

OUTDOOR RETAILER WINTER 2007

US show majors on eco-apparel

The Outdoor Retailer Show aims to set the 'sustainability standard for all other trade shows', Kathlyn Swantko reports from Salt Lake City.

Talk about sustainability in textiles and clothing began in a small way at the Outdoor Retailer (OR) Show a few years ago, with the introduction of OR's Green Steps Program, which identified exhibitors by the 'eco-friendliness' of some of their products.

The Green Steps program at Outdoor Retailer continues to recognize companies that are adopting 'green' practices in their product, policies and business strategy. By showcasing successful exhibitor practices, the program continues to encourage the spread of ecologically sound programs throughout the outdoor industry. All net proceeds from the Green Steps program go towards green education, and purchasing wind credits, powering Outdoor Retailer shows with sustainable energy.

VNU Sports Group, the parent company of Outdoor Retailer, once again offset 100% of the electricity used during the show with clean, renewable wind power through the purchase of renewable energy credits. The energy-related activities calculated from electricity indicate that an average tradeshow would release over 858,000 pounds of CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere. "This would be equivalent to the environmental benefit of taking nearly 81 cars off the road for an entire year," said the organiser.

So it was clear to see that at this year's OR show sustainability had been elevated from a major buzz at last summer's market, to take centre stage at the OR Winter Market 2007, which was held recently in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Peter Devin, executive director of Outdoor Retailer, said that the OR Show has now "become the prototype for environmental responsibility in the apparel trade show business that other major trade shows will follow."

Sustainability was the hot topic on everybody's

lips during the four-day event, and even the trade show badges were made from recycled paper and used soy ink. The recycled paper badges replaced an estimated 20,000 petroleum based badges, and the organisers collected these at the end of the show for re-use at future trade events.

And, companies like Keen Inc., which received the Hybrid Award at the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) Breakfast on the first day of the show, even incorporated sustainability into its booth design this year. The Portland-based manufacturer of performance footwear and accessories for the outdoor market announced the launch of its 'Hybrid.Think', a branded initiative that reflects the company's core value of finding new solutions to old problems. "With 'Hybrid.Think', Keen is taking small steps towards making a difference in sustainability by rethinking, reusing, and repurposing

Bamboo organic cotton knit.
From: **Of the Earth.**

where possible," said the company.

Erika Bruhn, marketing manager for Keen, explained how the company used cardboard pillars, a recycled Tyvec graphic platform, and a recycled floor in its exhibitor booth at OR.

As part of its Hybrid.Think sustainability initiative, Keen introduced its Hybrid.Transport, a new bag collection inspired by and for those consumers living a 'HybridLife'. The collection included packs, lifestyle and computer bags for a wide variety of everyday usage from trail to street. Designed with repurposed materials, the Hybrid.Transport collection bags are made with 100% recycled aluminum hardware, made from discarded aluminum show moulds. Excess rubber is trimmed from the outsole during shoe production, and this reclaimed rubber is reworked and remolded into protective cushioning features used on the bags. In addition, the laptop sleeves in the computer styles contain recycled polyester and are lined with recycled/ reclaimed foam.

Coconut shells

Meanwhile Concept III, which develops, markets and sources textiles through relationships with



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Glenoit Fabrics in the USA, Rentex of Canada, Kingwhale of Taiwan, and PrimaLoft, showcased two new sustainable fabrics in the form of premium recycled fleece without the premium price tag, and creative Cocona knits and fleeces.

Concept III's new eco-friendly fleeces from Kingwhale are said to provide both cost competitive and eco-friendly fleece fabrics that are as soft and luxurious as many of the virgin fleeces currently available in the market. The polyester yarn comes from recycled plastic bottles

Concept III's range of 'Cocona' knits and fleeces, also from Kingwhale, include all of the inherent performance qualities from a naturally renewable and unusual, natural resource, the coconut.

Cocona fabric is made by embedding activated carbon derived from the coconut shell into the polymer before spinning into fibres or yarns such as polyester, and it is said to give fabrics moisture management, odour absorption, and UV protection properties. Brands already using 'Cocona' activated carbon in their fabrics include Cutter & Buck, Champion and Cannondale.

