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Lanín National Park

Of Mice and Money

By Peter Keller

MARCH, 2001

SAN MARTÍN DE LOS ANDES, Argentina – I’ve heard that stock analysts visit businesses *incognito* to find out what employees have to say about their own company. Generally, employees on the frontline are the most ardent critics of their own operations. This is true for national parks as well — rangers and maintenance staff know where the “skeletons” lie, and which systems work well and which ones don’t. With that purpose in mind I visited Los Glaciares National Park in southern Argentina, where I started a conversation with park ranger, Javier Alejandro Montbrun. “Which park is the best-managed in Argentina?” I asked Javier in terms of resources, professionalism and execution of work plans. “Certainly Lanín has to be one of the best.” He answered with little hesitation and added, “They have a good staff, and someday I would like to work there.” Based on this conversation and other positive references, I decided I wanted to learn more. Weeks later I set up an opportunity to meet Lanín park staff and study their operations — with little pre-hand knowledge of the facility, except that Lanín’s main attraction is a volcano by the same name.

However, since this is my first full article about an Argentine park, let me



Shining like a beacon along the Andes skyline, Lanín is a dormant volcano that attracts thousands of visitors to this park of the same name.

provide some background on the history of their park system before moving on to Lanín.

Argentine Park System — Following U.S. Model

“During the excursions I made to the south...I admired the exceptionally beautiful places and more than once I declared that the nation should conserve this, the property of the few, for the better use of present and future generations, following the example of the United States.”

—*Excerpt of a letter from Perito Moreno to President Julio Roca. Circa 1900.*

Coming from a nation that has delivered such contemporary popular culture to the world as McDonalds, Coca-Cola and The Simpsons, I have had relatively few opportunities to boast about of my homeland.¹ Nevertheless, occasions for national pride do exist, one being the fact that the United States served as an example to Argentina for creation of their national park system.

Argentina’s first park began with a 7,500-hectare donation of land by Francisco Pascasio Moreno. The brilliant geographer was given this land as a reward for serving his country well in resolving a border dispute with Chile in the late 19th century. In 1893, he led a scientific expedition to the disputed border region. His team of geographers and surveyors developed more detailed maps than his Chilean counterparts, led by Diego Barros Arana. In 1900, a British tribunal used information provided by both sides to draw the border. It is widely acknowledged Argentina did better than Chile in presenting its case. For that reason Moreno has ever since been known as Perito Moreno, a word used to describe someone who is an expert. Also, as another indicator of victory, he has far more streets named after him than his counterpart, Arana.

In a burst of nationalist and naturalist pride, Moreno donated some of his land in 1903 to the government on condition that it be made a national park. He had been inspired by Yellowstone, established in 1872 as the world’s first national park, and said wanted to establish a park in Argentina. The government accepted his gift in 1904, but didn’t officially declare it a park until 1922. At first it was called Southern National Park, which included his donation and a substantial addition. In 1934, Argentine legislators created a national park system and simultaneously inaugurated two parks, Iguazú and Nahual Huapi — the

latter being the new name for Southern National Park.

Park legislation was expanded in 1986, establishing a national network of protected areas with a goal of streamlining and coordinating protected-area management at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. All national parks are managed at the federal level by the *Administración de Parques Nacionales* (APN), an autonomous body that has undergone recent administrative changes. With the election of President Fernando de la Rúa in December 1999, the National Park Administration was moved to a different Ministry. Formerly managed by the Secretary for Natural Resources and Sustainable Development, the Secretary of Tourism now directs the 700-plus employees of APN. Many park officials I talked to fear this new management may be a sign APN will become more commercialized in the future.

Between the politics of the Ministry and the professionalism of the APN is the National Parks Board, comprised of a president, vice president and four spokespeople from various ministries. Appointed by the President, board representatives serve three-year terms, which can be renewed. Board duties are diverse, from making sure that legal and regulatory norms are followed, to formulating annual budgets, to approving master plans and establishing rules, fees and licenses. Besides overseeing its central offices, the board manages four regional offices. Finally, it has the ability to name, transfer, promote, award, warn or dismiss employees. Or provide them with incentives. With this type of power no wonder my project sponsor, Adriana Maddaleni, was excited to tell me the news about the new Board Vice President. Maddaleni, a professor and Coordinator for Public Use at Lanín Park, wrote to me before I arrived with the news of the week, that former park-ranger Salvador Vellido was selected as Board Vice President — the first field ranger to reach this level.

