

MEDIA RELEASE

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Creation of Patagonia Park Announced at Banff Mountain Summit



This Friday the first national coastal park to be created in Argentina will be one step closer to reality when the Patagonia Land Trust transfers the ownership of 155,000 acres of coastal Patagonia to the Argentinean government.

Rick Ridgeway, a director of the Patagonia Land Trust, made the announcement yesterday in Banff at one of the closing sessions of the Banff Mountain Summit. The Patagonia Land Trust is a non-profit charitable foundation that raises funds to purchase, restore and preserve the lands in South America's Patagonia region. Ridgeway said control of the area, known as Monte León, will be formally handed over at a ceremony in Buenos Aires on November 1.

Monte León is located along the southern coast of Santa Cruz province, north of Rio Gallegos. Since 1912, Monte León had supported a sheep ranch, but years of overgrazing reduced the carrying capacity of the land. The Patagonia Land Trust purchased the property two years ago and the sheep were removed to allow the grassland to recover. Working in conjunction with Vida Silvestre — the Argentine sister organization to the World Wildlife Fund — and the Argentine government, the Land Trust developed a master plan to convert the property to a national park. Monte León, with seal rookeries and a penguin rookery of over 400,000 birds, is expected to attract many visitors from South America and around the world.

The Banff Mountain Summit, which concluded yesterday at The Banff Centre, examined the issues facing the world's extreme landscapes and the inspiration these wild lands provide. Ridgeway's presentation, entitled "Patagonia Dreaming", described the work of the Patagonia Land Trust in raising private and corporate funds to preserve wilderness lands in the southern regions of Argentina and Chile.

The Banff Mountain Festivals continue with the Banff Mountain Book Festival (October 30–November 1) and the Banff Mountain Film Festival (November 1–3). For festival information go to www.banffmountainfestivals.ca. For tickets, call the Box Office at 1-800-413-8368, 1-403-762-6301.

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Patagonia Land Trust website: www.patagonialandtrust.org

***Banff Mountain Summit 2002 – Extreme Landscape: Challenge and Celebration
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