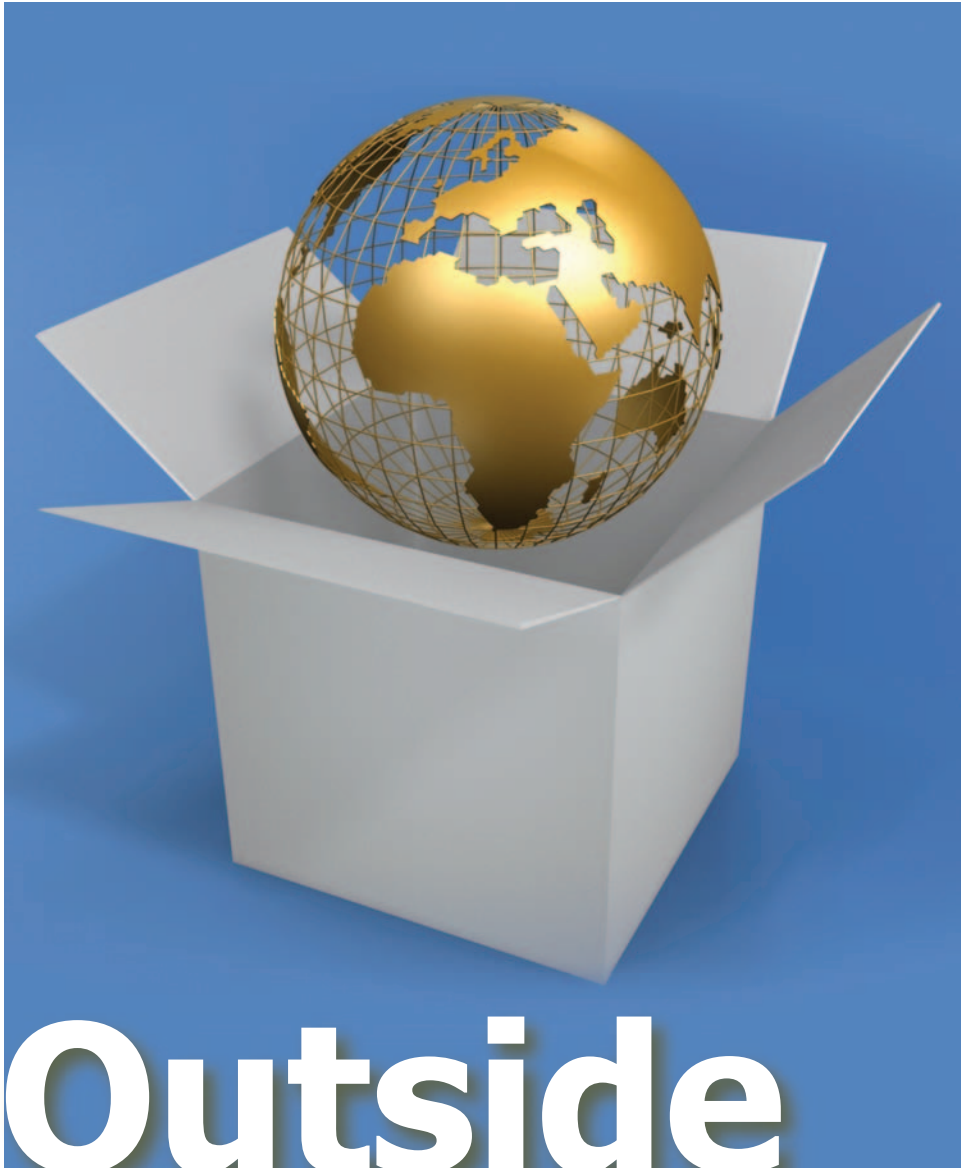


OUTDOOR RETAILER



Outside the box

New eco developments were a highlight at the recent Outdoor Retailer Winter Market where a special 'Eco Think' seminar was a hit with buyers. Kathlyn Swantko reports.

"From backcountry skiing, to state-of-the-art technology, to a renewed commitment to protecting the environment, the Outdoor Retailer Show continues to be a proving ground for the best of the best!" This statement by Kenji Haroutunian, frames the focus for Outdoor Retailer Winter Market '08,

which was held late January in Salt Lake City.

The show attracted over 17,000 attendees, including industry leading outdoor and winter sports manufacturers, 5,000+ retailers, and media. Over 200 new exhibitors joined this season's international gathering to conduct business in a celebratory environment.

Sustainability and innovation were front and centre, along with a commitment to grow participation in the US\$289 billion outdoor industry by appealing to the next generation of consumers.

ORWM '08 was also supported by several industry-related seminars on a variety of topics. Two of the premiere events centred around sustainability, including "Eco Think! –What it Means to be Green for Consumers Today" (sponsored by FabricLink and Textile Intelligence Magazine) and the Outdoor Industry's Eco Working Group Meeting (see page: XX).

Haroutunian touted OR's support for transparency in the supply chain saying, "Across the board, consumers continue to demand that products, whether they are sleeping bags, socks, insulation, or outerwear, contain components that will be far kinder to the planet."

