



OIA Eco Working Group Makes Strides Toward Industry Index

As published in OIA WebNews 5/13/2009

At a two-day meeting in Seattle last week, the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) Eco Working Group convened to share progress to date on the development of the industry's first Eco Index and make plans to move forward with a heightened focus on producing a beta index for peer review.

A highlight of the meeting was a report out by the Packaging Subgroup on the adoption of the group's Packaging Guidelines by industry members within the last eight months and the subsequent reduction in their footprint.

Here are the highlights of brand adoption of the Packaging Guidelines.

- Black Diamond – is in the process of transitioning to FSC paper for their in-house manufactured product packaging.
- Brooks Sports – has redesigned their footwear boxes. Upgraded the shoebox label to 30 percent recycled content – no chemical adhesives. Less energy was used in the new design to print the boxes. Using 100 percent post-recycled content from a closer proximity to the factory source in China.
- Cascade Designs – has introduced better packaging designs in 2009. Therm-a-Rest mattresses have started rolling out packaged in EPI, a totally degradable plastic bag. Seal Line bags previously came in an all-encompassing box. For new products they have moved the product into simply a paper board wrap, reducing substrate use tremendously, reducing packaging cost and showing off the product even better. All Cascade Designs printing on packaging have switched from UV to aqueous prints.
- Eagle Creek – has completely overhauled its entire travel accessory packaging program in 2009 with one of the major goals to reduce overall paper use. The Pack-It® Folder illustrated a 60 percent reduction in packaging weight. Overall, they reduced paper use by 32 percent or about 15 tons of packaging.
- Keen – has designed footwear boxes that use 70 percent post consumer waste and 30 percent recycled materials, which are printed with soy-based inks with a natural finished surface with no applied clay coatings and are designed for easy flat folding to ease recycling.
- Marmot – has reduced the overall size of their hangtags by roughly 25 percent; switched from new materials to all recycled paper; are no longer using a stickered features label – eliminating the sticker glue – and reduced the number of inserts from 30+ to 10.
- Nike – has redesigned their new Nike Considered Design shoebox which uses 30 percent less fiber than the previous design.
- Novara Cycling (REI's cycling brand) – Last year they studied their unit load capacities on containers. In 2009, they are eliminating unnecessary dunnage and optimizing pack methods. This summer, select Novara bike tubes will be piloted in REI's retail stores in a shrink-wrap design. Eliminating 98% material use from the previous design. Many bike accessories were also redesigned with 60 percent less material usage than the previous design.
- Outdoor Research – Significantly reduced material usage in two key product programs. For their gloves, OR designed an aperture to the header card to allow the product to be hung from a sewn-in fabric loops instead of using plastic tach-ins. For their Stuff Sack product line, they converted from a plastic substrate to post-consumer waste paper. Their new designs reduced substrate utilization by 10 percent.
- Patagonia – is dedicated to sourcing responsible paper for their hangtag program. They use FSC certified paper substrates from well-managed forests.

- REI – in spring 2010, REI will launch its Gear & Apparel brand in better, more sustainable substrates that are designed to be fully recyclable in their stores.
- Sole – The SOLE Performance Sock package was reduced in size, foil was removed and a plastic hanger was integrated into the paperboard so that the package is now all paperboard (80 percent post-consumer recycled material).

The Packaging Subgroup team will continue to build on the success of the adopted packaging design guidelines and develop metrics to evaluate packaging's environmental impact. The toolkits will help optimize packaging design by reducing the weight, footprint or number of substrates that are used and promote the selection of environmentally preferable material choices.

The meeting marked the two-year anniversary for the working group at which the members spent time in working subgroups and reported their progress at the meeting.

Attendees also heard a progress update from the EOG Sustainability Working Group; a review of the current legislative landscape and overviews from Nike, Bluesign and the Global Reporting Initiative.

Most of the hard work needed to create an index still remains and the group, in collaboration with OIA, will now narrow its focus in coming months to support and focus the Subgroups to produce an index for peer review within six months.

The next Eco Working Group meeting will be July 23, from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., at the Marriott Hotel, Salt Lake City.

For more information, please visit www.outdoorindustry.org/eco.