

# **BHP CEO states that "Argentina could become one of the world's top five copper producers"**

Mike Henry led the opening of the world's largest mining exploration convention in Canada on Monday. There, he described Argentina's mining resource potential as "underdeveloped" compared to countries like Chile.

**Pulso. March 4, 2025.**  
**By Víctor Guillou**

"Argentina could become one of the world's top five copper producers." This statement, made by BHP CEO Mike Henry, marked the opening of the 2025 edition of PDAC (Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada), the world's leading convention on mineral exploration and extraction, which began on Monday in Toronto.

In a presentation focused on the future of mining and the importance of critical minerals towards 2050, Henry took a moment to analyze Argentina's case, a country where, in January, BHP and Lundin Mining finalized the acquisition of Filo del Sol to jointly develop the Vicuña District, located near the Josemaría project, both on the border with Chile.

Henry referred to Argentina as a "recent example" of countries adopting measures to attract investment in the critical minerals sector, noting that, alongside the United States, Argentina "is taking global competition seriously" to supply critical minerals. He stated that the country "is rich in resources such as copper, gold, and lithium, but these are underdeveloped compared to neighboring countries like Chile." BHP controls the Escondida mine in Chile, as well as the Spence and Cerro Colorado copper deposits.

Regarding Argentina's current administration, he emphasized that its leaders "know they need to attract capital" to compete globally, stressing that "they are focused on unlocking opportunities for the nation and the Argentine people, taking bold steps to establish incentives that attract large investments, including in mining, through the RIGI bill."

He added that "our sector has taken notice," recalling BHP's interest in Josemaría and Filo del Sol. "Together, we have created the Vicuña joint venture to develop the combined deposits of Josemaría and Filo del Sol in Argentina, one of the world's most important recent copper discoveries and undeveloped deposits."

He emphasized that "Argentina already has a portfolio of potential projects totaling around 1.2 million tons of annual copper production."

However, he also issued a "call for both caution and optimism," noting that while the United States and Argentina are joined by established mining powerhouses such as Canada, Australia, and Chile, there is a risk associated with "complacency and bureaucracy," which he warned "will be the enemy of growth and economic security in the future."

"My warning is that, just like in business, past results do not determine future success," he stated, pointing out that while Canada and Australia are making efforts to reform permit regulations, "the harsh reality is that other countries are moving faster and more decisively to capture a disproportionate share of the opportunities ahead."

He concluded by highlighting—without naming specific countries—that "some nations have an even better combination of resources in certain commodities, more favorable tax and royalty regimes, faster permitting processes—while still maintaining high standards—and industrial relations frameworks that are more conducive to productivity."

# **BHP CEO says Argentina could enter the Top 5 copper producers**

Mike Henry highlighted the country's measures to attract investment and its reserves.

**Diario Financiero. March 4, 2025.**

In his speech at the opening of PDAC in Canada, the world's largest mining exploration conference, BHP CEO Mike Henry placed special emphasis on Argentina's copper potential, stating that "it could become one of the five largest copper producers in the world."

"It is a nation rich in resources, including copper, gold, and lithium, but these are underdeveloped compared to neighboring countries like Chile," he told the audience.

He emphasized that Argentina "has taken global competition seriously," and praised measures implemented to attract capital, such as the RIGI law in the mining sector.

He also mentioned the recent acquisition of Filo Corporation in the Vicuña District, in partnership with Lundin, and noted that Argentina has a portfolio of potential copper projects totaling 1.2 million tons of annual production.

"And there is likely more to come. Argentina could become one of the world's top five copper producers," he assured.

# **The 47 mining exploration projects that Chile showcases to investors in Canada**

The registry, compiled by various sector entities, includes 25 copper initiatives, 10 iron, six gold, and six polymetallic projects.

**Diario Financiero. March 4, 2025.**

**By Patricia Marchetti.**

A total of 47 mining exploration projects are now on display as Chile presents them to global investors at the PDAC in Toronto, the world's most important mining exploration conference, with 135 participating countries and 30,000 attendees.

