

# Patagonia: An Outdoor Clothing and Gear Company with a Commitment to Saving the Earth

*"I have a story similar to a lot of people's stories in that I was in the outdoor industry for a while before Patagonia. And there was definitely something that made me want to just do more. I think the best way to say it is I think a lot of people want a job that aligns with their personal passions or feelings."*

*"I asked myself, how could I feel good about my work and also make money."*

- Gin Ando, Patagonia

For my Hero Project I chose the company Patagonia because of how much money and attention they donate to the environment. Patagonia's mission appeals to me because one of the values of my family is being outside in nature. We love to go skiing, hiking, swimming, these activities really bring my family together. Another reason I chose Patagonia was because I really like Patagonia's clothing/gear. Also, I don't feel bad about spending money on Patagonia clothes because of their commitment to the environment.

Patagonia is an outdoor clothing and gear company that is based in Ventura, California. It was founded by Yvon Chouinard, a rock climber, in 1973. In the past year, Patagonia has donated more than \$60 million to nonprofit organizations.

I knew I wanted to interview someone at Patagonia, but I didn't know who I should contact. I scoured their website and found an email address for the press. I was so excited because Gin Ando, Communications and PR Representative got back to me. I decided to schedule the interview while I was on a trip with just me and my dad in Bend, Oregon. I spoke with Gin via Zoom after a beautiful sunny day of skiing Mount Bachelor. It had just snowed the night before, so my Dad and I were ripping down the powdery slopes. It was also a great day because it was the first day the Summit lift was open, which meant you could ride it to the very top of Mount Bachelor, which is about nine thousand feet tall! I spent the first half of my day skiing through the trees in my new Patagonia jacket, and that afternoon I was able to talk to someone who actually worked there.

One of the most impressive things Gin told me about was Patagonia's protection of Bristol Bay in Alaska. As Gin said, "The Hold Fast Collective (Patagonia's nonprofit that uses the company's profits to support philanthropy efforts) gave money for the Pebble Bay Court to buy a tract of land to prevent a road from being built that would have gone to a proposed mine, saving Bristol Bay Alaska. Now that they can't make that road, that means the building of the mine is effectively stopped."

Bristol Bay, Alaska has so many different types of animals living there including bald eagles, moose, brown bears, rainbow trout, freshwater seals, pacific walrus, north pacific right

whales, and beluga whales. Patagonia saved so many animals from death because of their heroic act.

Another impressive action Patagonia has taken was to protect the last undammed river in Europe. Gin shared, "The Vjosa River is the last undammed river in Europe, so we along with Riverwatch and some other local non-governmental organizations out there worked with the government to declare it as a national park to stop people from damaging it."

I think Patagonia's role in protecting the Vjosa River is heroic because of all of the natural marine animals they are saving – more than 150 species of winged insects, around 60 mollusks, at least 31 species of fish, 31 of reptile, 257 of bird, and around 70 mammals rely on that habitat to survive. Also the natural beauty of the landscape is being preserved.

In addition to numerous environment-saving programs, Gin also told me about the sustainable business practices of the company. Patagonia is using a lot of recycled polyester in their clothing. As Gin noted, "We started using recycled PET bottles back in the 90s to make polyester. We are also looking at novel ways in which clothing can literally be broken down by its fabric type, even if it's a blend, and then be made into polyester."

Patagonia also uses Bureo NetPlus which comes from old fishing nets, recycled cotton which comes from T-shirts, and recycled down that comes from bedding material to make their clothing.

Towards the end of the conversation I asked Gin what advice he has for a 7th grader who wants to help save the environment. Gin said, "It starts with you and I mean that not "like only you can save the planet" actually looking at your practices and your passions and what you're good at and how it can actually support all of the amazing incredible work that's being done." He added, "For me - I went to school, studied hard and really enjoy writing. So I'm putting my skills and education towards this cause."

What I mostly took out of this interview with Gin is that the best way to help the environment is by knowing your own passions and special skills, and finding a way to use them in the best way. Whether being out in nature, or writing about it, it all helps.

Gin also reminded me that I could do the simple stuff too like, mind what you eat (try to eat locally,) recycle, encourage other people to not use much plastic, etc.

Overall I think Patagonia is an amazing company with incredible people because of their passion. Patagonia is so heroic because of how they're trying their best to save places in need of help (Vjosa River, Bristol Bay, and more), they donate so much money to nonprofit organizations, and how they inspire kids like me to help the environment.

Gin reflected on working at Patagonia, "I don't think I've ever met a more talented, odd but also passionate group of people in any place that I've ever worked."

**BRISTOL BAY**  
**Alaska**



**VJOSA RIVER**  
**Albania, Europe**



**YVON CHOIUNARD**  
(Founder of Patagonia)