As part of its commitment to bring innovative and earth-friendly products to the market, Albany International Corp., Albany, N.Y., introduced its new 'PrimaLoft Eco' Insulation at ORWM '08. The technology for PrimaLoft Eco combines ultra-fine, multi-diameter, and recycled polyester fibre to create a 'dynamic insulating structure'. PrimaLoft blends about 50% virgin fibres and a minimum of 50% recycled fibres to create a high loft performance insulation. The resulting product is warm, lightweight, and water resistant, to keep the wearer dry and comfortable.

"Outdoor companies have become more conscious about contributing to a better environment by offering products made with recycled components," says Tom Mendl, Marketing Director, PrimaLoft. "We share the same concern for the environment and are dedicated to developing innovative products that are earth-friendly without sacrificing the technical properties for which PrimaLoft insulation is well-known."

PrimaLoft Eco fibres are produced from post-consumer plastic bottles and post-industrial plastic waste.

Albany International also featured its PrimaLoft Eco Footwear insulation at the show. IT said, the fibre structure has a compression resistance, maintaining 73% of its loft after testing, compared to similar products in the market that maintain only 52% loft.

Named as one of the Best Inventions of 2007 by Time Magazine, Vibram USA Inc. presented its new Vibram FiveFingers footwear to the outdoor market at this season's OR Show. This Concord, Massachusetts, based company, which

had been primarily a component supplier for footwear manufacturers, made the decision in 1992 to begin reusing its production scraps for creating the soles for its customers shoes. About six years ago, the company re-engineered the polymer structure formula in its Eco Soles, and targeted that 30% be made from the recycled scraps. In 2006, Vibram became more than just a component supplier to companies like Patagonia, Timberland, and Burton, with the launch of its own Vibram FiveFingers brand.

Vibram FiveFingers footwear is said to act like a second skin to offer a gecko-like grip over a variety of terrain. The upper portion of Vibram FiveFingers is made from a stretch polyamide mesh knit for comfortable movement and durability. It protects bare feet from rocks, gravel, and sharp objects, and it promotes a natural walking motion, reducing impact on the wearer's knees, hips, and lower back.

Sierra Design jacket insulated with PrimaLoft Eco.



In addition to the many synthetic/natural fibre combinations available, Optimer Performance Fibres has released a new 'green' version of its Dri-release with FreshGuard, called Dri-release E.C.O. (Environmentally Correct Origins). The new product combines recycled polyester and renewable natural fibres along with its patented moisture management technology (see page: XX).

The first finished product using Dri-release E.C.O., the Off-Road Mt. Airy sock by KEEN Footwear, will debut for Fall '08. A specialist in outdoor footwear and accessories, Portland, Oregon-based KEEN is well known for its support of social and environmental causes. The new sock is made of recycled polyester and organic cotton from Optimer's new E.C.O. group. Other Dri-release E.C.O. options will soon be added including recycled polyester paired with wool, SeaCell, soy, and bamboo.

Wool and transparency

"The wool story at OR was less about product and more about transparency in the supply chain," stated Haroutunian of OR. "As new technologies and fabrics emerge, the quest for industry consistency is strong."

Responding to this call, the Central Otago, New Zealand based Tika used the OR Show to debut its line of 100% natural merino, sustainable t-shirts, made from Zque-certified fabric. Zque is a traceable and accredited value chain that ensures New Zealand merino fabrics meet environmental, social, and economic sustainability and animal welfare criteria (see *Ecotextile News*, No: X, pp. X - X).

"We have designed a line of shirts that incorporates the style of our favourite t-shirts with the luxurious, eco-friendly benefits of superfine merino," said Tika's managing director, Barbara Anderson. "They feature extra body length that hits at mid-hip and come in beautiful, rich colours."



KEEN's new Off-Road Mt. Airy sock is the first to use Dri-release E.C.O., which combines recycled polyester and organic cotton.

Eco Seminars at ORWM '08

At Outdoor Retailer two well attended seminars sponsored by FabricLink and Textile Intelligence Magazine, Outdoor Retailer, and the Outdoor Industry Association were premiere events at ORWM '08.

Eco Think!, an Industry Panel event, focused on the consumer's understanding of the sustainability movement and was moderated by Emily Walzer, managing editor of Textile Intelligence. Other panelists included: Brad Poorman, CEO for Cocona, Inc.; Andrew Veccione, president Polartec; LLC, Kelly Wallrich, director of design for KEEN Footwear; and Kevin Myette, director of R&D for REI. The Panel reacted to the results of a consumer research study conducted by Leisure Trends Group (LTG) in December 2007, which explored consumer sentiment on the environment, specifically as it related to their perceptions and interest in buying outdoor and sports apparel. The Panel focused on the consumers' understanding of "green" terminology; the desire for performance in sustainable products; and the impact of higher costs for sustainable garments and also looked at the importance of eco-education, eco-labelling, and eco-certification as it resonated with consumers.

For those unable to attend the OR event, a Podcast of the Industry Panel is available for downloading from FabricLink's TheTechnicalCenter.com (www.TheTechnicalCenter.com) web site.