Vellido’s boss, Board President Marcelo López Alfonsín, has taken on his new job with enthusiasm. He wants to increase private-sector support, the APN budget and the number of park rangers. As is usual for park administrators in Chile and Argentina, he makes comparisons to the U.S. park system (NPS), mostly in respect to budgets and visitation. López Alfonsín has often said that U.S. Parks “...have ten times more protected land than Argentina, but account for a budget one-hundred times greater.” He wants to change this by increasing the APN budget of US\$29 million to something on a relative par with the NPS, comparing acreage within the system.²

¹ I am sure the first two entries are no surprise as leading American institutions; I added the third to my top-three list one evening when I heard the following conversation: A Chilean friend of mine asked his friends to name four past presidents of Chile. The crowd of 25-year-olds came up with only three presidents after several minutes of debating. After this he asked, “Name four rock bands that have been on The Simpsons.” Four bands were named within 10 seconds.

² The NPS has a budget of US\$1.7 billion for protecting 80 million-plus acres. Using the justification that acreage should determine budgets, APN’s 8.6 million acres would require a budget of US\$290 million. However, looking at the other side of the coin and using visitation as a measure for budget requests, APN would receive only US\$8.85 million. The U.S. system received 287 million visitors last year, while the Argentine system accounted for 1.5 million. Of course, the population of the two countries affects visitation statistics greatly. Argentina has a population of 36 million, the majority of whom live within Buenos Aires province — which includes the capital city of 15 million. Argentina is South America’s premier tourist destination and its parks will continue to experience visitation growth in coming years.



López Alfonsín says they are far from the idea of privatizing reserves, even though he proposes to, "...propel sponsorship of some protected areas." He notes that "there are many private businesses in a good position to help us." In another comparison to the U.S. system he is now organizing a foundation to catalyze private support for park conservation. His encouragement for private-sector support, "...does not mean hotels and

businesses will begin to flourish inside parks." Even with these new initiatives, he doesn't see park policy changing from the current objectives of conservation, environmental education and public use through sustainable tourism.

As an environmental lawyer with strong ties to the Patagonian city of San Carlos de Bariloche, he has support from the Administration of President Fernando de la Rúa

to re-open the Bariloche Park Ranger school, which closed seven years ago. Currently, APN has 246 park rangers distributed within 33 parks. He contends they need to double this number to meet growing needs of the system. López Alfonsín's proposal would increase staff totals to 577 rangers within the next three years.

In 1967, Argentina was the first South American country to establish a park-ranger education program. The ranger program relocated in 1994 from San Carlos de Bariloche to San Miguel de Tucumán. Located on the campus of Tucumán National University, the change of venue has increased academic standards and opened up programs for graduate and post-graduate study opportunities for APN employees and other South American park agencies.

Those aspiring to be an Argentine Park Ranger have a series of requirements to meet. First, applicants must be between 20 and 25 years old, an Argentine resident for a minimum of four years and in good health. They must have completed their secondary education, have no penal infractions and possess a driver's license. An applicant is looked upon favorably if he (or she) is single or married without children, has volunteered in a national park, knows how to cook, can speak other languages and can manage a personal computer. Selected candidates that make it past the first round are interviewed and given a psychological-profile and physical-aptitude test. Of the 1,200 that apply for openings offered every two years, only 25 are accepted. Graduates leave the program with a technical degree in protected-area administration. I've asked several Chilean park managers why no such program exists in their country; the common answer is they don't have the money to develop and sustain a ranger-education program. It seems, however, that a cost-share arrangement could be developed with the Argentine program.

Tucumán graduates are sent to work in the field, not necessarily at a park or reserve of their choice. If they are lucky they can work within one of the country's nine Biosphere Reserves, six World Heritage Sites (such as Iguazú and Los Glaciares National Parks) or eight Ramsar sites protecting wetlands.

Argentine parks cover a variety of ecological regions; the country is divided into 19 distinct eco-regions. Ecosystems within the APN system include Patagonian-Andean Forests, puna and high-Andean steppe, Patagonian-arid steppe and pre-Puna ecotypes. Those most lacking protection include the Argentine coastline, the pampas, Paraná River delta/islands and Chaco arid forests.

In an effort to protect ecotypes not well represented in

the APN system, international support has been given to Argentina. In 1997, the Global Environment Facility, based in Washington, DC, approved a US\$10.1 million Biodiversity Conservation Project for Argentina.³ Coordinated by the World Bank, the project will purchase critical habitat for conservation of currently unprotected ecosystems (e.g. pampa grasslands, Andean puna, Chaco arid forests and Patagonian steppe).⁴ Scheduled for completion by 2006, total cost projections reach as high as US\$47.8 million. However, beyond announcing that five parks will be expanded or created, few projects have advanced — except for the proposed Monte León National Park. Recently purchased by Doug Tompkins, the 6,000-hectare Monte León includes Patagonian steppe and marine coastline that will become Argentina's first Atlantic-coast park when the donation is finalized. For the other projects, the official reason for a slow start is a, "... delay due to a change in government in late 1999 and restructuring ministries."

