

From: Jim Moss [mailto:bsa.rec.law@gmail.com]
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To: philmont@troop47.com
Subject: Semi Annual Product review

Here is my semi-annual review of what is coming on the market in the future for the outdoor industry. That means you may not find this stuff on your local retailer's shelves until a year from now.

Every six months I attend the Outdoor Retailer Trade Show. This is the show where the manufactures show the retailers what is new for the next selling season, normally 12 months out. I check out a lot of things for a lot of different reasons, but a favorite is finding BSA friendly products. By that I mean stuff that can be used and abused by Scouts.

I'm not paid by any manufacture I write about. In some cases I receive product to review which I can keep. This is purely a labor of love. I strongly believe that if we all work hard, we can move the BSA into the 1980's.

There wasn't a lot of new stuff that jumped out of the booths this year at either the Outdoor Retailer or Snowsports Industry Association shows. I would suspect that based on predictions of the economy going somewhere, money for R&D was slowed or cutoff.

Generally the one good thing was the green items. A lot of companies have figured out how to use green materials to make their products as well as to ship and show them. Patagonia of course has been doing this for more than ten years and still leads the way, but several other companies are starting down that path.

Another general idea that is associated with the green movement is the resurgence of wool. There are a lot of companies making wool products. Smartwool and Ilex the big companies who have been doing it awhile are getting bigger.

SteriPen

There are always a lot of comments about the SteriPen as a way to sterilize water, especially for Philmont trips. For a group of 12 it won't work. But for two people on a small trip or traveling to water questionable countries it is very convenient and easy to use. What makes it pretty slick this year is the new case which contains a solar charger. While carrying the case if the solar panel is exposed to the sun it recharges the spare battery inside the case.

Underwear

Thanks to the NFL and other professional sports underwear used to keep us warm, not it helps us stay active, recover quicker and just be better all around. What used to be a niche industry has broken out and is pretty much taking over the base layer industry. Skins is the new one on the block with some very interesting ideas. Yellowman does not have one feature other underwear manufactures do not have. When you look at someone wearing a Yellowman shirt it takes a second to realize it is not a tattoo. Don't be afraid if you see these real soon, they are fairly interesting without the pain or hepatitis. Under Armour was the first and still seems to be leading the pack (their booth is getting bigger).

Ex Officio

I know I may be stretching things here, but I really have fallen in love with their underwear. It is very comfortable, what I really like is after 12 or 14 hours of strenuous activity or just walking tradeshow halls, it still feels good and does not stink. You don't feel clammy, and it does not hold moisture that can create other problems. You can wash it out in the sink, hang it up to dry and it will be ready to go the next morning. For you weight fiends, you could theoretically get away with one pair that weighs less than 2 ounces for the entire Philmont trip. (If you do only take one pair of underwear to Philmont on your trip, please don't let me know!)

Camelback

With the big discussions about the "carcinogens" (BPA) being released from many types of plastic bottles the whole issue is a mess. To deal with it Camelback has come out with a new bottle to retrofit their old one. You just unscrew the bottle, put the old lid and tube in and go. This also gives you a spare cap without a spout if you need one.

I've been using them for almost a year and have converted to them. The bottle allows you to drink with the bottle upright and you lose the opportunity to spill whatever is inside your drinking bottle down your shirt. There is a tube that extends into the bottle and a Camelback bite tube at the top. When you are done drinking the bite tube folds out of the way and seals the flow of water closed. The lid is designed so it can be clipped to a carabineer without fear of losing the bottle or breaking the clip. They come in several sizes. Mine go with me everywhere even on flights. (You can take an empty water bottle through the airport security check points. I then fill it up on the other side at a drinking fountain. I save money, I don't waste energy or water by buying plastic water bottles and I don't spill anything because of the design.)

Brooks-Range

Brooks-Range makes several interesting products. What I found interesting was their mountaineering rescue sled. It weighs 2 pounds and folds up into a mall package. When used it unrolls to fit over skis to create a sled for hauling someone off a mountain. Expensive but neat.

Helly Hansen

For you guys & gals who never have enough pockets, Helly Hansen is making a Patrol Vest. It is designed to be light weight and work with a pocket for everything. There are six pockets of different function, size and type on the front of the jacket. It is designed to zip to Helly Hansen Pants to create an effective one piece suit. It also is supposed to match up with one or more of their jackets so you can reach through the jacket pockets into the vest pockets. I wore something like this when I worked at a ski area and it was wonderful. I kept it loaded with what I needed and I knew I was set when I put it on.

Headlamps

Petzl, Princeton Tec and Black Diamond have gone nuts with headlamps. They are small and lightweight. I carry a Petzl that can be seen for miles, has red and white led's, flashes and is a little larger than two quarters. If you are need something to look through your pack, read in the evening or find your way to the woods when nature calls in the middle of the night these are perfect.

If you are searching for someone and need to light up an area, these aren't enough. Dependent upon what you real uses are though you can find a light that works and probably a lot less in price and a lot less in weight than a couple of years ago.

CAMP-USA

CAMP-USA, a distributor for CAMP SpA has several new or updated ideas. Their helmets are getting a lot of buzz. The CAMP Pulse has been getting good buzz. CAMP-USA has also gotten into being the lightest gear on the market.

General stuff

Skis are getting wacky. They are lighter, faster, turn sharper and a lot more fun to ski these days. AT or backcountry skiing gear as well as Telemark skiing is growing. The equipment has made it to the big time and works, inbounds and out.

The price of resin is rising in the near future due to the cost of petroleum going up. If you are looking for new plastic boats, whitewater kayaks, sea kayaks, sit on tops, etc, buy now while the price has not jumped yet.

Not as much Philmont specific stuff this year, but it was the winter market.

Jim
Recreation.Law@gmail.com

James H. Moss, Attorney specializing in Recreation Law

Recreation Law Blog: <http://rec-law.blogspot.com/>

Editor, Outdoor Recreation & Fitness Law Review:

The Outdoor Recreation & Fitness Law Reviews are publications for members of the Outdoor Recreation, Adventure Travel, Hospitality and Fitness Industry
lawreview@snewsnet.com http://www.snewsnet.com/cgi-bin/snews/law_review/index.html

Instructor: Ski Area Operations, Risk Management Course Colorado Mountain College
jmoss@coloradomtn.edu <http://www.coloradomtn.edu/programs/sao/home.html>

PO Box 16743
Golden, CO 80402
303-807-2275
Personal Email: jhmoss@gmail.com