example of responsible plantation management, Forestal Mininco also contributes indirectly to raising standards in all areas where it has an influence, from the Maule region in the north to the Aysen region in the south.

Next steps

Forestal Mininco has been working with the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences at the University of La Frontera in Temuco to identify and classify the full extent of natural vegetation on its lands. The company will use this information to assign potential uses for each area, and determine appropriate care and management plans.

The company is also working with government agencies and neighbouring communities to identify further areas of high environmental value.



Forestal Mininco is committed to restoring native forest and protecting Chile's unique tree species, such as araucarias (below).