In its 2025 edition—the seventh compiled—the Mining Exploration Catalogue, prepared by InvestChile in collaboration with the Ministry of Mining, Cochilco, Sernageomin, and the College of Geologists, expands Chile's portfolio from 36 to 47 projects, incorporating 13 from the National Mining Company (Enami).

All projects—detailed by stage, mineralization, location, resource estimation, best drilling interception, size, and deposit type—were presented at the event by the Minister of Mining, Aurora Williams, on behalf of the Chilean government.

Spanning from Arica to Los Lagos, the document lists 25 copper projects (10 of them from Enami), 10 iron projects, six gold projects, and six polymetallic projects (three from Enami), including minerals such as cobalt, molybdenum, silver, zinc, and lead. The Atacama Region stands out, accounting for 44.6% of the registry.

The portfolio is divided into:

- 35 basic exploration projects, categorized by their generative and follow-up stages.
- 7 advanced exploration projects.
- 5 projects in the pre-mining development phase.

The progress of these projects depends on investment, but they do not all share the same objectives. For example, some are seeking greater investment for exploration, others are actively looking for a buyer, while some aim to establish partnerships or joint ventures for future exploitation.

"Our primary interest is to increase investment in exploration while maintaining Chile's leadership in the mining sector," Minister Williams told DF ahead of the summit.

## **Budget**

Globally, Chile reported an exploration budget of US\$ 794 million in 2024, solidifying its position as the fourth most important mining destination, behind the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Within Latin America, Chile remains the top exploration destination, capturing 24.7% of the region's total exploration budget.

Chile leads the world in copper exploration, accounting for 19.9% of the global budget allocated to this mineral. Moreover, within Chile, copper remains the most relevant mineral for exploration.

In 2024, the budget was distributed as follows:

- 80.3% allocated to copper projects.
- 13.9% allocated to gold exploration.
- 5.8% allocated to other minerals.

Regarding the origin of the budget, the majority—35.8%—comes from United Kingdom-based companies, followed by Canadian firms, which account for 24.1%.

Chilean companies hold the third position, contributing 16.7% of the total exploration budget.

# **SQM finalizes its entry into Africa after overcoming the last regulatory hurdle in Namibia lithium project**

"This milestone marks a key step in the expansion of our portfolio," said the Chilean firm regarding its agreement with Andrada Mining.

**Diario Financiero. March 4, 2025.  
By Patricia Marchetti.**

Lithium giant SQM has officially established its presence in Africa, marking its first alliance on the continent.

This comes after the Namibia Competition Commission approved the participation agreement between SQM and African company Andrada Mining Limited to jointly develop the Ridge Lithium project.

Approval from the regulatory body was the final condition required to implement the agreement between the companies. Under this deal, SQM has the right to acquire up to 50% ownership in Grace Simba Investments, a wholly owned subsidiary of Andrada that holds the Lithium Ridge license.

"We are delighted that the Namibia Competition Commission has granted approval for our participation agreement," said Mark Fones, General Manager of SQM's International Lithium Division, following the announcement. "With all preconditions met, we are ready to begin exploration at Ridge Lithium," he confirmed.

He added that, "this milestone marks a key step in the expansion of our lithium asset portfolio and reinforces our commitment to the global energy transition."

Meanwhile, Andrada Mining CEO Anthony Viljoen stated that this approval "is the final component needed for us to fully launch what will be a transformative partnership with one of the world's largest lithium chemical producers. The agreement will significantly accelerate our lithium commercialization strategy."

He also highlighted SQM's investment of up to US\$ 40 million, which he believes "will not only accelerate the development of the lithium spodumene-rich region but should also drive socioeconomic growth in the Erongo region." He emphasized that the partnership will create job opportunities, local capacity development, and the strengthening of goods and services.

