Patagonia Launches "The Responsible Economy" Campaign, Celebrates 40 Years of Firsts

New York City, New York (September 24, 2013) — Leaders from outdoor apparel company Patagonia today announced its new campaign, The Responsible Economy, and outlined its numerous environmental and social “firsts” since being founded 40 years ago.

“Patagonia’s mission is to ‘inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis,’” said Rick Ridgeway, Patagonia Vice President of Environmental Affairs. “There are two vital concepts in that statement: we implement our own solutions and we inspire others to follow our lead.”

Based in Ventura, Calif., Patagonia has become a leader by implementing many environmental and social firsts that include:

- using only organic cotton for all its cotton products since 1996;
- redefining corporate transparency through its Footprint Chronicles® website documenting what is working in the supply chain, what’s not, and steps the company is doing to address its challenges;
- launching its Common Threads Partnership, which invites customers to take mutual responsibility for the entire life cycle of the company’s products through the 5 R’s: reduce, repair, reuse, recycle, and reimagine;
- becoming the first brand member of the bluesign® system;
- being one of the first companies in California to switch to wind energy upon deregulation and adding on-site solar energy systems;
- being the first company in California to incorporate as a Benefit Corporation, institutionalizing its core values in its Charter and Articles of Incorporation;
- launching $20 Million & Change, a fund to help like-minded responsible start-up companies; and
- becoming one of the first U.S. outdoor apparel companies to introduce Fair Trade Certified™ garments (for fall 2014).

In addition, over the years Patagonia has co-founded 1% for the Planet®, Freedom to Roam, The Conservation Alliance, and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, and is a founding member of the Fair Labor Association. It has given more than $55 million in grants and in-kind donations to date to more than 1000 environmental organizations through its grants program.

Patagonia was one of the first to use hemp, recycled nylon, recycled polyester, and Tencel® (lyocell). Its most recent initiative is working with The Nature Conservancy and fifth-generation ranchers to regenerate overgrazed grasslands in Patagonia, Argentina, where it sources its merino wool. The company takes responsibility for every garment at the end of its life by taking it back for recycling or repurposing.

“On a daily basis, we actively pursue our mission statement’s provision to ‘cause no unnecessary harm,’” stated Jill Dumain, Patagonia’s Director of Environmental Strategy. “At every step we ask ourselves, ‘How does this fiber or input affect the environment we live in and the people making the products and how can we reduce that impact?’”
The new environmental campaign, The Responsible Economy, challenges the assumption that an economy based on growth and increased consumption is tantamount to prosperity.

The company notes that every year, humans use the earth’s resources at a rate nearly one and a half times faster than nature can replace essential “services” such as clean water, clean air, arable land, healthy fisheries, and the stable climate all businesses and societies depend on.

"If the population climbs from 7 to 9 billion people by 2050 and, even more importantly, our growing and increasingly global high-consumption economy continues to draw down our natural resources, we will exceed the planet’s capacity by 300 to 500 percent, putting us into ecological bankruptcy,” notes Vincent Stanley, co-author with Yvon Chouinard of The Responsible Company.

“How do we reverse this decline before it becomes sudden catastrophe? How do those of us in business confront this challenge yet remain in business?” he added. “Patagonia doesn't claim to have the answers, but we do want to start a conversation so all of us – business, government, and civil society – can collectively find the answers.”

To confront the “elephant in the room” – growth-dependent capitalism – Patagonia will promote the concept that everyone must learn to consume less and use resources far more productively – as well as innovate as quickly and ingeniously as possible to reduce adverse human impact on the natural systems that support all life.

Patagonia will be the first major company to raise this topic with its customers, business leaders, and a general audience. The campaign was inspired by the enormous response to its provocative “Don’t Buy This Jacket” full-page ad in the New York Times on Black Friday, 2011, when it asked customers to think twice whether they needed a new jacket, and by its recent “Better Than New” ad in the same paper celebrating the re-sale of well-used, long-surviving Patagonia clothing.

About Patagonia:
Patagonia, Inc., based in Ventura, California, is a leading designer and retailer of core outdoor, alpine, fly fishing, snow, surf and sport-related apparel, equipment, footwear and accessories. The company is recognized internationally for its commitment to authentic product quality and environmental activism, contributing over $55 million in grants and in-kind donations to date. Incorporating environmental responsibility into product development, the company has, since 1996, used only organically grown cotton in its clothing line. The company’s entire product line is recyclable through its Common Threads Partnership. The Footprint Chronicles® at www.patagonia.com/us/footprint explores the company’s environmental and social footprint.

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