

## Mining, Dams, Other Threats to Unprotected Futaleufu River Revealed in *Patagon Journal* Magazine

**SANTIAGO, 08/21/2013** – The latest edition of the bilingual magazine *Patagon Journal* exposes several threats to the Futaleufú River, a globally-renowned river located in Chile's Palena province, including a controversial hydroelectric dam project by multinational company Endesa. The issue also includes an exclusive interview with American attorney Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., president of the Waterkeeper Alliance, an international organization with more than 200 affiliates worldwide and a key backer of one of Chile's newest environmental organizations, Fundación Futaleufú Riverkeeper.

The *Patagon Journal* cover story, "Saving Futaleufu," discusses various risks to the watershed. These include one of the largest hydroelectric dam projects in Patagonia; the possible environmental impacts if large-scale mining interests succeed in entering the watershed; colonizers being forced off their lands by Chilean land speculators; and the negative effects of unregulated tourism growth.

The Futaleufú River is considered one of the world's best places for rafting and kayaking, and is also a top destination for activities like fly fishing and many other adventure sports. But the authors of the article, Jimmy Langman and Nancy Moore, state that Chile is the only country in the world to privatize its rivers, leaving them unprotected. They recommend that Chile amend its water laws to allow for conservation and even park status for some rivers: *"The quickening pace of change that has come with the arrival of modern technology, better roads, and increased tourism over the past two decades, and most important, the prospect that energy companies are now pursuing large-scale dams on the river, has led Futaleufú to a crossroads."*

The article describes how Endesa is moving forward in its plan to develop numerous hydroelectric projects in Chile, including three dams totaling 1,367 MW on the Futaleufú River. Engineering studies for what would become the second-largest hydroelectric project in the Patagonia region after HidroAysen are currently in a conceptual design phase.

The authors also discuss how mining projects in a region such as Palena, which has high rain precipitation during the year, could lead to serious environmental consequences from the use of toxic chemicals commonly used in gold mining, such as cyanide.

Also detailed are a series of recent land conflicts that may be related to Endesa's increasing interest in the river. The article states that *"more than a dozen families, mostly colonos, have lived for numerous decades in the area, but some are facing potential expulsion from their homes in a conflict with a real estate investment group called Agrícola Auchemo, which has been buying properties in the area since 2004."*

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., an environmental attorney and nephew of former U.S. president John F. Kennedy, said in his interview with *Patagon Journal* that his Waterkeeper Alliance recently approved the new Futaleufu Riverkeeper to help protect the Futaleufú watershed. He said that he has personally been involved for more than a decade in efforts to protect the Futaleufu River, which he calls the *"mecca for whitewater enthusiasts around the world."*

Adds Kennedy: *"Endesa has tremendous political power and, as foreign investors, they are trying to drive energy policy in Chile. And it is an insane policy. It makes no sense from a market point of view, and makes no sense in terms of protecting the patrimony of the country and the economy of Patagonia which is increasingly a tourist-based economy."*

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*Patagon Journal* is an international publication based in Chile offering both digital and print subscriptions in 19 countries. [www.patagonjournal.com](http://www.patagonjournal.com)

*Futaleufú Riverkeeper* is a Chilean nonprofit foundation dedicated to protecting the Futaleufú watershed and its communities. [www.futaleufuriverkeeper.org](http://www.futaleufuriverkeeper.org)

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