Currently, more land is under provincial protected systems than federal. The federal system includes 33 areas that total nearly 3.5 million hectares. Under provincial jurisdiction, over 200 areas total more than 11 million hectares. Included in this are protected areas held by universities, municipalities, technology institutes and privately held reserves.

Provincial legislation allows private organizations to own and manage protected areas. Argentina's private-reserve system includes 31 areas with nearly 160,000 hectares. A majority of these sites (22, totaling 119,000 hectares) are managed by the Argentine Wildlife Foundation. Also known as *Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina* (FVSA), is has been active for almost 25 years in Argentina protecting natural areas, saving threatened species from extinction and trying to reduce societal consumption of natural resources. Since 1988, FVSA has been apart of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) network with access to WWF's 4.7 million members in 96 countries. FVSA established the first private reserve in Argentina when it purchased the 3,500-hectare *Campos Del Tuyu* in Buenos Aires Province.

Lanín Park Management

Creation of Lanín in 1937 served two purposes — one geopolitical, to promote the development and settlement of the Argentina/Chile border zone, and the other to conserve the beautiful scenery. At 379,000 hectares, Lanín is the third-largest protected area after Nahuel Huapi and *Los Glaciares* National Parks.⁵

Lanín is different from other national parks in respect to multiple use and the number of people living within the

³ The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was launched in 1991 to address critical global environmental threats such as biodiversity loss, climate change, degradation of international waters and ozone depletion. GEF was restructured after the June, 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to be a more effective participatory-development agency. Since then, over 30 nations have pledged nearly \$5 billion in support to continue GEF's mission.

⁴ The new or expanded parks include Copo, San Guillermo, Quebrada de los Condoritos, Los Venados and Monte León National Parks.

⁵ Lanín comes from a Mapuche word whose literal meaning is 'died of overeating.' It's a reference to the last eruption decades ago, which finally extinguished the volcano — at least that is the hope.

park. Acreage within Lanín is divided almost evenly among the use categories, *reserve* and *park*. Lanín is a patchwork of land designated either national park or national reserve, although both are managed by APN. In the United States, this is equivalent to land managed by the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, respectively — however, the difference in Argentina is that one agency manages both conservation areas and multi-use lands. The other factor that makes Lanín different is that within its boundaries live six indigenous Mapuche groups (Aigo, Raquithué, Cañicul, Cayún, Curruhuinca and Ñorquinco). These communities range in size from five families to 70 families, or about 450 total residents. Lanín has more indigenous settlers than all other parks in the country — combined.

Even program areas reflect this difference, with a sustainable-use program for indigenous communities beside the normal program areas of public use, natural-resource management and operations (administration, maintenance and accounting). The most recent park-management plan, written in 1997, designated five management zones. One of the management zones was tailored for indigenous communities by delineating a sustainable-use zone. Other zones include the normal administrative areas, intense-public-use (campgrounds), dispersed recreation and the strict-use zone.

In 1990, a National Decree for establishing “Strict Nature Reserves” created this strict-use zone. The zone is for areas of high conservation value requiring strict protection. Only scientific or educational use is allowed in the zone, and this is on a regulated basis. Officials at Lanín have designated Queñi area as a strict natural reserve.

Coincidentally, this area was a popular three-day hiking loop promoted in the *Lonely Planet Trekking in the Patagonian Andes* guide. However, uses such as hiking are now prohibited. When *Lonely Planet* (LP) writer Clem Lindenmayer came here in 1989 to write a guide, the hike was still possible. Queñi was designated a strict nature reserve two years later, yet the 1998 LP guide edition still features the hiking circuit. Since that time, park ranger Carlos Mariosa, in charge of back-country use, has told LP representatives that the hike no longer exists, but no changes have been made.

Nonetheless, plenty of other hiking areas do exist, which are needed as the park becomes more popular each year. In 1992 an estimated 15,000 people visited Lanín. This increased to 30,000 in 1995 and to 70,000 in 2000. However, park officials don’t have an accurate counting system and feel the total could be as high as 100,000 this year and may reach 140,000 by 2003. Visitor tallies are derived from paid receipts taken at entrance stations between January and April.

In 1997, APN introduced entrance fees at various parks. For Lanín these are collected over the summer months at eight locations (Lake Huechulafquen, Lacar wharf, Lake Tromen, volcano base, Quila Quina, Catrite, Hua Hum and Lake Currrahue). Since visitation is charged on a per-day basis, APN developed the “Green Pass” for weeklong stays.

A Green Pass is US\$7, while a one-day pass is US\$3. By comparison, the U.S. system charges entry fees per vehicle, which are valid for one week.

