

# News release

GREENPEACE

## Hazardous chemicals found in many outdoor clothing brands

**25 January 2016 (Montreal)** – Hazardous and persistent chemicals, dangerous to human health and the environment, have been found in the products of leading outdoor brands. Brands like The North Face, Arc’teryx, Patagonia, Mammut and Columbia keep using PFCs to make their gear waterproof despite their claims of sustainability and love for nature, a new Greenpeace Germany report reveals. [1] The report [“Leaving Traces. The hidden hazardous chemicals in outdoor gear”](#) was presented today at a press conference at ISPO Munich, the biggest outdoor trade show in Europe.

Greenpeace tested 40 products purchased in 19 different countries. Hazardous PFCs were not only found in clothing but also in shoes, tents, backpacks, ropes and even in sleeping bags. Only in four items were no PFCs detected. Although most of the brands tested claim publicly that they are no longer using the most hazardous long-chain PFCs, [they were still found in high concentrations in 18 items](#).

“We found high levels of PFOA, a long-chain PFC that is linked to a number of health effects, including cancer, in some products from The North Face and Mammut. This substance is already restricted in Norway. These are disappointing results for outdoor lovers who want their clothes to be as sustainable and clean as the places they explore,” said Greenpeace Canada Detox spokesperson Charles Latimer.

PFCs are chemical compounds that don’t exist in nature. Once released in the environment many of them degrade very slowly and enter the food chain, making pollution almost irreversible. They have been found [in very remote areas of the planet](#), in animals like dolphins and in polar bears’ livers and even in human blood.

“Brands like Arc’teryx, The North Face and Mammut have helped a large number of Canadians explore and appreciate nature in all its beauty. I have spent over four months crossing the Atlantic Ocean and I have seen, from my own eyes, that pollution and its impacts have now reached the most remote regions. PFCs have travelled great distances, and even though they are invisible, they have been shown to be hazardous and can remain in the environment for a very long time. Arc’teryx, The North Face and Mammut can do the right thing to reduce the amount of PFCs in the environment by eliminating their use in the manufacturing of outdoor equipment,” said Mylène Paquette, the first North person from America to row solo across the North Atlantic Ocean.

In recent years, many outdoor brands have started switching from long chain to short chain PFCs, claiming that these are better alternatives. But recently, more than 200 scientists from 38 countries signed the [‘Madrid statement’](#) which recommends avoiding the use of PFCs -- including short chain -- for the production of consumer products, including textiles.

While major outdoor brands are still highly dependent on hazardous chemicals, UK brand Páramo Directional Clothing today announced its [commitment to Detox](#). Páramo is the first brand in the outdoor sector that has already eliminated PFC from its entire production chain, showing that high-

performance PFCs-free gear is possible and setting the highest standard within the sector. The UK brand joins 34 international fashion and sports brands already committed to Detox.

“We are convinced that the outdoor community really has the leverage to be a game-changer in the industry and we are calling on the brands to accept the challenge to detox their customers are asking for,” concluded Latimer.

This is the first product testing from Greenpeace that was designed in collaboration with a community of supporters and outdoor lovers. More than 30.000 votes were collected on <http://detox-outdoor.org/>, and Greenpeace sent the 40 most-voted products to the lab.

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**Notes:**

[1] Poly- and per-fluorinated compounds (or PFCs) are used in many industrial processes and consumer products. The outdoor industry in particular is an important user, since it applies PFCs to make products waterproof and dirt-repellent. Once released into the environment, many PFCs are broken down very slowly; they remain in the environment for many years and are dispersed across the entire planet. Some PFCs may cause harm to reproduction, promote the growth of tumours and affect the hormone system.