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By JULIE HANSON

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HUDSON — Polartec's unique process for turning recycled water bottles into material for military uniforms has caught the eye of U.S. Rep. Charles Bass, R-NH.

Bass toured the manufacturing facility Monday. He reminded employees that their unique products make life better for American soldiers around the world.

"Every day you show up for work you should be proud of that," Bass said.

As a member of Energy and Commerce Committee and someone who worked in a private sector alternative energy company, Bass took a special interest in the process.

He promised to fight defense budget cuts that could affect the product line and called on the government to learn from the private sector.

Polartec is a thriving textile mill because management and employees work together toward a common goal, Bass said. Government should follow that lead rather than pursue its current unsustainable methods of budgeting and running up deficits, Bass said.

"It's time to stop talking big and acting little and start talking little and doing big," Bass said.

Using the first closed-loop recycling system of its kind, Polartec is able to convert used water bottles into fabric used for advanced military uniforms.

"It's really incredible," said Alissa Southworth, director of government relations for ADS Ventures. "It's literally saving millions of post-consumer bottles from going into landfills."

Recycled bottle material is spun into the yarn that makes up Polartec fabric used for military uniforms. Nothing is wasted in the process. The company has been recycling since 2006. In 2009 it added the ability to recycle the 10 to 15 percent of fabric that typically becomes scrap during the garment manufacturing process. When soldiers return uniforms no longer fit for wear, the items are stripped of nonrecyclable items and the rest is sent back to the recycling center.

About 40 recycled bottles go into each jacket.

"Polartec has invested significant capital and resources into this effort," Southworth said. "We believe this is the best closed loop recycle program in the world."

A cutting-edge recycling program is to be expected from a company known for innovation, according to Jonathan Adelman, executive vice president of global sales and marketing. Half of what the company shipped in 2011 didn't even exist the year before, Adelman said.

The uniform being manufactured for the special forces unit is a new seven-layer design to accommodate temperatures from 65 degrees Fahrenheit to 45 below.

"It's a vast improvement over what they had," Adelman said.

The layers are breathable and compressible to save space in the pack. The technology is also popular in the outdoor-wear market, he said.

Commercial and military wear are the main components of Polartec product line, but the company also does work wear, according to Andrew Vecchione, president and CEO. The company expanded its military component about a year and a half ago, he said.

The company has enjoyed record years since 2009, Vecchione noted.

"We're growing because of new products and innovation," Vecchione said.