In February 1999, Lanín’s fee program suffered a setback when fees collected at Quila Quina met community outrage and hostility. Fee collectors and rangers were threatened; eventually, policemen were enlisted to aid them in collecting fees safely. Fee-collectors were teenagers working on behalf of the local Curruhuinca Mapuche community. They had accepted the fee collection concession in order to raise funds for building better facilities at the local school. Approximately 20 percent of the money was destined for the school budget. Locals came to resent the fees because they had not seen any benefits, roads were still in bad condition and nothing new was being done. Locals really have little to complain about, since the entrance fee for them is only US\$1 for year-round access to the park.

The ones who ought to be complaining are those who come to Lanín with large families from outside the community. With a per-person-based fee system, they are the ones who pay the most and spend the least of amount of time in the park. During my first meeting with Lanín park officials they were mostly interested in the U.S. system for charging entrance fees. They wanted to know everything from length of stay permitted by an entrance fee, whether revenue stayed at the park or went to a central office, how fee earnings were spent and, lastly, a list of fee schedules for different size vehicles (e.g. U.S. parks charge tour vans US\$37 to US\$75 depending on the number of passenger seats).

This fixation on fees made me realize they are acutely interested in assistance regarding revenue-enhancement techniques, a.k.a. how to make more money. In that case, a few principles must be followed. A fee program of any type must be based on principles of equity and accountability. The users must feel they are paying a fair price for what they are receiving. “Fair,” that is, measured by the “product bought” and to what others paid. Accountability is necessary in two areas: handling of fees to prevent embezzlement, and allocation of revenue in such a way that visitors can see direct benefits. Thus far, APN has not applied these tenets consistently.

Besides fee programs, APN has been pushing for more international funding support. In 1996, APN received funding from the World Wildlife Fund that is being administered through the World Bank. The total given to Argentina was US\$19.5 million for a “Native Forests and Protected Areas Project.” The World Bank allocated money to four Patagonian national parks (Los Alerces, Nahuel Huapi, Los Glaciares and Lanín) to improve the infrastructure. At Lanín, the money was supposedly earmarked to design and build a visitor center. However, this project, destined for the town of San Martín de Los Andes (population 20,600) at a price tag of US\$182,000, has never materialized. Several organizing meetings have taken place, but according to Adriana Maddaleni, “The project was poorly managed and never happened.” As far as the Argentine government

is concerned, the park's budget is only US\$450,000, which is little in comparison to what they could have if projects were better managed — or managed at all.

One morning I met with park ranger Carlos Alfredo "Freddy" Reta. His duty station is Lake Lolog, a 37,000-hectare section of the park that is the water source for San Martín de Los Andes. He commented that his main challenge, "...is organizing my time well so I can work toward advancing my career." As the only year-round employee in his sector, he often feels pressed for time. Lanín has 23 sectors, each with a park ranger. In total, nearly half of the 65 employees at Lanín are park rangers, whether in the field

lometers north of Bariloche along the Traful River. The site is called Primavera Estate and features unbeatable trout fishing. Since that first purchase, he has founded a private enterprise called *La Primavera Argentina* (The Argentine Spring) to manage his land.

A recent acquisition of the 37,000-hectare Collon Cura ranch cost Turner US\$5.4 million. Located near the community of Junín de Los Andes (population 8,800), the estate will be devoted to environmental protection through breeding and conservation of local endangered species, like guanaco and deer. One controversy emerged quickly when Turner's managers cut off public access to local fishing spots. However, Argentine law protects public access to navigable waterways, so access soon reopened after public complaint.

Back at park headquarters, I spent most of my weekday mornings tracking down information. In the afternoons I would go on field trips with park or concession staff. The office morning session, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., is very busy, reaching near-chaos levels. The atmosphere is very similar to that of the administration building at Yosemite National Park — even the building structure is the same, with a rectangular two-story stone-and-log exterior. Employees scurry around at a rapid pace, almost creating separate crises in their wake. Business hours for the general public are only from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., so the lobby is filled with townspeople trying to get

one permit or another. Employees zip in and out of rooms, bark out a question and leave — minutes later, an answer is heard from the other room. Adriana, my main contact, runs off to yet another meeting with the acting superintendent — staff have been waiting months for a permanent appointment. Each knows that if he or she needs to speak with a colleague, this has to be done before lunch break — which usually lasts from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. or later. Otherwise, it won't get done that day. After lunch, the office is a virtual ghost town, surreally quiet compared to the morning. Officially, employees work seven hours a day, five days a week for a 35-hour workweek — a tad more livable than the 44-hour workweek required in Chile, albeit with more stress.

