

## *Resolving opposing views requires an unbiased assessment.*

Cumulative Impact study



### Challenge

The development of two pulp mills along the Río Uruguay, which forms a natural border between Uruguay and Argentina, became a heated standoff between the two countries due to their opposing views concerning the perceived environmental and socio-economic effects.

What represented a considerable benefit for the economy of Uruguay was seen as a significant environmental risk by Argentina.

Resolving such opposing views requires an unbiased and technically defensible assessment, the details of which must be distilled into terms that are meaningful, respectful and relevant to all stakeholders.

The IFC, as lead investor, sought its own independent assessment.

### Background

The companies involved prepared and publically disclosed environmental and socio-economic impact assessments, but this did not satisfy Argentina's concerns. Argentina filed legal action with the International Court of Justice against Uruguay. They also blocked the International Bridge, demonstrated in nearby communities, and filed complaints with the World Bank and other financial supporters.

The IFC commissioned a cumulative impact study to ensure compliance with IFC performance standards and World Bank environmental, health, and safety guidelines.

### Project

EcoMetrix examined the issue based on facts rather than perceptions. We evaluated the processes and technologies; plantation and transportation strategies; social and economic implications; and potential air and water quality effects.

We considered Uruguayan regulatory standards, IFC performance standards, World Bank EHS guidelines, and international standards for best available techniques. We drew from our experience in the pulp and paper sector and interpreted what was a real versus perceived risk. Moreover, we communicated our findings with clarity and transparency.

Uruguay relied upon our assessment as independent experts, and in its ruling, the International Court of Justice identified EcoMetrix as "a consultancy specializing in environmental and industrial matters" and quoted our findings throughout its final report.

### Outcome

Bruce Rodgers led the project team. He said, *"Our ability to apply our knowledge to environmental challenges, and to effectively communicate solutions to diverse groups of stakeholders, is at the heart of what we at EcoMetrix call Environmental Intelligence"*.

EcoMetrix Team:

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