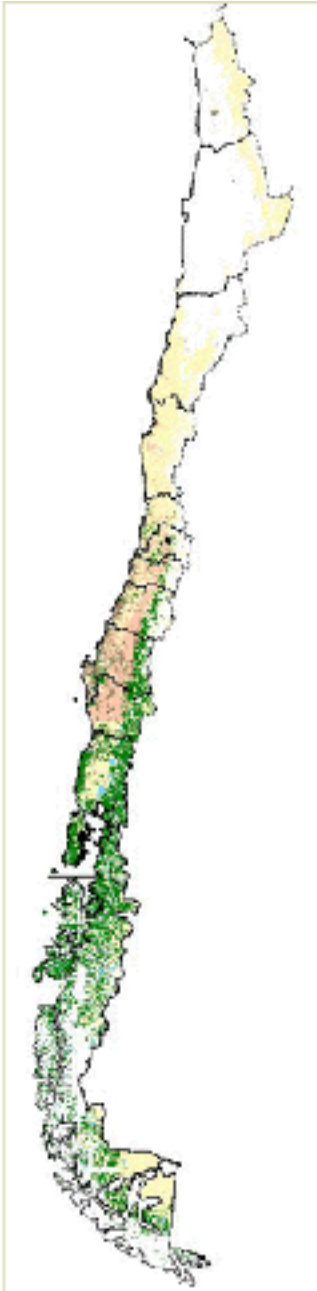


Chile's Frontier Forests: Distribution of Different Land Uses and Native Forests in Chile



Map Projection: Transverse Mercator

Citation: Neira, E., H. Verscheure and C. Revenga. 2002. Chile's Frontier Forest: Conserving a Global Treasure. WRI, CODEFF and UACH, Washington DC.



Analytical Overview:

The Official Land Register and Evaluation of the Native Vegetative Resources of Chile used topographic maps at a scale of 1:50,000 provided by the Military Geographic Institute of Chile (Instituto Geografico Militar).

This landcover map was mapped based on satellite images at a scale of 1:250,000 with a 79 meter resolution. Aerial photographs were also interpreted visually. The following classes were used for this map: urban, cropland, grassland/shrubland, forestry plantations, native forest, water bodies, other land uses.

This map was produced by Global Forest Watch partners Comité Nacional Pro Defensa de la Fauna y Flora (CODEFF) and Universidad Austral de Chile.

Description:

This map shows the different land uses and land cover in Chile. Chile is a long, narrow country located in the southwestern part of South America. It has a total length of 4,300 km and an average width of 160 km. It is bordered to the North by Peru and Bolivia, to the east by Argentina and to the west by the Pacific Ocean. As shown in the map, the country is divided into thirteen administrative regions, distributed from north to south. Region XIII, in the center of the country, corresponds to the metropolitan region of Santiago, Chile's capital, where most of the population of the country is located.

Chile has an extraordinary diversity of environments, from deserts in the north to temperate rainforests in the south. Chile's most biodiversity-rich areas are found between Regions VIII and X (i.e., those administrative regions found between the parallels 36°S and 43.5°S). Chile's forests are some of the most impressive in the world, ranging from Chilean palm forests and Sclerophyllous forests (composed of tree species adapted to drier climates), in north-central Chile, to prehistoric araucaria forests, temperate rainforests, and alerce forests-- the "redwoods of the Andes"-- to the South. The alerce cedar is the Southern Hemisphere's largest conifer, and one of the most long-lived species of trees, sometimes living for over 3,000 years. Virtually every type of temperate forest native to the Southern Hemisphere can be found in Chile. These forests are of great ecological and conservation value. They store vast quantities of carbon that contribute to global climate regulation, control flooding, purify water, cycle nutrients and soil, and house an incredible array of species that provide the genetic material for valuable new products and a foundation for the resilience of natural systems.

Unfortunately, Chile's native forests are being eroded by the skyrocketing global demand for wood and paper products. There has been a dramatic expansion of logging into southern Chile. Over the past 30 years, the Chilean forestry sector has become a driving force in the national economy, with forest exports increasing from approximately US\$40 million in 1970 to US\$2.2 billion in 2000. This growth has attracted overseas investments in logging. These economic incentives, combined with the current forestry policy in Chile, have promoted the establishment of large-scale plantations of pine and eucalyptus, many of which have resulted in the clearing of precious native forests. These plantations provide most of the timber needed for the domestic and export markets. The result is a dramatic loss of biodiversity, increased soil erosion, and changes in the water level of streams.