Concession and Guide Services

From anecdotal evidence I gather that most visitors do not meet park rangers, but rather get information about the park from concession staff and tourism-service provid-



The headquarters building at Lanín National Park in San Martín de Los Andes. It looks tranquil from the outside, but inside it's chaotic.

or office. During summers Reta has a few volunteers to help him patrol the countryside. When asked what park rangers need, he said, "I would like to have more continuing education regarding conservation practices and biodiversity. In the future we need a degree in administration of protected areas, not just the technical degree we have now from the park-ranger school." He wants to see the day when a *Licensia* degree, like a bachelor's, is available for protected-area management. Freddy spends 20 percent of his time in the office and the rest in the field patrolling by horse, although he would probably patrol by truck if he were not one of the few rangers without a government vehicle.

Although Freddy's sector doesn't have many financial resources, someone down the hill from his cabin has more than enough. This time it isn't millionaire Doug Tompkins, but billionaire Ted Turner, who owns land near the park. Turner has taken a particular interest in this section of the Andes. His first purchase was a 4,500-hectare ranch 60 ki-



Another concession operator serving as the voice and face of Lanín National Park. Ivan Weihmuller manages a guide service and convenience store at the base of Volcano Lanín.

ers. On a field trip to Quila Quina, a beach on Lake Lacar, I stopped at an information booth to chat with someone I thought was a park ranger. My informant, Itatí Catalán, told me about the history of the area. She grew up only a few hundred meters from where we stood. Her father was once a park ranger here.

“So being a park ranger must be in your blood?” I asked Itatí.

She surprised me by saying, “Who me? No, I am not a park ranger. I work for the boat-concession company.”

Tour boats arrive at Quila Quina daily from San Martín de Los Andes.

“Why then,” I asked her in confusion, “Do you staff the park information booth?”

“The park doesn’t have the money to pay a ranger to be here, so they require the boat company to staff the information booth.”

She said it was common practice for concessionaires to provide this type of service and pointed out several examples, such as fee collectors and trail guides, which are concession services. I began to wonder what park rangers did, because they are rarely in the public eye. What I found out is that they are the ones behind the scenes developing contracts, reviewing concession proposals and basically managing work done by others.

On another occasion I stopped off at a little food market, or at least it looked like one, to buy a snack before hiking up Volcano Lanín. Before this I stopped by a ranger

office for hiking information, but it was closed in observance of the midday siesta. As it turned out, the market had a wealth of both food and information. Managing the market was Ivan Weihmuller, who with his wife operates a concession called *Mapu Mahuida* — Mapuche for land and mountain. They rent climbing equipment to those attempting the two-day ascent to the volcano summit. Both from Buenos Aires, they just completed their first season with this concession contract. An average of 40 people per day during the high season attempt to climb Lanín. This amounts to 1,500 to 2,000 per season, which extends from November through March 15 and then weekends until Easter. He has ice axes, crampons, hiking poles and sunglasses for rent — and a variety of food for sale. In addition, he is a vendor for park-entrance and camping fees, and manages three-mountain shelters that house up to 45 climbers. A guided trip can cost each climber US\$150. A bid is now out for constructing a restaurant near his concession and a large shelter on the mountain. If the project is completed, he hopes it will bring him more business.

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Ivan is also a guide who leads mountains treks and back-country ski trips. He recited a list of requirements for guides including entrance exams, knowledge of park rules and fees that must be paid each year. This guide program is more sophisticated than others I have encountered. There are even different categories of guides. Tourist guide is the most popular; other categories include trekking (31 registered guides), mountain, high-mountain (only two guides), hunting, fishing and *Baqueano* (a type of Argentine cowboy). Potential guides are given a written test offered once a year, focusing on Lanín history and ecology. Theoretically, guides are supposed to retake the exam every five years, but that is not enforced. Each guide is charged US\$10 annually to maintain registration.

Using guides and concessionaires to be the voice and face of the park can be risky, but if properly managed it can be beneficial for all involved. Currently, Lanín officials are managing the program well. Nevertheless, it is important for visitors to see uniformed rangers, to give the sense that someone official is caring for the park. Otherwise, some people tend to treat parks like they treat houses when parents are away.

Indigenous Communities

While driving across a mountain pass from Chile into Argentina, I saw a dozen or so people huddled below a group of araucaria trees (Monkey puzzle tree). I pulled off to the shoulder and watched in dismay as my truck slid down the soft, sandy edge. It wasn’t the first time I had



Pine nuts from araucaria trees collected by local Mapuches. The pine nuts are used as a food staple and are also sold in local markets.

been stuck, so I knew I could worry about that later. A man approached, introducing himself as Alejandro, a local Mapuche Indian. He opened his hand to show me what he and the others were collecting — pine nuts, called *piñons* from araucaria trees.

