

Position Paper:

The Earth Needs It More: Patagonia's Investment in Our Planet

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The Situation

Our planet is in turmoil. Human-caused global warming poses a severe and irreversible threat to Earth's beautiful mountains, forests, lakes, skies, plains, and every living creature that calls our planet home. Both the United States National Climate Assessment (NCA, 2018) and the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization (2018) have released updated reports that confirm Earth's climate is changing faster now than ever before, primarily because of human activities. Climate change causes increasingly extreme weather, changes in air quality, the spread of new diseases, shifts in the availability of food and water, and economic instability (NCA, 2018; WMO, 2018), among other potentially devastating effects. The time for change is now.

As a company built on celebrating and exploring Earth's beauty, Patagonia is in business to save our home planet (Patagonia, n. d. 1). We produce sustainable, high-quality apparel and outdoor goods for those who love nature and aim to use our resources to combat the climate crisis (Patagonia, n. d. 1). While Patagonia is committed to changing the course of the climate crisis, we cannot do so alone. Protecting our planet is a shared responsibility and requires global commitment and action from leaders around the world.

Yet the current administration, led by President Donald Trump, continues to deny climate change. President Trump has withdrawn from global collaboration seeking to enact change and prioritized corporate gain over the future of our planet. Since taking office in 2017, the Trump administration has announced a host of policies rolling back environmental protection policies, stunting or reversing progress for the future of our air, water, and land (Eilperin et al., 2020; Gibbons, 2019). These significant steps backward benefit no one except wealthy corporations and individuals seeking to prioritize profit over the environment. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which reduced the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21% (Trump, 2018), exemplifies the

prioritization of corporate financial interests. In opposition to these irresponsible policies and keeping with our ongoing investments in the future of our planet, Patagonia will donate the \$10 million savings resulting from the reduced corporate tax rate to environmental protection groups (Marcario, 2018).

Our Community

We take pride in knowing our customers and employees are also environmentally conscious and that many support our stance against the administration's disinvestment in the planet's future. One of our loyal customers, Abby (2017), exemplifies this vision in a social media post where she shared her volunteer work to clean up a stream near her Alabama home – wearing her favorite Patagonia gear – and the declaration that "if the prez won't, I will." We commend Abby for taking action and are proud of the countless Patagonia employees and customers who are activists in their communities through the Patagonia Action Works advocacy social network (n.d.). Perhaps most importantly, our vision for Earth's future is shared and executed by our grassroots partners – including Ventura Land Trust, the Center for Regenerative Agriculture, the Coalition for Clean Air, and more than 1,400 other Patagonia Action Works partners (n.d.) who are working to make a difference at the community level.

Other members of the public have expressed direct support for our decision to donate profits from the corporate tax reduction. Customer Judy Schultz (2018), a nurse and self-described tree hugger, called our commitment "another great reason to support Patagonia." Environmental journalist Mora Morrison (2018) said our choice was a "perfect example of corporate social responsibility done right." Additionally, REI, one of our largest peers and competitors in the outdoor apparel industry, has joined us in opposing the Trump administration's reckless environmental policies (Hauser, 2017; Stritzke, 2017).

While many share our position, we recognize that it might be politically divisive. Some conservatives and Republicans have dismissed our commitment to environmental issues as a publicity stunt, including Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke (Bhattarai, 2017) and the GOP House Natural Resources Committee (Daly, 2017), who have encouraged their followers to boycott our products. Some members of the public have expressed frustration with our stance on social media using the hashtag #BoycottPatagonia, insisting we should not involve our company in issues beyond sales (Maylynda, 2017; Jazzy, 2017).