The agreement included an initial payment of US\$ 2 million by SQM, and the Chilean company is expected to invest an additional US\$ 7 million over the next 18 months.

# Value of mining patents would triple under the new regulation

LAW 21.420. The Mining Chamber asserts that modifications to the regulation eliminate or reduce a set of tax exemptions, change deadlines, and adjust costs for the sector.

**El Mercurio de Antofagasta. March 4, 2025.  
By Cristián Venegas M.**

This month, Law 21.420 came into effect, introducing a series of modifications to the Mining Code, altering deadlines, conditions, and amounts for Mining Concessions, Exploration Concessions, and Mining Patent Fees. The regulation is rejected by the Mining Chamber, which considers it abusive and is calling on authorities to repeal it.

In this regard, the president of the Calama Mining Association (AMICAL), Jaime Aguilera, stated that the few remaining producers in the commune already face the disadvantage of being 360 kilometers away from the nearest Enami purchasing center in Mantos Blancos, and 234 kilometers from Barriles in Tocopilla. A new tax burden could mean the end of the association.

"The mining patent rates will increase, and the older miners are already struggling to pay the current fees. I don't think they will implement it, because if they do, not even a single small miner would remain. They have modified the fees, deadlines, renewals, and the requirements for new mining properties. They changed everything," Aguilera said.

## THEY ARE NOT HAPPY

The president of the Mining Chamber, Manuel Viera, explained that mining patents will be subject to a progressive scale, which could mean paying almost three times their current value. Regarding the mining concession system, which in Chile operates under a patent protection regime, the right to explore and/or exploit is granted based on an annual payment.

For exploration patents, "the duration period is increased to four years, eliminating the possibility of renewal. Additionally, the patent fee increases from 1/50 UTM (\$68,034) per hectare to 3/50 UTM per hectare."

For exploitation patents, "the value of already granted patents remains the same only for those that demonstrate activity, but the fee for non-metallic patents will be raised to the level of metallic ones (1/10 UTM). A progressive scale is also introduced over the



years for concessions that do not demonstrate activity, with no distinction between metallic and non-metallic mining."

Viera stated that, in the opinion of the industry association, which promotes business and investment in the sector, these measures will hinder the development of mining, disproportionately impacting small miners, as "they will not be able to afford the annual patent fees due to their high cost."

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## **2025**

The mining patent fee will increase from 1/50 UTM (\$68,034) per hectare to 3/50 UTM per hectare.

Proposal included the lease of 100,000 hectares in Magallanes:

## **Spanish firm suspends green hydrogen project due to 'global slowdown' in the sector**

Industry associations say that the restructuring of initiatives is normal in an emerging industry like this fuel, although they warn of obstacles such as "permit bureaucracy."

**El Mercurio de Santiago. March 4, 2025.  
By Catalina Muñoz-Kappes.**

The Spanish company Ignis terminated more than 13 lease contracts with ranchers in Tierra del Fuego on January 29. The land was intended for the development of a green hydrogen project, according to the regional newspaper La Prensa Austral.

The company responded to El Mercurio that the termination of the contracts is part of a restructuring of the proposal. "Given the global slowdown in the industry's growth expectations, the company, while firmly believing that this industry will develop and mature, is now considering a longer timeframe than initially planned," they stated.

The company detailed that in 2023, it had set the goal of developing a green ammonia project, leveraging the wind resources of the Magallanes Region. The proposal was for a wind farm in two phases, each with 2.25 GW of power, to supply the green ammonia project.

Originally, 100,000 hectares were needed for the development of this initiative. However, Ignis stated that after discussions and negotiations with various ranchers in the region, they were able to secure lease agreements for approximately 50,000 hectares.

However, these plans will now have to be restructured. "Given these circumstances, Ignis has decided to respond by downsizing the project, which requires adapting it to this new reality, implementing a series of modifications, including territorial reorganization," the Spanish company indicated. The project had not yet been submitted to the Environmental Impact Assessment System (SEIA).