He pointed out the two different types of araucaria trees and said, “Over there, the trees with flowers are *machos* (males) and those others with large cones are *hembras* (females). They need each other to survive, just like any family.”

Crops of piñons are produced every other year. Alejandro described how piñons are eaten, “My favorite ones are those boiled in water with salt for three hours. They are soft, yet meaty. I also like them fried or when smashed into flour for making tortillas.” Only Mapuche can collect piñons legally. They receive permits from APN.

Before Alejandro returned to his work he helped me free my truck from the sand. He must have seen this problem before because he knew exactly what to do. He started the engine and slowly began rocking the truck back and forth. After several attempts, the truck was free.

The return of democracy in 1982 allowed Argentina’s indigenous peoples to free themselves and organize efforts for gaining control of their own lands. So far, though, only one community holds title to the land upon which it lives. The Curruhuinca Mapuche community achieved this in 1988 when title to 10,500 hectares was restored. Two other

Mapuche communities, Cayún and Raquithué, will receive land titles to 1,600 hectares once the National Congress approves the transfers. Livelihood for each of the six communities is a mix: raising sheep and cattle; providing tourist services such as camping, horse rides and craft sales; collecting araucaria pine nuts; and sustainable forestry projects.

It’s interesting how thousands of miles can separate the indigenous communities of Argentina and the United States, but the issues are still the same. On one occasion I had a flashback to several parks where I have worked in the United States. The triggering word was “co-management of parklands.” In some places Indian reservations and parks overlap or are adjacent to one another. Over the past decade, through the development of self-governance legislation, eligible tribes have pursued the idea and practice of managing their own destiny. Now, several tribes have approached neighboring national parks requesting that they become park co-managers.⁶

This is a sensitive issue because few people enjoy having others tell them what to do. On the other side of the coin, these same tribes do not welcome park officials directing their decisions about whether a casino should be constructed or how budgets should be allocated. At what level decision-making is cooperative between sovereign nations within a nation can be a delicate matter and one for which both the U.S. and Argentina are struggling to find a balance.

“People in your country will be surprised to hear we are cutting down trees in a national park, won’t they?” asked forestry technician Marcelo Fernández.

I replied, “Ya, it’s not common in my country for park officials to approve a timber-harvest plan.”

We were on a field outing to the Cayún Mapuche Community, where they have developed a forest plan directing a selective cut of 16 hectares in Lanín. However, as Marcelo later clarified, they were not actually cutting the native-oak forest on parkland, but rather on national reserve land that will soon be property of the Cayún community.

The Cayún community has been working with park staff and Pro Patagonia in the development and implementation of their forest-use plan. Pro Patagonia, located on the campus of Comahue National University of San Martín de Los Andes, is an association set up to provide technical forestry support for Mapuche communities. Financial sup-

⁶ Lanín managers and Mapuche community officials have developed their own definition of “co-manage” to mean, “They will respect, preserve and maintain the knowledge, innovations and practices of the indigenous communities that contains traditional styles of life pertinent for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.” Yes, it is a lofty sentence, obviously produced during a group-write session. Though it doesn’t provide detailed guidance on making decisions, it does set a tone for developing a relationship.

APN now recognizes that it has obligations to people living in protected areas, particularly indigenous groups. They have created a department of human affairs to undertake planning for ecologically sustainable-park living and better management of all protected-area residents.

port has come from the European Union (largely due to a connection by a former staff member from France). Pro Patagonia is a symbiotic relationship between the University and the Mapuche community. The University has forestry-technician students eager for field experience and several Mapuche communities are looking for assistance in developing and implementing forest-use plans.⁷

Low-impact timber harvesting is demonstrated in all phases of the project, from harvest selection of old and dying trees to hauling logs out by oxen and, finally, cutting lumber on site with a mobile sawmill. Forest-use plan authors Marcelo Fernández, Sebastián Goicoechea (Pro Patagonia forestry technician) and Esteban Manqui (Cayún Inan Lonko, or vice-chief) anticipate the plan will have a 10- to 15-year lifespan. Native-oak trees cut at the harvest site are sold as cut lumber or whole logs to regional lumberyards. Economically the Mapuche hope to augment income, generate value-added products, diversify the economy and provide jobs for community youth so they will develop ties with their land. Cut lumber has been used to build new community homes — Cayún-designed and -constructed. Their commitment to sustainable forestry extends to putting a fence around the timber-harvest site to keep cows out, so tree

seedlings have a chance to grow and replace harvested trees.

