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ENVIRONMENT

Slater Designs and Firewire Just Partnered with a Company that Makes Traction Pads Out of Algae

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Alexander Haro Senior Editor STAFF



BLOOM Foam is partnering with Slater Designs to create a traction pad made of algae. Photo: BLOOM/Facebook

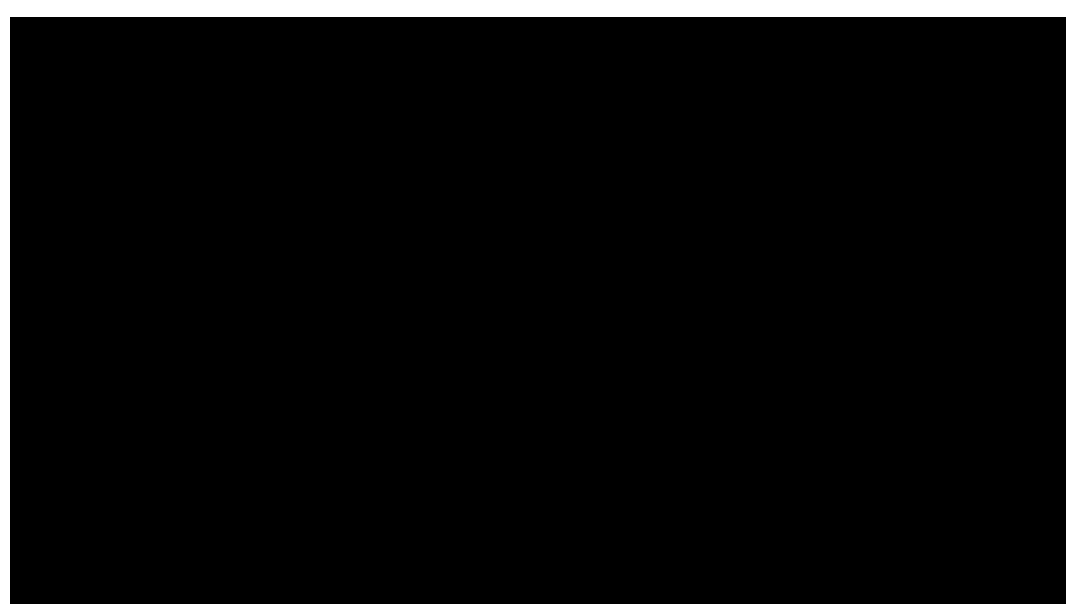
Slater Designs and Firewire Surfboards are a little bit better for the environment than most other surfboard companies. Recently, they decided they'd try a little bit harder by collaborating with BLOOM Foam to make "arguably the most environmentally-friendly traction pad on the market today."

In general, surfing is a bit of an environmental disaster. A good percentage of us are pretty damn hypocritical when it comes to being good stewards of the environment—sure, there are organizations like The Surfrider Foundation that do real good, but for the most part, we all just pay Mother Earth a bit of lip service, then go on about our day riding toxic surfboards made from foam and fiberglass, wearing wetsuits made of rubber or trunks made in sweat shops, and using accessories made from things that, once they're created, will pretty much never disappear.

When Kelly Slater left Quik, there were rumors that part of the reason for his departure had to do with Quik's commitment to the environment, or lack thereof. Then, of course, he started Outerknown, a very expensive yet environmentally-conscious company, which is probably better than super cheap and environmentally-awful. But everyone likes super cheap, and putting your money where your mouth is is much easier said than done, especially when there are shareholders shouting about the bottom line. But in keeping with the environmentally-conscious theme, Slater started a health drink, fired up Slater Designs, bought a bunch of shares in Firewire, and started making surfboards, too.

So where does BLOOM Foam fit in? Contrary to popular belief, that stuff your traction pad is made of doesn't need to be made from shit that kills the environment. BLOOM makes it from algae, which is quickly becoming a building material of the future. Algae grows pretty much anywhere there is water. "We are literally scraping pond scum, solar drying and pulverizing it," said BLOOM's Managing Director, Rob Falken. "Then extruding the material to create a pad that not only helps rebalance the natural ecology, but also reduces our dependence on non-renewable oil, and aids in CO2 sequestration."

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The foam is created from algae biomass on lakes and ponds that are at high risk of an algal bloom, according to the website. "Algae helps keep ecologies in balance, but too much can hurt freshwater habitats and the people and animals living around them," it says. "By sourcing our algae biomass from lakes and ponds with high algal bloom risks, we help mitigate the negative environmental effects caused by the overproduction of algae."

While they haven't yet hit Australian or American stores, they're slated to be added to shelves at the end of August. "This is in line with a consistent theme for us, developing quality products in friendlier forms," said Slater. "The traction feels insane and is also a small but simple solution for seemingly unconnected industries to utilize byproducts. I'm stoked on this initiative because surfers use so many traction pads throughout their lives."



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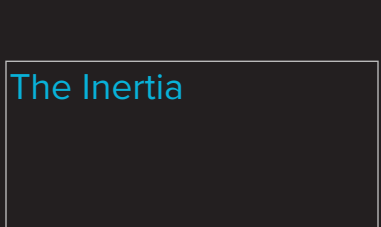
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