



# TORRES DEL PAINE LEGACY FUND

Biennial Report 2018-2020





# LETTER FROM THE TEAM

It is quite ironic that at the ends of the earth one can feel so close to the sky. The 8th Wonder of the World, Torres del Paine National Park, is a natural sanctuary unlike anywhere else on earth. Majestic granite peaks, piercing blue lakes, and otherworldly wind make this UNESCO biosphere reserve an ecological treasure trove. It is both approachable and ferocious, and its powerful enigma now draws hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world each year.

In 2014, the Legacy Fund was founded by Drew Fink and Daniela Uribe in partnership with Sustainable Travel International with a single mission in mind – a more sustainable future for Torres del Paine and its surrounding communities. Since then, the Legacy Fund and its community of supporters have grown year after year to make this vision a reality. And while the expansive glaciers and towering mountains will always bring people to Torres del Paine, we are most proud of the responsible businesses, conscientious travelers, local destination stewards, volunteers, and team members that have worked in concert to show the true meaning of destination stewardship.

Over the last two seasons, our team has worked with our incredible partners to carry out 11 locally defined sustainability action projects in Torres del Paine National Park and various communities of Magallanes. This biennial report, covering the period June 2018-May 2020, shares the results of these efforts, efforts that would not be possible without your enduring support and shared commitment to this most special region of the world.

With gratitude,  
Emily, Wes, and Bruna



A hiker in a blue jacket and dark pants stands on a dark, rocky ridge in the foreground, looking out at a massive, jagged mountain peak. The mountain is composed of light-colored, layered rock and is partially covered in snow. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The overall scene is dramatic and emphasizes the scale of the natural environment.

## **OUR MISSION:**

To ensure a sustainable future for Torres del Paine National Park and its surrounding communities.

## **OUR VISION:**

A Magallanes where partnership generates a responsible tourism that protects the region's world renowned natural and cultural heritage.





# 2018-2020 BY THE NUMBERS

**\$152,784** Invested  
in Programs

**159** Volunteer  
Participants

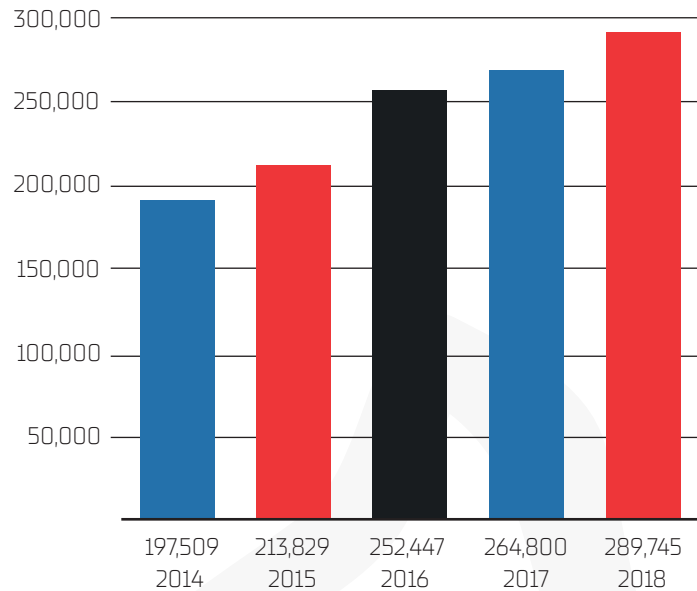
**44** Local & International  
Partners

**11** Sustainability  
Action Projects



# AN OVER-LOVED DESTINATION

**Torres del Paine National Park Annual Visitation**



Puerto Natales and Torres del Paine National Park have seen a sharp rise in visitation over the last decade. Heavy foot traffic has led to erosion on the park's limited trail system, energy and waste systems cannot keep up with exponential growth in usage, and three tourist-induced forest fires have ravaged almost 1/5 of the national park.

The increase in visitors to this once sleepy fishing village requires heightened social and environmental responsibility amongst local actors. As tourism grows, so does the need to proactively manage its benefits and consequences.