Cayún Mapuches are not the only community trying to diversify their economy. At Quila Quina, I came upon an interesting project initiated by the Curruhuınca Mapuche community. Their land, set on the hillside above the popular Quila Quina beach, offers scenic hikes to waterfalls, vista points and lakes. At the Curruhuınca trailhead, community youth serve as guides and fee collectors. Hiking fees vary depend on trail length — a 15-minute hike to the waterfalls is US\$1.50, but an all-day hike to the top of Mount *Tren Tren* is US\$15. The enterprise employees 13 Curruhuınca youth. During my visit, 12 had gone to a five-day tourism course sponsored by a Mapuche community in Currahue, Chile (near Pucón). Ironically, the remaining guide was not able to go because he did not have the necessary documents to cross the border. All of this territory was once dominated by Mapuche, but is now split down the middle by an instrument of the “civilized” world, called the Chile / Argentine border.

Ecology Issues

The rodents are coming! This has many park and public health officials worried in the Lanín area. An upward spike in the population of mice and rats is expected be-



A Cayún-Mapuche forester cutting lumber with the help of a mobile sawmill

⁷ The University, more like a community college in the U.S., offers two technical degrees, one in forestry and the other in tourism. An example of courses for the technical forestry degree include biology, chemistry, zoology, dendrology, photo interpretation, silviculture and computers.

cause of the natural flowering of *caña colihüe* (*Chusquea culeou and quila*), known as quila in Chile. This native, bamboo-like species grows in the temperate rainforests of Patagonia. It is a very aggressive plant that spreads quickly and flowers only every 15 to 60 years. The last time *caña colihüe* flowered in this part of Argentina was 1939, making it a once-in-a-lifetime spectacle — or disaster, depending on your line of work.

As a result of the flowering, affecting over 80,000 hectares, two ecologically-based phenomena will be forthcoming — fire, and rodent-population growth. When the plant blooms, it produces fruit and then dies off — leaving a mass of dry canes, which present a worrying fire hazard for years to follow. The bamboo fruit, rich in nutrients, is relished by mice and rats that go into a feeding frenzy. With the increase in food supply, rodents multiply out of control and soon move out of the forest into nearby communities. As if having mice and rats scurrying around town is not enough, infectious hanta virus can be spread by touching rodent feces and through rodent bites. At the moment, this is the most pressing issue for park managers, and with reason they are concentrating their efforts to get ready.

The normal fire season lasts from October to April. Human-caused fires account for 70 percent of fire starts, the largest of which in recent history was an 8,000-hectare blaze near Lake Tromen in 1965. Lightning strikes cause the remaining percentage of fires. Even with tight controls to prevent human-caused, unplanned fires, the possibility of a lightning-caused fire surpassing previous records is worrisome now that dead *caña colihüe* is present throughout the forest.

Even though the Argentine park system is more developed than those of neighboring countries, biological studies are still a novelty. Thus I was eager to learn about a study analyzing the impact of rafting on the reproduction rate of duck populations. Hua Hum River was the study area, where class II and III rafting has been offered for several years.⁸ The duck in question is *Patos de los Torrentes*, the merganser (*Merganetta armata*). Biologists have not seen any signs of merganser reproduction on the Hua Hum for almost three years, but other nearby rivers have had successful breeding pairs. They studied duck behavior during the rafting high season from December to March. Scientists found that when ducks were present on the river, approaching boats caused them to flee only 10 percent of the time (an av-

erage of three-rafting parties per day float this section). They also determined that mergansers use semi-submerged rocks in the river only in the morning. These rocks act as shelter, where mergansers can feel safe enough to sleep and rest.

In a report to park managers, the park biologist concluded that with the level of data obtained he could not determine a cause-effect relation between rafting and the absence of merganser reproduction. He concluded by recommending that rafting be suspended for two to three years for a proper study to be completed. Rafting still continues, and when I rafted the river with one of the three companies operating on the Hua Hum, the guide brought along a dog. The yellow Labrador either swam or ran along the banks during the entire one-and-a-half hour journey. We were lucky enough to see mergansers perched on a rock in the river, just before the dog caused the ducks to flee. Maybe fewer dogs would result in more ducks.

Getting the Job Done

During my two weeks at Lanín, the two main topics of discussion among park-staff members were mice and money, one welcomed and the other not, one forthcoming and the other not. Even given the current chaos, somehow each week it all came together and staff got the basic job done. In particular they are doing well in the cooperation they've begun with Mapuche communities, letting them take on more responsibility at a manageable pace. They have also fared well, or maybe have been lucky, in having



A home built and designed by Cayún carpenters with technical assistance provided by Pro Patagonia.

⁸ Rafting the Hua Hum has the added intrigue of crossing an international border. It is one of three rivers with headwaters in Argentina that flow through Chile to the Pacific Ocean — another reminder of Perito Moreno's victory at the British Tribunal in 1900, which resolved most of the two countries' border disputes.



