

Stuff I Like

As the surfing world expands, so does the array of gear available. To alert our readers to the best green and/or cool stuff, Mark Anders and other staffers evaluate new products on offer. Readers are invited to contact the test team by emailing suggestions for this column to: stuffilike@surferspath.com



PATAGONIA REGULATOR WETSUIT

Today's high-performance super-stretch wetsuits may be toasty warm and kid-glove comfortable, but most of them lack durability. Step on one of those wetties while changing in the parking lot and – wham! – you've torn yourself a handy butt vent. Not so with the Regulator. Instead of petroleum-based super stretch, Patagonia opted for a neoprene made from limestone. Yep folks, limestone! While it isn't much more earth-friendly, limestone rubber is decidedly sturdier. Inside the suit you'll find a unique lining of chlorine-free Merino wool – remember wool provides warmth even when wet – that's been de-scaled so it's not itchy. Also in the lining, there's a small percentage of recycled polyester made from old plastic bottles and such. The end result is a really warm wetsuit. Though it's just 3mm thick, it'll keep you as warm as any 4/3 on the market. Seriously. I've worn the suit a bunch in water down to 55°F (12.7°C) and I've never once felt a chill. After surfing in it for a couple weeks I noticed the neoprene was smelling a little ripe and rubbery. Doesn't bother me but if you happen to be sensitive to stink, just slap on some of that cologne Laird Hamilton has been hawking lately. Comfort-wise, the suit is plenty flexible and though I noticed some flushing in the neck, overall the Regulator is solid. It is expensive, but if this suit holds up as well as we expect, you won't be needing another wettie for many years to come.

www.patagonia.com

HOTSUITS HEATED KIDNEY BELT

While wetsuit technology at last seems to be changing after some years of neoprene stagnation, it's also good to know that a simple idea using relatively old technology can make it through the hype.

Most people will have come across those sports injury heat packs containing a strange gel that solidifies and heats up when you press a small button on the pack. To recharge them again you simply put the pack into boiling water and the solid returns to gel. Aussie company Hotsuits have used this technology, shaped it appropriate to your general abdominal area, and stuck it inside some neoprene.

The result is a slow-warming heat-source inside your suit that lasts for an hour or so. I tried it in midwinter Cornwall and it works – though it made the most difference right at the start when the pack was hottest and the water and my muscles were coldest. And having this belt around me made no apparent difference to my ability to surf – in fact I forgot I was wearing it after a while. It had an added benefit, too: these were my first few surfs since breaking some ribs, so I placed it in that general area.

The extra warmth had a soothing, loosening effect which I think will be welcome by any cold-water surfer suffering from lower back, kidney or any other abdominal pain or stiffness. So it's thermal and therapeutic and could really help get you out there on those freezing days when the waves are good

but the body's trying to chicken out. www.hotsuits.com.au – ADR



PLANET EARTH SPROUT BOARDSHORTS

It may still seem too much like winter where you live to be thinking about boardies, but check these things out. The Sprout is made from 55% hemp and 45% polyethylene terephthalate (that's material made from recycled plastic bottles again). Straight away I dug the earthy material and style, with its embroidery leaf print and all, but I was skeptical about how they'd work in the water. I'm happy to report they are totally comfortable. Though the fabric gathered wax a tad more quickly than most of my regular polyester surf trunks it came out easily in the wash. Bottom line: Thumbs up. www.planeteearthgreenlabel.com