***The Legacy Fund believes in shared destination stewardship, whereby the public, private, and civic sectors collaboratively harness tourism as a vehicle for positive change.***



# OBJECTIVES

## #1

Preserve & protect ecosystems

## #2

Improve tourism infrastructure and mitigate visitor impacts

## #3

Promote community development

## #4

Diversify recreational & cultural opportunities for residents & visitors

Legacy Fund projects advance one or more of these four principal objectives. Addressing these local sustainability priorities helps to mitigate many of the challenges brought on by overtourism in Torres del Paine. Few national park systems in the world are sustained by public resources alone, let alone one as popular as Torres del Paine. The Legacy Fund mobilizes additional investments to more sustainably manage this flagship region's mounting tourist arrivals and associated impacts.

# WHERE WE WORK



Torres del Paine National Park is located in the Magallanes Region of Chile, the southernmost region in the country (and continental earth). The Legacy Fund works with partners and communities between the major city of Punta Arenas and the small town of Puerto Natales, also known as the gateway city to Torres del Paine.



# SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

2018-2020







# TRAIL BUILDING

Since 2017, the Torres del Paine Legacy Fund has helped finance the design and construction of a new trail along Torres del Paine's famous 'W' Circuit. Connecting the Paine Grande and Italiano campgrounds, this trail will serve as a central access point to the stunning French Valley.

Originally created by livestock, the existing trail was never designed to support the trekking boom that Torres del Paine has experienced over the last 10 years. Poor design combined with intensive use have led to significant erosion, flood damage, and braiding along the trail, and consequently degradation of surrounding habitats.

Over the last several years, the Legacy Fund has worked with over 100 volunteers to construct a brand new, 10-kilometer trail between these two campgrounds. The trail features 380 meters of boardwalk, two new suspension bridges, interpretative signage, and 10 kilometers of tread designed with drainage, grade, and other sustainable trail principles in mind.

The new trail is set to open during the 2020-2021 season and will serve as a unidirectional circuit, eventually rejoining the existing trail at the new Francés River bridge.

This trail was built and co-financed in collaboration with Conservation VIP and CONAF (Chilean National Forestry Corporation).





# TRAIL BUILDING

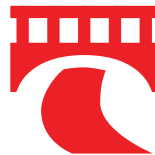
By the Numbers



- 109 volunteers
- 4,600 labor hours



- 10 kilometers of tread
- 2 interpretive panels
- 3 hour average walking time



- 380 meters of boardwalk
- 2 suspension bridges
- (financed & designed by conservation VIP)







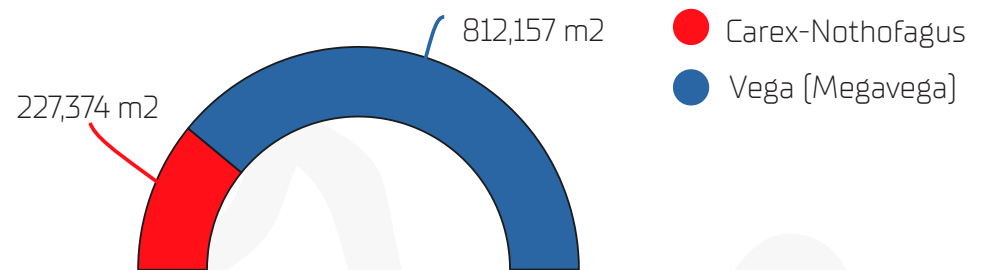
# DICKSON BOARDWALK

Between the Coirón and Dickson campgrounds along the Paine Massif Circuit, trekkers previously traversed directly through a large wetland area. Such conditions not only resulted in a less enjoyable recreational experience and prolonged trail closures, but caused hikers to widen or create destructive side trails that impacted surrounding habitats. Due to its remote location (nearly a 20 km hike from the closest road), installing any infrastructure in this sector of the park to mitigate these challenges posed a significant logistical and financial burden.

