

Media Contacts

Lisa Park, The Nature Conservancy, Lpark@tnc.org, (408) 821-9255

Rachel Winters, The Nature Conservancy, Rwinters@tnc.org, (212) 381-2190

Jess Clayton, Patagonia, jess.clayton@patagonia.com, (805) 667-4755

Wool from Sustainably Raised Sheep Play Surprising Role in Patagonia's Grasslands Restoration

Patagonia Inc. places first order of wool from sheep ranchers in their namesake region of South America, Argentina

Los Angeles, Calif. (January 23, 2013) — The Nature Conservancy, Patagonia Inc., and Argentine rancher network Ovis XXI announced a groundbreaking partnership to reverse over 100 years of overgrazing in 15 million acres of Patagonia's iconic grasslands. The Nature Conservancy is working closely with Ovis XXI's wool producers to provide scientific expertise and monitoring to ranchers. Patagonia's purchase agreement encourages ranchers to raise and graze their sheep in a way that supports the long-term health of the region.

Patagonia Inc. is the first to sign on and buy wool from the region to provide a market incentive and encourage widespread adoption of sustainable grazing practices. The company is creating a new consumer product line made from the sustainable wool available in the fall. The initial goal is to restore 15 million acres of Patagonian grasslands by implementing a sustainable sheep-grazing protocol and by attracting additional partners and buyers.

The Southern Temperate Grasslands of Argentina span 400 million acres- an area nearly three times the size of California—and are among the most threatened, most damaged and least protected habitats in the world.

“Ranching on grasslands has shaped the economic and cultural development of Patagonia. And by partnering with the leading outdoor clothing company and working directly with ranchers, we will be able to continue the region's ranching heritage in a way that sustains the local economy and the grasslands,” said Carlos Fernandez, Patagonian Grasslands Conservation Project Manager with The Nature Conservancy. “With the new merino collection by Patagonia Inc, consumers around the world will have an opportunity to be a part of this new, sustainable future.”

Starting in fall 2013, every single merino baselayer style by Patagonia Inc., including all merino socks, will be made with wool sustainably sourced from the grasslands of Patagonia. This high-quality merino is fully traceable back to ranches using the Grassland Regeneration and Sustainability Standard (GRASS), which includes conservation goals and land management protocols agreed upon by The Nature Conservancy and Ovis XXI.

“Patagonia's baselayers are our flagship product and the first step in layering for a successful day outdoors. Our Merino 2 is designed for staying warm in cool to cold conditions while our Merino 3 is perfect for the coldest days,” said Jill Dumain, Director of Environmental Strategy with Patagonia Inc.



“And now people can feel good knowing that by wearing these products they are contributing to the regeneration of the Patagonian grasslands. We have often sought to be sustainable but this is the first time we have actually been able to improve an environment by placing business there.”

Sheep herding is the Patagonia region’s principal economic activity. It is also the area’s biggest threat due to overgrazing and subsequent land erosion and desertification. Unsustainable grazing has already turned 20 million acres, the equivalent of 10 Yellowstone national parks, into desert-like lands, useless for supporting ranching or many species of native wildlife. The trend toward desertification is continuing and is evident on millions more acres.

The new protocol introduced by the Conservancy and Ovis XXI mimics natural grazing patterns for wildlife. Rather than graze sheep in one place continually, the sheep will be moved in and out of different pastures depending on the conditions of the grasses, encouraging more diversity of native grass species and higher ground coverage. When flock sizes, lands, and streams are properly managed, ranchers, sheep, native plants and animals can thrive together.

Desertification of these grasslands threatens not only ranchers and their livelihoods, but also this iconic ecosystem. Patagonia is home to wildlife found nowhere else on the planet: the guanaco, a relative of the llama; the rhea, a flightless bird similar to an ostrich; and last large population of the massive Andean Condors.

“This is one of those iconic areas we think of as true wilderness. There is a reason Patagonia picked it as a namesake right? It’s also home to a great ranching heritage and the ranchers we’ve been talking to are open to adopting conservation practices,” said Chris Pague, ecologist with The Nature Conservancy. “By working together we can ensure that the ranchers make a good living and that future generations will still know Patagonia as a wild place at the edge of the Earth.”

The hope of this partnership is to change the future of the Patagonian region’s grassland as well as implement a globally sustainable grazing protocol to secure the economic viability of sheep ranching without sacrificing the natural value of lands that sustain Patagonia.

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About The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Conservancy and its more than 1 million members have protected nearly 120 million acres worldwide. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org.

About Patagonia, Inc.

Patagonia, Inc., based in Ventura, California, is a leading designer of core outdoor, surf and sport-related apparel, equipment, footwear and accessories. With sales last year of \$540M, the company is noted internationally for its commitment to authentic product quality and environmental activism, contributing over \$47.5M in cash and in-kind donations to date. Incorporating environmental



Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

patagonia®



responsibility into product development, the company has, since 1996, used only organically grown cotton in its clothing line. Committed to making its products landfill-free, the company's entire product line is recyclable through its Common Threads Initiative. The company also advocates corporate transparency through its interactive website, *The Footprint Chronicles*, which outlines the environmental and social footprint of individual products. Patagonia was featured as *The Coolest Company* on the Planet on Fortune Magazine's April 2007 cover.