

Universidad de Concepción and Enel Generación Recover Threatened Native Tree Species Habitat in Termas de Catillo

- *The initiative, which also involves the university's Staff Association, has focused since 2020 on the ecological restoration of 11.7 hectares. In that area, the objective is to recover the Cordillera Cypress along with other native species.*

Plant no. 2,500,001 was the name given to the planting landmark, part of the reforestation and ecological restoration projects carried out through the agreements signed between the Universidad de Concepción (UofC) and Enel Generación Chile. This project extends over different properties between the regions of Maule and Araucanía, covering an area of 700 hectares with native species.

In the activity, three small specimens of Ciprés de la Cordillera took their place inside an 11.7-hectare property in Termas de Catillo, owned by Universidad de Concepción Staff Association. Both the chosen place and plants symbolize the collaborative work carried out between private enterprise, academia, and local actors interested in conserving and recovering degraded forests with the presence of endangered native species.

Dr. Andrea Rodríguez Tastets, Vice-Rector of Research and Development UofC, points out that "it is relevant for the university to establish an active collaboration with private companies, communities, and territories, to address initiatives that are aligned with expected Sustainable Development Goals."

He adds that "the work of finding environmental conditions enabling native species' ecological restoration to preserve our biodiversity while maintaining environmental and socio-cultural conditions of the environment. We hope that the milestone of the 2,500,001st plant will be an example of what can be achieved together. This presentation will allow us to face the great environmental challenges ahead of us," he says.

For Dr. Cristian Echeverría Leal, director of the Native Forest Initiative, the unit in charge of project implementation, this activity symbolizes a long journey of multiple learnings for all parties involved. "Under a transdisciplinary approach, we can generate new knowledge and provide a solution to an extremely complex issue: the restoration of habitat for endangered species. It is not only about planting trees, but also about seeking the recovery of biodiversity and ecological complexity that characterizes our ecosystems".

He also stresses that "under an adaptive management approach, we have implemented new site preparation and planting techniques this year. All of this will guide us in the medium term to better ensure the recovery of the habitat of the Cordilleran cypress species in a context of climate and biodiversity crisis," he explains. }

Virtuous Alliance

"For Enel Generación, this project is especially significant because it relates to the environmental conservation of relevant territory to the neighboring communities, us as a company, and the country as a whole. We are proud and happy with all the work that has been achieved through this virtuous alliance. Enel's collaboration with academia and land owners interested in conservation has been coordinated to develop this great reforestation

and ecological restoration project. The undertaking allows us to generate shared value, make a positive impact on the environment, generate shared value, contribute to reforestation research and restoration with native species, and at the same time restore deforested or degraded ecosystems, generating natural spaces for future generations" said Carlo Carvallo, Hydro Operation and Maintenance Manager of Enel Generación Chile.

Ecosystem degradation and climate change are also hot topics in Catillo, which has seen severe forest fires. Esteban Otárola López is the University of Concepción's Director of the Association of Teaching and Administrative Staff (APDA), an autonomous entity that owns the thermal complex in Catillo. For him, the replacement of monocultures by native species results in an environmental protective initiative "fully aligned with our institution's objectives of in the permanent search for benefits for our associates, their families, and the community in general."

He adds that the alliance between the Association of Teaching and Administrative Staff, Enel, and the University of Concepción is the way to a social and environmentally sustainable economic development, which allows the necessary protection and balance of vital ecosystems that sustain life on our planet".

Ecological restoration is a type of nature-based solution that seeks to recover the attributes and characteristics that an ecosystem would have had if it had not been affected or degraded by human activity. In Catillo's case, the aim is to recover the Cordilleran Cypress' endangered habitat by establishing both the species and accompanying species. A reference ecosystem is used as a basis, which provides guidelines regarding the density and distribution of plants in space.