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Waste pouches make for happy trails

By [Stephen Knapp](#)
06/28/2006

Aaah, nature! Colorado is certainly blessed with a generous portion of it, plus a goodly share of hardy folk who embrace its primitive charms. Unfortunately, the armies of avid outdoor enthusiasts answering the siren call of nature's scenic bounty must also heed a call more urgent, though decidedly less agreeable, and too often heap malodorous indignities upon the very Eden they've come to exalt.

We're talking about poop, of course, and pee, and the astonishing quantities of both that are deposited each year at nature's most popular franchises. Because the least-trammeled localities are rarely provided with even primitive public conveniences, most hikers' burdens wind up in a shallow grave or simply dropped onto the forest's green carpet behind a likely rock or bush. Either way, out of sight doesn't necessarily mean out of mind, and busy trailheads and inviting arbors can quickly become noxious minefields thickly strewn with pungent ordnance. Must it always be thus?

Not if Lara Usinowicz can help it.

A devoted mountain biker who's seen Colorado from atop all of its fourteeners, Evergreen resident Usinowicz has wrinkled her nose at many an improvised wilderness latrine, so when she learned that a California company was looking for a motivated individual to market its portable powder rooms to the tent-and-trail-mix set, she didn't piddle around.

"It just sounded like me, so I went for it," she says. Today, Usinowicz is the main pipeline for Restop portable human waste disposal pouches to nature lovers the world over. "I'm a believer," she smiles, "but then you really have to be. I'll never become a billionaire selling poop bags."

By "poop bag," Usinowicz means Restop's tidy Wilderness Waste Containment Pouch, a five-pack of feather-light, wafer-thin, tough-as-nails sacks-within-sacks that can accept the most charitable donations without complaint and tightly confine their

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cargo's scent and substance till trail's end. Each landfill-friendly unit comes with toilet paper, an antiseptic wipe and a measure of hungry enzymes that get nature's recycling work off to a brisk start.

Number Two, though, is but a single part of the dietary equation, and with chocolate must come lemonade, for which Usinowicz recommends Restop 1. A durable, unisex plastic pouch designed with a one-way internal spout and ample 20-ounce capacity, Restop 1 contains both enzymes and a space-age powdered polymer that instantly transforms Number One into a thick gel that couldn't escape into one's socks and map kit even if given the chance.

As remarkable as they sound, Restop's products aren't new, and for nearly 20 years the company has sold them by the boxcar load to the military and various utility-related industries where employees routinely find themselves up a figurative creek with neither pot nor window. By hiring Usinowicz, Restop hopes to bring its expedient effluent-management systems to a leisure market that badly needs them.

"They wanted to base their wilderness marketing in Colorado because there's so much outdoor activity here," Usinowicz says. "500,000 people hike the fourteens per year, and Fruita has become a mountain-biking mecca. All of these areas are impacted by human waste."

So far, her biggest clients are raft companies, particularly those plying the mighty Arkansas. "The Arkansas River is the most commercially rafted in the world," Usinowicz says, "and in a canyon on the river, there's just no place to go." Given the greater payload possible aboard an inflatable boat, rafters are able to enjoy two other Restop products — a small plastic stool upon where one can perch and take ease, and a pop-up privacy tent for shrinking violets that become self-conscious when defecating before an audience. "They're just more convenient if you have the space and don't care about a little extra weight."

More than one skeptic has suggested to Usinowicz that, because all manner of woodland creatures are wont to loose their bowels upon the virgin land, humans should do no less, an argument she rejects out of hand. "The human diet is full of chemicals, preservatives and a lot of other things that wild animals don't eat," she says. "If bears dig through our garbage and eat our trash, I think they should pack out their waste, too."

While Usinowicz freely admits that, across most of Colorado's vast wild lands, a few pounds of people scat aren't apt to upset nature's perfect balance. At dozens of the state's heavily trafficked areas, however, even the time-honored expedient of excavating a small "cat hole" in which to bury one's depleted rations is no longer practical.

"The Chicago Basin is horrendous," Usinowicz says. "You can't dig a hole anywhere without digging up somebody else's waste."

Several national parks and wilderness areas now recommend — some even require — that all hikers and campers carry sufficient

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waste-containment pouches to supply their backcountry itinerary. While that's good for business, Usinowicz believes that anyone who enjoys vacationing in a pristine wilderness should accept some responsibility for keeping it that way.

"I like to think I'm helping them do that," she says, flashing a here-it-comes grin. "I'm saving the world one poop at a time."

To learn more about Restop wilderness products, call 303-526-0723 or visit www.whennaturecalls.com. Locally, Restop products are available at Blue Quill Angler on Bergen Parkway.

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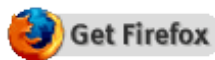
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