After flowering once every 15 to 60 years, Quila — a bamboo-type plant — dies providing food for rodents and fuel for fires, and ample worry for fire fighters and public health officials.

high-quality concession staff on the frontline.

Room for improvement exists in the way in which they develop new sources of funding. The need for a modern visitor center — something besides the reception desk that now exists — is such a high priority that opportunities for funding can't be missed. In a country known for corruption among government officials, poorly organized meetings to initiate the visitor-center project may be sufficient reason for international funding organizations to forget about it. In time, I think the park managers will figure out how to capitalize on more reliable sources of funding — fees, whether they be entrance, concession or use fees.

For now I think the park ranger I met at Los Glaciares National Park was partially right about Lanín being the best managed park in Argentina. Nevertheless, he may want to reconsider his desire for a transfer to Lanín, at least until the mice have retreated to the woods and money management is under better control. □

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

FELLOWS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

Shelly Renae Browning (March 2001- 2003) • **AUSTRALIA**

A surgeon specializing in ears and hearing, Dr. Browning is studying the approaches of traditional healers among the Aborigines of Australia to hearing loss and ear problems. She won her B.S. in Chemistry at the University of the South, studied physician/patient relationships in China and Australia on a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship and won her M.D. at Emory University in Atlanta. Before her ICWA fellowship, she was a Fellow in Skull-Base Surgery in Montreal at McGill University's Department of Otolaryngology.

Wendy Call (May 2000 - 2002) • **MEXICO**

A "Healthy Societies" Fellow, Wendy is spending two years in Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec, immersed in contradictory trends: an attempt to industrialize and "develop" land along a proposed Caribbean-to-Pacific containerized railway, and the desire of indigenous peoples to preserve their way of life and some of Mexico's last remaining old-growth forests. With a B.A. in Biology from Oberlin, Wendy has worked as a communications coordinator for Grassroots International and national campaign director for Infact, a corporate accountability organization.

Martha Farmelo (April 2001- 2003) • **ARGENTINA**

A Georgetown graduate (major: psychology; minor, Spanish) with a Master's in Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, Martha is the Institute's Suzanne Ecke McColl Fellow studying gender issues in Argentina. Married to an Argentine doctoral candidate and mother of a small son, she will be focusing on both genders, which is immensely important in a land of *Italo/Latino machismo*. Martha has been involved with Latin America all her professional life, having worked with Catholic Relief Services and the Inter-American Development Bank in Costa Rica, with Human Rights Watch in Ecuador and the Inter-American Foundation in El Salvador, Uruguay and at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Gregory Feifer (January 2000 - 2002) • **RUSSIA**

With fluent Russian and a Master's from Harvard, Gregory worked in Moscow as political editor for *Agence France-Presse* and the weekly *Russia Journal* in 1998-9. Greg sees Russia's latest failures at economic and political reform as a continuation of failed attempts at Westernization that began with Peter the Great — failures that a long succession of behind-the-scenes elites have used to run Russia behind a mythic facade of "strong rulers" for centuries. He plans to assess the continuation of these cultural underpinnings of Russian governance in the wake of the Gorbachev/Yeltsin succession.

Curt Gabrielson (December 2000 - 2002) • **EAST TIMOR**

With a Missouri farm background and an MIT degree in physics, Curt is spending two years in East Timor, watching the new nation create an education system of its own out of the ashes of the Indonesian system. Since finishing MIT in 1993, Curt has focused on delivering inexpensive and culturally relevant hands-on science education to minority and low-income students. Based at the Teacher Institute of the Exploratorium in San Francisco, he has worked with youth and teachers in Beijing, Tibet, and the Mexican agricultural town of Watsonville, California.

Peter Keller (March 2000 - 2002) • **CHILE**

Public affairs officer at Redwood National Park and a park planner at Yosemite National Park before his fellowship, Peter holds a B.S. in Recreation Resource Management from the University of Montana and a Masters in Environmental Law from the Vermont Law School.

As a John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow, he is spending two years in Chile and Argentina comparing the operations of parks and forest reserves controlled by the Chilean and Argentine governments to those controlled by private persons and non-governmental organizations.

Leena Khan (April 2001-2003) • **PAKISTAN**

A U.S. lawyer previously focused on immigration law, Leena is looking at the wide-ranging strategies adopted by the women's movement in Pakistan, starting from the earliest days in the nationalist struggle for independence, to present. She is exploring the myths and realities of women living under Muslim laws in Pakistan through women's experiences of identity, religion, law and customs, and the implications on activism. Born in Pakistan and immersed in Persian and Urdu literature by her grandfather, she was raised in the States and holds a B.A. from North Carolina State University and a J.D. from the University of San Diego.

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