### **Emerging Industry**

The green hydrogen industry in Chile is still in its early stages, where project restructurings are common, according to industry associations.

"Decisions like these are typical of early-stage development of such projects. While not a widespread trend, it is essential to understand the underlying reasons: on one hand, this is an emerging industry with a high degree of uncertainty; on the other hand, it has high development costs and long timelines associated with obtaining permits, leading some investors to seek alternative destinations," says Mario Marchese, president of the Association of Green Hydrogen Producers and Derivatives in Magallanes (H2V Magallanes AG).

Similarly, Marcos Kulka, executive director of the Chilean Hydrogen Association (H2 Chile), states that "historically, sectors such as renewable energy have faced similar obstacles in their early stages, such as financial uncertainty, demand contracts, and regulatory uncertainty."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Energy explains that, at first glance, they do not see a trend of withdrawals or delays in green hydrogen projects.

### **Permit Bureaucracy ("Permisología")**

However, beyond the inherent challenges of the industry, green hydrogen development also faces other obstacles, such as "permit bureaucracy". For example, Enel Green Power and HIF's wind farm project for green hydrogen production is currently undergoing environmental review. This initiative involves an investment of US\$500 million and has had to be submitted three times to SEIA, in 2022 and twice in 2023. Another green hydrogen project under environmental review is HNH Energy's initiative, which its owners estimate at US\$11 billion, but whose Environmental Impact Study (EIA) has been criticized by environmental organizations.

"Permit bureaucracy is one of the main obstacles to the development of the emerging green hydrogen industry in Chile. Lengthy and complex bureaucratic processes cause delays in project execution, increasing costs and creating uncertainty for investors," Kulka states.

Senator Karim Bianchi (independent), representing the Magallanes Region, argues that "permit bureaucracy in Chile, especially in industries aiming for a sustainable future, has become a cancer for development, employment, and modernization."

Luis Boric Scarpa, father of President Gabriel Boric, has a different view. "There are projects with significant progress, and of the 15 or more in Magallanes, only the serious and responsible ones will remain," he wrote on X on Saturday in response to the news published by La Prensa Austral.

Additionally, experts have questioned the viability of green hydrogen projects. "It won't work (...). A recently published study shows that green hydrogen is much more expensive than projected. The current prices are prohibitively high: from US\$500 to US\$1,250 per ton of CO removed," U.S. energy expert Robert Bryce told El Mercurio in October of last year. According to him, green hydrogen projects "are being canceled because the economics don't work."

# **Second-largest power transmission project in Chile faces criticism over impact on amphibians and native forest**

The Itahue-Hualqui initiative, with a US\$324 million investment, has accumulated objections from SAG, the National Monuments Council, and the Undersecretary of Public Health. In response, its owner, Mataquito Transmisora de Energía, defended its feasibility before the Committee of Ministers, proposing route adjustments, species relocation, and environmental mitigation measures.

**Pulso. March 4, 2025.**  
**By Leonardo Cárdenas**

The interregional power transmission project "Zonal Transmission System Group 3 S/E Itahue - S/E Hualqui", promoted by Mataquito Transmisora de Energía, is facing objections from public agencies before the Committee of Ministers. These entities have raised concerns about the environmental and heritage impacts of the US\$324 million transmission line construction. It is the second-largest power transmission project currently undergoing environmental review, playing a key role in Chile's energy transition and decarbonization efforts. The largest in review is the Kimal-Lo Aguirre line, with an investment of US\$1.48 billion.

Following the rejection of its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on November 28, 2024, Mataquito Transmisora de Energía (MATE) submitted a document to the Committee of Ministers defending the project's viability and detailing the measures it will adopt to minimize its impact on amphibians, native forest, and other sensitive areas.

The company acknowledged that the project's influence area is home to five amphibian species, including the rosy leaf frog (*Eupsophus roseus*) and the four-eyed frog. Since construction could affect their habitats, MATE proposed a capture and relocation plan, ensuring that the species would be moved to areas with similar or better conditions in terms of water, vegetation, and natural shelter.