Thanks to the European Outdoor Conservation Association, and thousands of votes from supporters, the Legacy Fund received a grant of approximately €26,416 (Euros) for a project titled "Enhancing and Safeguarding Torres del Paine's O Circuit."

The grant allowed us to map and classify the wetland and construct a 170-meter boardwalk out of native lumber to traverse the fragile, humid terrain. 27 Legacy Fund volunteers and 5 CONAF park rangers spent 2,169 hours in the field to complete the boardwalk and install two interpretive panels that educate visitors about the wetland ecosystem.

## Dickson Wetland Classification



*The Legacy Fund and CONAF analyzed the terrain prior to boardwalk construction to understand the types of wetland found in this sector of the park.*





# REFORESTATION MONITORING

Since 1985, three man-made fires, all started by tourists, have ravaged almost 1/5 of the park's area. Affected ecosystems include native lenga tree forests, home to the blackwoodpecker (*Campephilus magellanicus*), Cachaña (*Enicognathus ferrugineus*) and the endangered huemul deer (*Hippocamelus bisculus*), amongst other endemic and endangered species facing drastically reduced and altered habitats.

Since forest fires are not naturally occurring events in southern Patagonia, in response to the 2005 and 2011/2012 events, CONAF began restoration efforts to accelerate the recuperation of pure and mixed lenga forest. To date, CONAF has reforested an area of approximately 325 hectares with 900,000 lenga seedlings in the central and eastern sectors of the park.

The Legacy Fund has since then recruited, trained, and managed six different volunteer groups to examine the health and growth of these reforested seedlings. This data constitutes a considerable advance towards obtaining the sample size necessary for drawing informed conclusions as to survival rates, conditions, and resurgence/absence of adjacent/dependent flora and fauna that can in turn inform planting methodologies across an increasingly fire-prone Patagonia.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Weeden Foundation, the Legacy Fund will be continuing this work in the 2020-2021 season.







# REFORESTATION MONITORING

By the Numbers



- 58 Volunteers
- 1,516 labor hours



- 456 nuclei monitored
- 45,600 individual seedlings evaluated



7 Sectors of the Park

1. Pingo
2. Grey
3. Rio Angostura
4. Puente Weber
5. Pudeto
6. Carretas
7. Pehoé





# INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

CONAF has identified invasive species control as a complementary priority of its reforestation program, as both are critical to restoring the park's native ecosystems. Retamo (*Cytisus striatus*) is an invasive bush characterized by its attractive and bright yellow flowers. However, Retamo spreads rapidly and is highly flammable, prompting additional forest fire concerns for the park. Its strong, extensive roots are often double or triple the size of the visible brush, and they tend to overpower other native species for nutrients.

With support from volunteers, the Legacy Fund team has worked to manually remove Retamo from the Administration Serrano sector of the park, investing 667 man hours to eliminate 1.3 square kilometers of this invasive species between 2018 - 2020.







# KAWÉSQAR CULTURAL CENTER & COMMUNITY TOURISM INITIATIVE

In January 2019, the Legacy Fund received a \$50,000 (AUD), 2-year grant from the Intrepid Foundation. The project aimed to support members of the Kawésqar communities of Magallanes to promote and share their rich cultural heritage with residents and visitors alike, while also providing additional income-earning opportunities for participants and their families.

Through March 2020, the Legacy Fund helped support 10 Kawésqar entrepreneurs with capacity building and seed capital in the development of cultural tourism products. Training and coaching in sustainable tourism, heritage interpretation and storytelling, product design, development, and commercialization have resulted in the piloting of the following offerings:

- Kawésqar-inspired gastronomy with dine-in and boxed lunch options
- Masterclass in Kawésqar weaving
- Artisanal crafts.



