



ATTN TV REPORTERS: B-ROLL OF PATAGONIA REGION AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

**MEDIA ADVISORY FOR
Thursday, May 28, 2009**

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High Visual Impact Action to Take Place in Atlanta During Home Depot's Annual Shareholder Meeting

Five Destructive Dams Proposed in Delicate Patagonia Wilderness by Home Depot Suppliers

Home Depot Urged to Take Their \$50 Million Elsewhere to Avoid the World's Longest Clearcut

On Thursday, May 28 International Rivers will be organizing a highly visible action against Home Depot during the company's annual shareholder meeting in Atlanta.

The Home Depot is the largest US buyer of timber products from the Matte (CMPC) Group, who is involved in a proposal to build five big dams on two pristine rivers in Patagonia, southern Chile. The dams and their associated transmission lines would ruin rivers, flood rare endangered forests and destroy livelihoods.

"We are urging American consumers to boycott The Home Depot until they stop buying timber from companies that threaten to undermine Chile's rivers and forests," said Gary Graham Hughes, Patagonia Campaign Coordinator at International Rivers. "There are plenty of alternative timber providers for The Home Depot, and Chile has abundant energy options, including some of the greatest solar, wind, and geothermal potential in the world."

In addition to the protest in Atlanta there have so far been demonstrations outside Home Depot stores in Emeryville, CA, Portland, OR, Olympia, WA, and Albuquerque, NM. International Rivers says they will cease this campaign when The Home Depot either severs its relationship with their suppliers involved in the dam plan or uses its influence to help protect Patagonia's rivers.

WHAT: In protest of The Home Depot's support for companies planning dams in Chilean Patagonia, International Rivers will organize a high visual impact action during the company's annual shareholder meeting.

WHERE: Cobb Galleria Centre, Two Galleria Parkway, Atlanta

WHEN: Thursday, May 28, 8:30 – 9:30 AM

Based on five continents, [International Rivers](http://internationalrivers.org) is an international environmental and human rights organization. For over two decades, the organization has been at the heart of the global struggle to protect rivers and the communities that depend on them.

WHY THE HOME DEPOT?

Every year The Home Depot buys approximately \$50 million in wood products (largely trim and moldings) from the Chilean interests that are proposing five dams that will destroy rivers and native forests in Patagonia. The transmission lines associated with this project would run more than 1,500 miles to carry electricity to Chile's industrial centers, creating the world's longest clearcut through globally rare temperate rainforest.

In November 2003 The Home Depot signed a specific, written agreement with its Chilean suppliers and environmental organizations to protect Chile's native forests. In addition, the company has an explicit environmental policy to help their customers become "better environmentally conscious shoppers."

"Despite The Home Depot's claim that it works to protect Chilean forests, these proposed dams and transmission lines would require clearcutting and flooding of ecosystems found nowhere else on the planet," said Aviva Imhof, Campaigns Director at International Rivers. "We will not stop until The Home Depot stands true to its own environmental policies and takes proactive steps to protect Patagonia's wild rivers."

International Rivers works with Chilean and international organizations in the Council to Defend Patagonia (*Consejo de Defensa de la Patagonia*) to protect Patagonia's rivers and forests.

OTHER PROBLEMS WITH THE PROPOSED DAMS:

- The dams and transmission lines will threaten numerous aquatic, bird and mammal species already at risk, including an endangered Chilean deer called the *huemul*, of which less than 3,000 survive today.
- The Patagonia region is one of the most geologically unstable regions of the world, with extensive volcano and earthquake activity, making it a high-risk region for big dam projects.
- The wide-scale damming of rivers in Patagonia threatens to ruin tourism in the region, which is an important part of the Chilean economy.
- A recent poll shows that 57 percent of Chileans are against the Patagonia Dams (IPSOS April 2009).

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ATTN JOURNALISTS: To learn more about the proposed dam project, who is involved, and what the alternatives are for The Home Depot please visit <http://internationalrivers.org/patagonia>

To schedule an interview with experts on the issue please call Shayna Samuels at 718-541-4785.