The Facts

Our Planet's Needs

Findings from the WMO and the NCA, the nonpartisan, scientific authorities on Earth's wellbeing, paint a serious picture of climate change's impact on our planet. In its State of the Global Climate, the WMO (2018a) reported that the physical signs and socio-economic impact of global warming are accelerating. The agency noted record greenhouse gas concentrations (WMO, 2018b), which have caused increasing global temperatures evidenced by the long-term warming trend (WMO, 2018a). In 2018, average global temperatures reached approximately 1° Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and the years 2015 to 2018 were the hottest on record (WMO, 2018a). The ocean temperature continues to increase, and water levels are rising as arctic sea ice melts (WMO, 2018a). The occurrence of extreme weather, like tropical storms, drought, and heatwaves, is increasing, impacting lives and sustainable development on every continent (WMO, 2018a). The NCA (2018) reported the impacts of climate change are already being felt in communities, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and health disparities.

In response to these findings, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) outlined recommendations for policymakers to curb the global warming trend,

including rapid and far-reaching transitions in land, energy, industry, transportation, and building practices (IPCC, 2018). The IPCC (2018) asserted that although climate change is irreversible, global collaboration could lessen its impact on our planet and future generations.

President Trump's Environmental Policies

President Trump has declared he "doesn't believe" the climate reports (BBC, para. 1). This dangerous denial and dismissal of objective, scientific truth is apparent in many of his administration's actions and policies. In June 2017, President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement, making it the first nation to leave the global treaty on climate change and ending our nation's promise to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Trump, 2017). The administration slashed the Environmental Protection Agency's budget, reducing it to the lowest level in 40 years (Thrush & Davenport, 2017) and enabling its criminal enforcement to hit a 30-year low (Gibbens, 2019). In addition to the withdrawal of financial support and collaborative participation to address climate change, the administration's policies hurt our planet by reducing carbon emission restrictions, weakening pollution limits and enforcements, narrowing the definition of federally protected waters, and attempting to reduce public lands in favor of mining and drilling, among numerous other harmful impacts (Gibbens, 2019).

Our Position

Considering the increasingly dire need to address climate change and President Trump's apparent intentions to ignore or deny it, our Chief Executive Officer Rose Marcario (2018) declared this administration's environmental stance to be woefully inadequate and the corporate tax cut to be irresponsible. To help remedy these injustices, Patagonia will donate our company's \$10 million savings from the Tax Cuts and Job Act to grassroots environmental protection groups "because our home planet needs it more than we do" (Maracario, 2018, para. 1).

Companies pay taxes for a reason, and Patagonia has always gladly paid our fair share of federal and state taxes. Taxes fund essential public services and protect the most vulnerable members of our society and our public lands and resources. The Trump administration's corporate tax cut "threatens these services at the expense of our planet" (Marcario, 2018, para. 3).

Patagonia is committed to protecting our planet's air, land, and water and finding solutions to combat the climate change crisis. We believe these grassroots agencies will be far more responsible stewards of our tax dollars than the Trump administration. This \$10 million will go a long way toward supporting groups with the planet's needs in mind, including those dedicated to regenerative organic agriculture, which may be our greatest hope in reversing the damage done by our planet's increasing temperatures (Maracario, 2018).

Our Values

Climate change is an issue that affects us all and transcends differences in age, race, identity, socio-economic status, and politics. We have only one planet to share and addressing climate change is a shared responsibility for our future and our children's future. Patagonia will never be a company that settles for merely selling products and is committed to using every resource we have – our voice, our business, and our community – to do something about our climate crisis (Patagonia, n. d. 1). We have been an unapologetic activist company since our founding in 1973 (Gelles, 2018), and everything Patagonia does aligns with our core value that "we're in business to save our home planet" (Patagonia, n. d. 1). Our donation is in addition to Patagonia's ongoing 1% for the Planet program — which has awarded more than \$140 million to environmental groups since 1985 through our pledge to allocate 1% of all sales to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment (Patagonia, n. d. 4) — and our ongoing litigation against President Trump's unconstitutional attempt to reduce public land for mining

and drilling (Patagonia, n. d. 2). We know that the climate crisis is real and that leaders around the world need to work together for the future of our planet. While it is unfortunate that the current administration is refusing to step up to the challenge, we are proud to continue doing so.

Resources

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