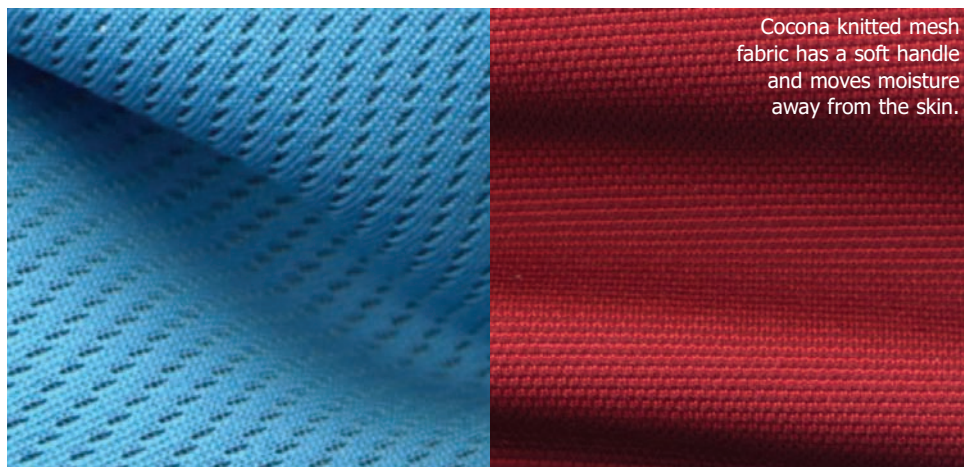
A new exhibitor at Outdoor Retailer for the first time was Designer Textiles, which is involved in the MAPP (Merino Advanced Performance Program), which includes fabrics and garments accredited with the Zque Merino traceability program (see howies feature on page: 18 – 19). MAPP encourages sustainability and best practice in the production of New Zealand Merino fibre, and it requires accredited growers to meet the standards outlined in the Zque manual, which uses an independent audit process to verify that these practices are followed.

"Both AWI and MAPP of New Zealand are committed to developing innovative Merino fabrics that bring wool back to the outdoor wear market," said Designer Textiles which had a range of new fabric developments including merino wool developed specifically for seamless knitting, made from a blend of merino wool, nylon, and spandex yarns.

Recycled nylon

Toray used the OR Winter Market to focus on two new sustainable products for the outdoor market. The Japanese chemical company is said to be the first fibre producer to announce the recent development of recycled nylon 6 fibres through its 'Recyclon' process. The creation of a recycled nylon has been much more difficult than recycling other fibres like polyester. Recyclon is now available in woven constructions for workwear for the winter season.

"Through this recycled process, we utilize only



Cocona knitted mesh fabric has a soft handle and moves moisture away from the skin.

Cocona – activated carbon

- Activated carbon is usually derived from charcoal.
- Cocona is derived from coconut husk.
- There are 20 billion coconuts produced annually.
- Activated carbon has a huge surface area, and is highly porous.
- One gram has a surface area of around 500 m²/g or the size of two tennis courts.
- It grabs stale odours through adsorption to its porous surface
- It uses evaporative cooling to move moisture (sweat) away from the skin.
- Activated carbon also blocks out harmful UV radiation.
- Carbon is activated either chemically or steam. It can be reactivated in tumble drying.
- The activated carbon finish is locked into the fibre polymer prior to spinning



Recycled polyester fleece from Taiwan-based Kingwhale, which is available through Concept III.

15% of the energy (BTUs) required during the production of virgin nylon fibers made from petroleum," explained Kenny Gotcher of Toray. He also noted that carbon dioxide emissions are reduced by 80%.

Fabric containing 36% recycled nylon/64% virgin nylon is currently being featured in Patagonia's Workender Pant from its fall/winter 2007 collection, and in its Wave Farer board short for spring/summer 2008.

Another sustainable product announced by Toray was the first solvent-free waterproof/breathable coating/laminate fabric.

Toray says it has eliminated 98% of the solvents, which means its new outerwear targeted Entrant-E polyurethane fabric is completely water-based. The company said, "Entrant-E looks no different than Toray's popular Entrant-DT fabric, made with solvents, and that's what makes it so cool!"

Throughout the show, many exhibitors announced new sustainable practice initiatives. Patagonia announced plans to expand its closed-loop recycled garments program to include clothing manufactured by its competitors, specifically Malden Mills (see news section in this issue of *Ecotextile News*).

Organic cotton garments were seen at the show through Oregon-based retailer 'Of the Earth', which sources its cotton garments from China. The company also uses merino wool, bast fibres such as hemp and ramie along with Tencel fibres in its outdoor apparel.

Sock producer Teko introduced Plaited 'EcoMerino' wool socks for the Fall 2007 season. These holistic and sustainably farmed, chlorine-free socks are from one farm in Tasmania and have soft EcoMerino wool inside, 'Ecopoly' recycled polyester reinforced toes and heels, and nylon outside for added durability.

The inside of the sock has been knitted with medium terry cushioning throughout for hiking.

Teko even buys wind energy credits to ensure that 100% of the electricity use in manufacturing and operations get put back into the energy grid from clean, sustainable American Wind.