



New Organic Wool Fabric Highlighted in Outdoor Retailer's "Project OR" People's Choice Winning Design by Los Angeles-based FIDM Student

**For Immediate Release
January 28, 2009**

**Sandra Marquardt, 301-592-0077
smarquardt@onthemarkpr.com**

Middlebury, VT - Stylish, lightweight, yet warm leggings made with [Vermont Organic Fiber Company](#) (VTOF)'s new "O-Wool® Washable fabrics," were a key element of [Outdoor Retailer's](#) (OR) "Project OR" People's Choice-winning design at the show in Salt Lake City, UT which ran January 22-25, 2009. "O-Wool® Washable" fabrics are the nation's first washable Merino wool fabrics made with wool grown and certified to the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's](#) (USDA) organic standard.

Project OR organizers hand-picked five design students from top design programs around the country to produce a garment prototype that was original, an innovative use of performance and eco-friendly materials, and had a practical application for the outdoor market. Designer Curt Sousa, who graduated Magna Cum Laude from the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles, CA, used VTOF's new organic washable wool fabric to make the leggings for his design. It was only natural Sousa would use an organic fiber – he earned a degree in biology from the University of New England in Biddeford, ME in 2006.

"We worked hard to create an excellent quality organic wool fabric that could be used whether as a base layer or a fashion fabric," said Matthew Mole, VTOF president. "The fact that O-Wool Washable fabric was a big part of Curt Sousa's winning People's Choice design is testimony to the fabric's nice hand, usefulness, and high quality."

"I was excited to blend my background in both fashion and environmental responsibility into a garment perfect for the outdoor apparel market and am honored so many OR attendees believed sustainability was an important part of apparel design," said Sousa.

The washable wool fabric, now available in three outdoor apparel weights, (150g/m², 220g/m², and 250g/m²), uses the "3e-WOOL®" process (ecological, essential, easy care) to prevent O-Wool from shrinking and "felting" during washing. The process, which meets the IWS TM 31 standards for machine washability, uses hydrogen peroxide and mechanical action instead of chlorine (which is harmful to the environment). In addition, the innovative process uses one-third of the water used by traditional chlorine-based shrinking treatments and is certified to Oeko-Tex Standard 100, which tests textile products to ensure they are free from harmful levels of more than 100 substances known to be detrimental to human health. Furthermore, based on manufacturer testing, the process results in superior anti-pilling properties when compared to conventional wool or chlorine-treated washable wool.

VTOF also displayed its wide range of other knit and woven fabrics, including blanket, flannel, herringbone, interlock, jersey, melton, pile, and wool suiting, as well as 'O-Wool® by Jasco®' fabrics.

Vermont Organic Fiber Company

Vermont Organic Fiber Company (VTOF) is the nation's leading manufacturer of fabrics, blankets and yarn made from organic wool. O-Wool yarns and fabrics are made from certified organic Merino wool spun, knit, woven, and finished at facilities in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. Woolen spinning in the U.S. is certified to the new [Global Organic Textile Standard](#) (GOTS) as is worsted spinning carried out with partner mills in China. GOTS addresses all post-shearing stages such as dyeing and finishing, and includes social criteria. VTOF is one of the first and few companies in the U.S. to have partner spinning mills certified to GOTS and is getting all subsequent processing phases certified to the standard. Sales of O-Wool products grew 107 percent in 2007.

Current and recent designers using O-Wool yarns and fabrics include Bahar Shahpar, Linda Loudermilk, and Diane von Furstenberg, who featured 'O-Wool® by Jasco®' fabrics on the runway at Earth Pledge's Future Fashion show in New York City in February, 2008. In addition, companies from North America to Europe and Asia that have used O-Wool include Ecobaby Organics (San Diego, CA), Fox River Mills (Osage, IA), IBEX (Woodstock, VT), J. Crew (New York, NY), Loomstate (New York, NY), Maggie's Organics (Ypsilanti, MI), Patagonia (Ventura, CA), Wildlife Works (London, UK), and Mitsukoshi Department Stores (Tokyo, Japan).

Organic wool is part of the approximately \$1.9 billion global organic fiber industry, according to the *Organic Exchange Organic Cotton Market Report 2007*. For the wool to be sold as "organic" in the United States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Organic Program (NOP) requires that the sheep meet its livestock standards which call for the animals to be fed organic feed and forage from the last third of gestation and be raised without the use of synthetic hormones or pesticides. In addition, organic livestock producers are diligent in ensuring they do not exceed the natural carrying capacity of the land on which their animals graze, resulting in agricultural practices that are healthy for both the animals and the environment.