

**His Excellency  
Mr. Ricardo Lagos Escobar  
President of Chile  
Palacio de La Moneda  
Santiago, Chile**

Washington, 18 July 2005

Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned organizations, representing more than seven million members worldwide, write to ask his Excellency the President of Chile, Mr. Ricardo Lagos, to create a marine protected area for blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*) in the waters lying off Chiloé Island and the Gulf of Corcovado, X Region, Chile.

This area ranks as one of the most biologically important areas in Chile and the world, home to emblematic species including the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), orca (*Orcinus orca*), Chilean dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus eutropia*), Peale's dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus australis*), South American sea lion (*Otaria flavescens*) and South American fur seal (*Arctophalus australis*), among others. It also harbors commercially important species such as three hake species (*Merluccius*, *Macruronus* and *Micromesistius*) and Patagonian toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*). Its coasts are dominated by spectacular islands, fjords, channels, volcanoes, ancient forests and snow-capped peaks, serving as impressive icons of wilderness for visitors from all over the world. The creation of a marine and coastal protected area in the region would not only benefit its marine ecosystems, but the Chilean people by bringing economic alternatives that could make the region a prime destination for nature-based tourism.

The protected area would also play a key role in the protection of the blue whale. In 2003, Chilean scientists identified a population of blue whales engaged in feeding and nursing activities in the Gulf of Corcovado and off the western coast of Chiloé Island. These magnificent creatures, at 33 meters the largest mammal ever to exist in the world, represents a species that has begun to recover over the last half century from the severe depletion and near extinction brought by commercial whaling. It is estimated that even now the population of blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere reaches no more than 800 to 2900 individuals, less than 1% of pre-exploitation estimates. One of the primary continuing threats to marine mammals such as the blue whale is the lack of safe feeding, reproduction and socialization areas. This places the region, a highly unpolluted and rich feeding ground and nursery, in a particularly important position in the global efforts to protect this threatened species. In recognition of this special role, the World Conservation Congress at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, 17-25 November 2004, adopted a motion encouraging the Republic of Chile to ensure the protection of the blue whale through the creation of a protected area in the

Gulf of Corcovado and waters off western Chiloe Island. We strongly endorse this motion and respectfully urge you to take the necessary steps to create this protected area and in this way crystallize your commitment to the environment as a remarkable and historic legacy of your Presidency.

Sincerely yours,

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**Wavelength Magazine**  
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**The Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals, GSM**  
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**Fins Magazine**  
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