*This project provided co-financing for the project "Prototipo de Innovación Social," implemented by NEXUS and funded by CORFO. Please contact the team for additional information.*

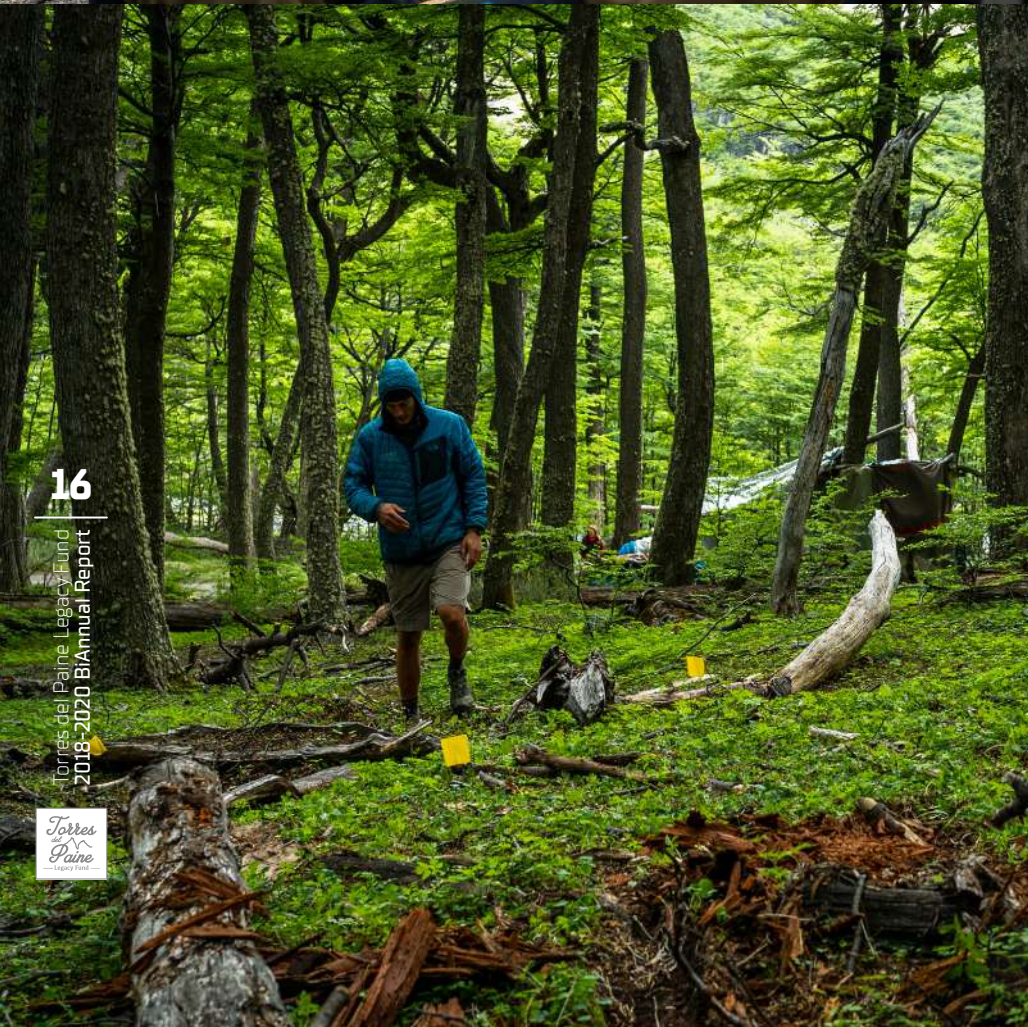




## ECO-TOILETS

A critical visitor management challenge brought on by Torres del Paine's increasing popularity is waste management. Most backcountry and even front-country toilet systems are outdated and undersized, and installing and maintaining large flush systems in remote areas is an energy and cost intensive undertaking.

The Legacy Fund has partnered with the NGO "Do Good Shit" to provide a lower cost, lower maintenance, low odor, high performance remote waste management option for backcountry areas of the national park. In 2019, three urine diverting toilets and accompanying structures were purchased for installation at different campgrounds (construction at two sites was interrupted due to COVID-19 and will resume during the 2020-2021 season). The waterless system + liquid-solid separation significantly reduces final waste amounts, even compared with composting systems. This is particularly helpful for parks like Torres del Paine that use barrel fly outs to manage backcountry waste. The system can reduce helicopter trips to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their previous requirement, resulting in considerable savings.







