

# Inherit the Wind

Prana embraces renewable energy and helps its retail partners do the same.

By Kris Versteegen

**T**en years ago, the outdoor industry took notice as Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard put the well being of his company on the line and converted every piece of cotton apparel bearing the brand's name to organic cotton. A variety of outdoor industry vendors soon followed in those eco-conscious footsteps, prodded by the realization that much of their livelihood is directly dependent on preserving places to recreate.

Before this move by Patagonia, activism regarding environmental issues was mostly limited to funding preservation groups. Today, the outdoor industry realizes that in order to truly make a difference, it needs to lead by example and reduce its own footprint.

Just over a year ago, Prana took a major step toward accomplishing this—not only for itself as a company, but also for all of its retail customers. The company made a commitment to provide 3 million kilowatt-hours of renewable energy in the form of wind power for its own facilities, as well as 100 of its retailers. Known as the “Prana Natural Power Initiative,” the program offsets energy used in everyday business activities with the purchase

of Green-e certified tradable, renewable energy certificates supplied by 3 Phases Energy Services. As shops are added to the program, Prana purchases renewable energy credits sufficient to supplant the conventional power being used by those stores.

“To this day, every time I recycle something instead of throwing it in the trash, I think of Patagonia,” says Prana founder Beaver Theodosakis. “I thought that we should drive one initiative that Prana would be known for. Prana is an ancient Farsi word for breath, and wind power is that one initiative.”

Conventional power plants within the United States are responsible for roughly two-thirds of the Earth's pollutants that result in acid rain; half of the world's nuclear



waste; one-third of the planet's global warming pollution; and one-third of the air pollutants that are the chief causes of respiratory-related hospital admissions for children and senior citizens.

When Prana first launched the program, the company intended to offer it to 100 of its retailers. Today, the initiative has grown to encompass more than 250 retailers and 17.5 million kilowatt-hours of clean, renewable energy.

Chattanooga, TN-based Rock/Creek Outfitters, a multi-channel, small outdoor chain that has four brick-and-mortar locations and two e-commerce sites, has participated in the program from the beginning.

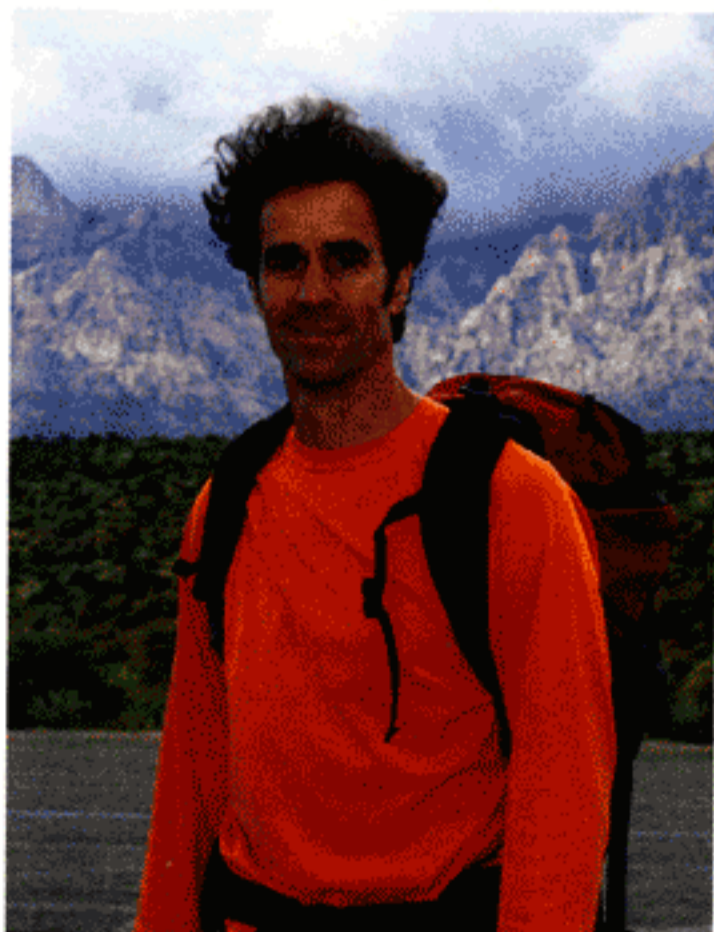
“It was a very easy program to implement,” notes Mark McKnight, Rock/Creek's marketing/creative director. “From a general environmental stance, this program fits in 100 percent with what we want to accomplish as a company. Powering our stores off of wind power is only one small part of what Prana is doing and what we are doing to reduce our footprint.” He adds, “We are now able to work with our customers to get the word out about renewable energy, and wind power in particular.”

McKnight also points out that Rock/Creek is benefiting from this initiative beyond the “feel-good” aspect of clean energy and is actually gaining direct benefits to the company.

“Especially here in Chattanooga, anyone can buy clean energy if they want to,” McKnight says. “EPB is our provider and you can buy these green tags. We have started inspiring our customers to do this themselves and [we] also act as a leader among local businesses. I don't have any way to measure it, but we have had a lot of very good feedback. It's definitely grown our business.”

The program is not only broadening its appeal to Prana's retailers and customers, but is also working its way up the food chain to Liz Claiborne, Prana's parent company. Liz Claiborne voluntarily purchases 25 million kilowatt-hours of green power to cover 100 percent of the electricity used at its corporate headquarters in New Jersey. This move put both Prana and Liz Claiborne on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's list of Top 10 Retail Green Power Partners.

Prana's commitment to 3 Phases Energy Services also includes the company's investment in the future of wind farming in this country—including the formation of new wind farms and bolstering existing farms to create a wider base for future wind power production. The long-term goal for 3 Phases is to have 12 percent of the U.S. power grid based on wind power by the year 2012. The wind power being poured into the nation's grid is currently coming from California and Nebraska wind farms. ■



## TAKING A DEEP BREATH

Prana founder Beaver Theodosakis, embraces renewable energy.