To validate the suitability of the relocation sites, the company conducted studies in the spring of 2024, concluding that the amphibians would be able to survive and reproduce in these new locations. Additionally, MATE explained that it was unable to access one of

the originally considered relocation sites (R13a) due to lack of permits, but identified an alternative site (R13b) where the same species were found and ecological conditions were better.

Mataquito also acknowledged that the transmission line crosses areas of ecologically valuable native forest, including areas where naranjillo trees, Chilean palms, and queules—the latter classified as endangered—are present.

To minimize impact, the company proposed relocating several towers, creating 20-meter protection zones around the forest. For example, in the Rapilermo sector, they relocated a tower to avoid tree cutting, and in Santa Delfina, they further adjusted the route after identifying naranjillo trees, even eliminating a tower to prevent harm to protected species.

In its defense, MATE argued that the project is crucial for Chile's renewable energy development, as it will connect 21 generation projects, adding more than 4,000 MW to the national electricity system. The company also questioned the SEA's decision to reject the project, stating that in similar cases, projects have been approved with mitigation conditions rather than outright rejection. Therefore, they requested the Committee of Ministers to reconsider the environmental rating and allow the project to proceed with the proposed modifications and commitments.

## **HERITAGE CONCERNS**

Despite Mataquito's proposed adjustments, various public agencies maintain their concerns about the project's impact.

The National Monuments Council (CMN), in a December 2, 2024 report, warned that the company failed to provide sufficient data to rule out significant impacts on archaeological heritage, as required by Article 11(f) of Law No. 19,300. So far, only 54% of the project's influence area has been surveyed, and 13 archaeological sites have already been identified, 12 of which are within the intervention area.

The CMN noted that the existence of additional archaeological sites cannot be ruled out, and that the company has not conducted subsurface delineation of the identified sites, preventing a full impact assessment.

Additionally, the Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG), in an October 30, 2024 report, raised concerns about the project's impact on local wildlife, warning that the effect of native forest clearing on amphibians and protected mammals such as the culpeo fox, chilla fox, and güiña (kodkod wildcat) has not been adequately assessed.

The SAG also criticized the company for not obtaining Environmental Sectorial Permit (PAS) 146, which is required for the capture, handling, and relocation of protected species. SAG pointed out that Mataquito has not justified the necessity of the rescue and relocation plan, making it impossible to verify the effectiveness of its mitigation commitments.

## **HEALTH CONCERNS**

Meanwhile, the Undersecretary of Public Health, in a report issued on February 10, questioned the company's assessment for obtaining Environmental Sectorial Permit (PAS) 138, related to the management of wastewater during the project's construction and operation phases.

The agency criticized Mataquito for failing to correctly estimate the number of workers who will use sanitary facilities at key sites such as Culenar, Pencahue, Cauquenes, and Rafael, projecting only 20 people per facility, despite some sections expecting over 400 workers at the same time.

Additionally, the subsecretariat identified methodological errors and inaccuracies in the design of infiltration drains, making it impossible to validate the reported figures and creating uncertainty about the potential health risks associated with wastewater management in the project area.

Simultaneously, UKA Chile, a subsidiary of the German company UKA Umweltgerechte Kraftanlagen, submitted a statement to the Committee of Ministers, arguing that rejecting the project could negatively impact the development of renewable energy in Chile.

UKA Chile explained that its Culenco Wind Farm, located in the Biobío Region, depends on the transmission infrastructure that Mataquito aims to build. The wind farm is expected to have an installed capacity of 250 MW and connect to the Las Delicias substation at 220 kV, which is part of the Zonal Transmission System Group 3.

The company warned that delaying the project could jeopardize the feasibility of clean energy initiatives and hinder Chile's decarbonization goals, stating that the lack of transmission infrastructure is the biggest barrier to the expansion of renewable energy in Chile.