

HidroAysén and The Home Depot: Myth vs. Fact

The Home Depot is feeling the pressure of our campaign, as evidenced by the email responses they are sending to Patagonia Campaign supporters that have written to them. In these responses, and on their website, The Home Depot has presented misleading information. Here are a few examples of The Home Depot Myths, compared with The Patagonia Dam Facts.

The Home Depot Myth: *Their suppliers hold only a small minority stake in the companies involved in the project.*

The Patagonia Dam Fact: The main Chilean partner in the Patagonia Dam joint-venture scheme known as HidroAysén is Colbún. Colbún owns 49% of HidroAysén (Enel, an Italian multinational energy corporation, controls the other 51%). The Home Depot supplier Matte Group (CMPC) is considered the “de-facto” owner of Colbún, with a 49% percent share and control of the board of directors. The Angelini Group (Arauco), another Home Depot supplier, owns a 9% stake in Colbún, giving The Home Depot suppliers in question a controlling interest in Colbún. The Home Depot suppliers are major stakeholders in the Patagonia Dam controversy.

The Home Depot Myth: *The organizations involved in this situation are not directly involved in harvesting any of the wood we purchase.*

The Patagonia Dam Fact: The Matte Group owns Colbún (energy) and CMPC (forestry). The Home Depot buys wood products directly from CMPC. The Matte and the Angelini Groups are huge economic interests with forestry, mining, energy, and banking sectors that are intricately interconnected. Members of the Matte family trade stock and hold executive posts in all their companies.

The Home Depot Myth: *The issue is about choosing between coal burning power plants or large-scale hydroelectric development in Patagonia.*

The Patagonia Dam Fact: Chile is a country endowed with plentiful renewable solar, geothermal, and wind options. Implementing energy efficiency measures could make the Patagonia Dams unnecessary. The companies promoting the dams in Patagonia are also investing in coal burning power plants—as well as renewable wind energy projects! The Home Depot is repeating a false discourse of choosing between coal and large-scale hydroelectric development to meet future energy needs, when Chile has many energy options and the Patagonia Dams scheme is simply not necessary. In addition, large-scale hydro is widely recognized to be a dirty form of energy, and is widely considered a false solution for meeting climate change challenges.

The Home Depot Myth: *This decision is best made by the country and its citizens.*

The Patagonia Dam Fact: We agree! Recent polling shows that a majority of Chileans rejects the construction of dams on Patagonia's rivers. More than half of the public agencies reviewing the dam project supported outright rejection of the Environmental Impact Study. Government bureaucrats and Chile's citizens are against dams in Patagonia, yet the project continues to move forward with political manipulations that are reminiscent of the legacy of the military dictatorship that gave away the water rights to Patagonia's rivers decades ago.

The Home Depot Myth: *We take seriously our ability to effect change by doing the right thing in the communities where we do business.*

The Patagonia Dam Fact: The Home Depot contends that they can do nothing to stop the construction of the dams in Patagonia, though there is little question that action on their part would have tremendous consequences on a national and international level. In this instance, **we obviously take their ability to effect change more seriously than they do.**

The Home Depot Myth: *We will encourage our customers to become environmentally conscious shoppers.*

The Patagonia Dam Fact: One of the key elements to being an environmentally conscious shopper is to "follow the money" that you spend all the way to the companies that profit from your purchase. In this case, The Home Depot is failing to adhere to a rigorous definition of what it means to be an environmentally conscious shopper. Simply said, Home Depot sales are benefiting economic interests that promote the destruction of rivers and forests in wild Patagonia. **An environmentally conscious shopper will no longer shop at The Home Depot!**