# OUR COMMUNITY

Partners, engagement,  
and events.

We're constantly growing and learning with our community. Our priorities are driven by local actors and we depend on the support of our partners and volunteers to create impact.





# PARTNERSHIP WITH CONAF

As the national park authority of Chile, the Legacy Fund collaborates with CONAF day in and day out to advance shared conservation and visitor management goals. Under a formal agreement of mutual collaboration, signed in early 2017, the two agreed to jointly prioritize, plan, co-fund, and implement all projects undertaken in Torres del Paine.

This critical partnership leverages technical and financial resources for maximum impact, ensures alignment with local priorities and realities, and promotes education and knowledge exchange with volunteers, visitors, park rangers, and the broader conservation community.

Recognizing the value and importance of such relationships to protected area management, CONAF and the Legacy Fund expanded their agreement to cover all protected areas of Magallanes in January 2019. The team looks forward to continuing this collaboration to advance sustainable tourism in Torres del Paine and beyond in the years to come.







# VOLUNTEERS

Legacy Fund volunteers are the heart and soul of park stewardship initiatives, and their time, sweat, dedication and enthusiasm are much appreciated.

While priority is given to individuals from Magallanes, volunteers come from diverse backgrounds from all over Chile. They work side by side with Legacy Fund staff and CONAF rangers, taking back what they've learned to other protected areas of Chile.

This volunteer model provides much needed human resources for park infrastructure and conservation projects. Additionally, it promotes environmental education, knowledge sharing, and experiential learning amongst a growing community of park supporters that can further advocate for the protection of Patagonia's public lands.

Below are testimonials from just a few volunteers (translated).

*"The bond I developed with some of the team members was something I will always cherish, even more than the wonderful landscapes we enjoyed. It has been a lifetime experience that if given the chance, I would do all over again."*

*"The experience was very personally enriching. Since returning home, I have shared about my experience and the importance of nature conservation with colleagues. Some of them have even made small decisions to be more sustainable in their lifestyles. I have a newfound way of living and have a better understanding of the many different things I can do to pass this knowledge to all the people that surround me, especially my students."*

Survey: How would you rate your overall fulfillment post-volunteering?  
(Choices: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Very Poor.)







# TRAIL COMMUNITY

In addition to constructing and restoring trails in the park, the Legacy Fund values opportunities to exchange lessons learned and build trail skills and capacity with our partners.

In January 2019, our team partnered with AMA Torres del Paine to host a sustainable trails clinic led by trail expert Jacob 'Sutra' Brett. In attendance at the 5-day clinic were park rangers from CONAF, AMA staff, college interns, NGOs, and individuals from the local tourism industry. Participants learned how to design, construct, and maintain sustainable trails for high use in wilderness environments.

In April 2019, the Legacy Fund also participated in a workshop organized by CEQUA for CONAF park rangers and other tourism actors. This 2-day event provided participants with an overview of trail fundamentals and the opportunity to put skills into practice building 500 meters of tread.







# BUSINESS PARTNERS

Business partners are industry leaders in responsible tourism at the local, national, and global levels. They understand that sustainability extends beyond their internal operations to include investments in the long-term health of their product, destination, and community.

Cuernos Partners contribute financial or in-kind donations in support of the Legacy Fund's projects. International tour operators provide per passenger donations, and share their commitment with their clients by joining sustainability talks and stewardship activities with the Legacy Fund team. Local partners contribute food or transport for volunteers carrying out field work, while friends in the gastronomy sector run product promotions and specials that benefit the Fund.

Torres Partners spread the word about Legacy Fund's sustainability initiatives, and help engage travelers and volunteers to expand impact. From raising awareness about Torres del Paine's challenges and opportunities, to facilitating donation opportunities for their clients, business partners play a critical role in financing park improvements and raising awareness.

Between June 2018 and May 2020, the Legacy Fund proudly partnered with 44 tourism businesses, ranging from local, family owned restaurants, to hotels, to some of the world's largest global travel brands.



# FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

Since its founding, the Legacy Fund has proudly carried out its work as a program of Sustainable Travel International, an international NGO based in the US. Founded in 2002, Sustainable Travel International was one of the earliest champions of sustainable tourism, working with businesses and destinations around the world to transform tourism's impact on nature and communities. Their global leadership and dedicated partnership have been instrumental to the Legacy Fund's growth. We look forward to continuing to collaborate to advance our shared mission of maximizing tourism's benefits for people and places.

As of June 1, 2020, the Legacy Fund is excited to announce a new partnership with another leader in sustainable tourism, the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST). CREST is a 501c3 non-profit organization based in Washington DC dedicated to increasing the positive global impact of responsible tourism. Through research, advocacy and partnership, CREST promotes responsible tourism policies and practices so that local communities, cultures, and biodiversity may thrive. In June 2020, the Legacy Fund transitioned from Sustainable Travel International and became incorporated as a fiscally-sponsored program of CREST. The team looks forward to collaborating to create an even greater impact in Torres del Paine National Park and its surrounding communities.



# PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Thanks to all of our donors, supporters, and partners, local impact grows each year. The Legacy Fund would like to recognize and show appreciation to a few of those that have made this work possible - and a pleasure.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

CONAF  
Conservation VIP  
Do Good Shit  
Municipality of Puerto Natales  
AMA Torres del Paine

## CUERNOS PARTNERS \$1,000+

Airbnb  
Adventures Cross Country  
Dragoman Overland  
European Outdoor Conservation Association  
The Intrepid Foundation  
Reserva Cerro Paine\*  
Yellow Dog Community & Conservation Foundation

## INDIVIDUAL DONORS \$100+

Daniel Abramzon  
Bruce Ahlbom  
Annie & David Collins  
Mary Fox Dubus  
Cayla Eller  
Luke Errington  
Kathryn Zinke  
Jesse A Espinosa  
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Lauren Kenly  
Kurt Kutay  
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Todd Zinke

## CREDITED PHOTOGRAPHERS

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Cristóbal Ortega  
Silvestre Seré  
Chris Theobald  
Teva Todd  
Daniél Gonzalez Villaroel

*\*In-kind contribution(s) valued in excess of \$1,000 or greater during the two-year period*

## FOUNDATION GRANTS

Fink Family Foundation  
Weeden Foundation

## FISCAL SPONSORS

Sustainable Travel International

Camping Pehoe\*  
Chile Nativo  
Eclipse Travel  
Hielos Patagónicos\*  
Last Hope Distillery  
Venture Patagonia  
Wilderness Travel

Cheri Espinosa  
Sue Rushmore  
Timothy Sanders  
Catherine Thomasson  
Tim Turner  
Christy Wise

## CUERNOS & TORRES PARTNERS

Afrigonia  
Big Foot Patagonia  
Cafe Artimaña  
Cervecería Baguales  
EcoCamp Patagonia  
The Grand Adventure Company  
Into the Wild Expeditions  
Latinspirations  
Noi Indigo Patagonia  
Patagonia Camp  
PIC: Preserve in Community  
She Explores  
Southern Explorations  
Traverse Journeys  
Tutrasavia  
Wildland Trekking International

## SPECIAL THANKS

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Base Camp Patagonia  
Buses JB  
Cafe Kaiken  
Dittmar Adventures  
Erratic Rock  
Horizon Guides  
Kau Patagonia  
Nash Patagonia Lodge  
Outdoor Project  
Patagon Journal  
Reserva Cerro Paine  
Sodexo Camping Pehoe  
Swoop Patagonia  
Travolution  
Wildland Adventures

Jacob 'Sutra' Brett  
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Emily Hopcian  
Hernan Jofre  
David Summer

Jose Linnebrink  
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Mauricio Ruiz  
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Mauricio Vejar





Thank you for all of the support and we look forward to continuing our work in the coming season. If you have any questions about this report or our work, do not hesitate to contact us.

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