

ORSM 2010

Investment in innovation

A greater willingness between companies to collaborate and a renewed interest in creating innovative fabrics was evident at Outdoor Retailer Summer Market. **Kathlyn Swantko** reports

After a relatively quiet year on the product development side due to the economy, exhibitors at Outdoor Retailer Summer Market 2010 (ORSM) discovered that the outdoor industry is once again beginning to show interest in investing in fabric creation.

Steve Lucier, president of Deer Creek Fabrics, a knit and woven converter based in Stamford, Connecticut, said: "At this show, we're beginning to see the whole thought process of our customers changing and people are becoming more innovative. Although they appear to be narrow and deep in their thinking, the good news is that the industry is again coming back to being product

development focused. We're seeing a renewed sense of product collaboration from both the major brands and the supply chain in general."

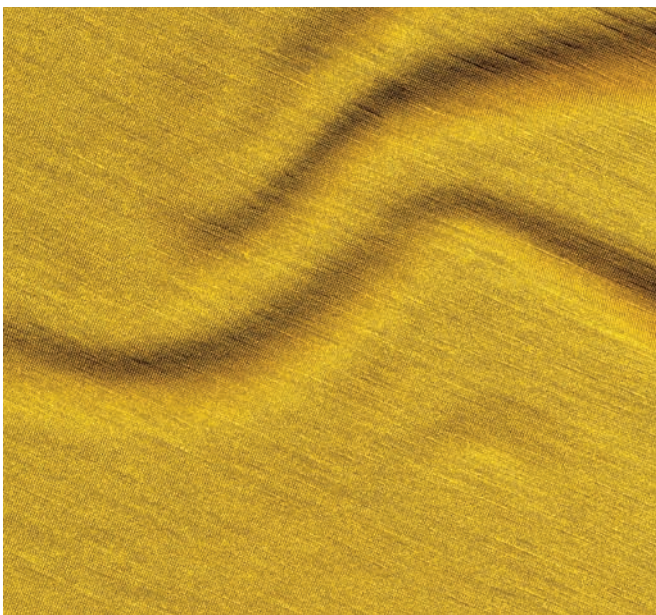
This revitalised spirit was evident in the many new offerings presented by a variety of knit suppliers exhibiting at ORSM, which ran from 3-6 August in Salt Lake City, US. Important trends included fleeces, sculptured high piles and fine denier Merino wools and blends.

Performance insulation and yarn supplier, PrimaLoft announced that it had established a partnership with Régitex, a North American based yarn spinner. Régitex specialises in manufacturing an assortment of made-to-order ring spun

and open end yarns for the apparel, high performance, home furnishing and industrial markets.

The new fine denier PrimaLoft Merino blend yarn, offering superior softness, is being used to develop seamless knit base layer garments, said to be functional and comfortable to wear.

PrimaLoft's base layer offerings include a two-ply knitted fabric system in which the 100% PrimaLoft polyester yarn is placed closest to the skin. When combined with a hydrophilic dispersing yarn, the hydrophobic properties work together in a push-pull manner to transfer water vapour away from the skin to the outside of the fabric, keeping the skin dry



Charles Parsons fine Merino State textiles from Concept III, are individually engineered specifically for apparel



High pile performance fabrics from Concept III

and comfortable. PrimaLoft yarn base layer stock programmes are currently in place with major brands at The North Face, L L Bean, Lands' End and Cabela's.

Taiwan-based Eclat Textile Company has spent years creating performance knit fabrics for the activewear and fashion markets and is targeting manufacturers that cater for the extreme outdoors consumer, with the introduction of its new X-Pole Advanced Technology fabric collection.

From raw materials to the end finishing processes, Eclat has created a new specialty line of textiles that incorporates advanced performance in comfort and function. Stefan Novak, global sales and marketing manager for Eclat said: "We don't want to be just another player in this market. We want to offer the best quality fabrics."

The X-Pole Advanced Technology group consists of four different fabric categories. The X-Pole Ultra Dry Series are baselayer fabrics that combine design technique and surface treatment for a comfortable, breathable second skin. The X-Pole Wind Stop Series uses high density knitting technology to provide a lightweight, warm, comfortable, wind-block layer between the body and the outer environment. The X-Pole Anti-Static Series combines an electron conducting fibre and special finishing treatment to provide a thermal barrier without electrostatic issues. Finally the X-Pole Snagging Resistance Series uses improved fibre performance along with meticulous knitting and finishing processes to create fabrics that withstand the daily abrasion and snagging that occur in extreme athletes' garments, according to the company.

Eclat's new line of X-Pole Advanced Technology fabrics are available in a variety of fine-gauge knits, single-knit jerseys, single-sided and double-sided fleece, meshes, and bonded fabrications.

Concept III Textiles, based in Red Bank, New Jersey, has partnered with Charles Parsons, an Australian and New Zealand supplier of fine quality Merino wool, to market its Merino State apparel collection. "Charles Parsons is a

company known to be a visionary in innovative fabric and design ideas, along with providing excellent service. This is what sets Merino State apart from other suppliers, and it's also the qualities we require of our partner mills," says Chris Parkes, Concept III's national sales manager.

Charles Parsons has been developing and manufacturing specialised textile solutions for fashion apparel brands throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region since 1915. Now, working through Concept III's network, Parson's and Concept III are looking to develop a following for its Merino State fine micron premium textile collection in the US, Canada and UK outdoor markets.

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Keenly aware of the ethical responsibility and environmental concerns of the outdoor apparel market, Merino State wool is sourced from independently audited, certified non-mulesed farms in Australia and New Zealand.

Farms must comply with regulations governed by the RSPCA and the New Zealand Animal Welfare Act. Except for seasonal shearing, these sheep graze in a free-range environment. Every product in the Merino State collection is tested according to stringent Woolmark and Merino Perform specifications, according to the company.

The Merino State Collection, made with naturally sustainable, renewable and biodegradable Merino wool also includes blends containing other environmentally favourable fibres such as bamboo, milk,



PrimaLoft yarn base layer garment, made from 50% PrimaLoft blended with 50% Merino wool

hemp and organic cotton.

The recent merger of Carolina Apparel, Coville and Alandale has created a vertical partnership of companies known for their yarn, patented knits and bi-ply knitting - a patented knit construction which produces a true 2-layer fabric with customised differences between the fabric face and next-to-skin layers - as well as construction capabilities. The companies have teamed up to provide apparel targeted towards the outdoor performance market, explains Pam Ball, director of sales and marketing.

"As a company, we now have the ability to do contract knitting or sewing. We can also sell fabrics, or we can do complete packages."

Using Carolina Apparel's body-size rib and jersey machines has allowed the company to be more cost-effective and efficient in its production, adds Ms Ball. "Because there are no side seams in our T-shirts, the equipment gives us higher cloth utilisation, so we can minimise labour costs for our customers. And, without side seams, the T-shirts we make are also more comfortable to wear."

Following the merger, Carolina Apparel/Coville/Alandale has the ability to do ribs of any kind, raschel knits, thermal knits, tuck knits, baby waffle knits and bi-ply knitting. The company also has the flexibility to outsource production off shore when necessary.