



## Rochester PLEX Community a Victim of Environmental Injustice

By Dorian Hall and Peter Debes

ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP—Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

# SIERRA CLUB ECOLOGUE

The term “environmental injustice” was coined to illustrate the structural policies and personal practices in which people in excluded groups have been targeted. It refers to people, who because of their race, ethnicity, or other identities, have been denied access to the privileges enjoyed by the people of power in their area. One way this has been manifested is by excluding people from certain preferred places to live, forcing them to live instead in less desirable locations. Such locations typically have been in areas subject to industrial noise, pollution, and waste, often resulting in health problems not typically seen by those in other areas. Since people in such neighborhoods were generally of low income and power they had few resources and little voice or decision making in developing their community.

Here in Rochester, such a scenario is taking place right now. The area enclosed by Plymouth Ave. and Exchange St. that borders the Genesee River just South of the Ford St. bridge is facing a major proposal to build multi-story residences that would provide housing for students attending the University of Rochester. This is no surprise since the 35 year-old, low income neighborhood, represented by the PLEX Neighborhood Association, is just across the River from the University of Rochester. Residents have unknowingly lived for over three decades near a toxic site that used to be an oil refinery, known as Vacuum Oil. Later it was taken over by Exxon which abandoned it in 1926. (See the links below for more history).

The City of Rochester wants to redevelop PLEX water front property and has applied for the NY State (BOA) Brownfield Opportunity Area Grant program to clean up contaminated properties. This area has great potential because of the beauty of the river, tree-lined banks, and peaceful walking/biking trails. At the brownfield site, there is toxic oil as deep as 15 feet in some areas, down to bedrock. The community wants properties cleaned up to the highest level but the current proposal, no surprise, is for the lowest level defined by the State. PLEX deserves a prominent role in the plan-

ning of the future development. The developer, City, and State should ensure that PLEX residents have a voice. PLEX wants to keep green space, trails, and community access to the river. Community members want to be trained and hired for jobs building the development, and see stores supporting the community, and some space designed for social gathering. The Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club has joined PLEX as an ally in getting their fair share in this project. You can help us by supporting PLEX. We invite you to come to a PLEX Neighborhood Association meeting and urge you to write to the City and State urging the highest cleanup for this site. Please review the links below to find out how to submit your comments and learn more about this issue.

**[See Photo from PLEX river bank on page 6](#)**

**VAC OIL BOA Implementation comment on link below:**

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/4yd15j7hr4zlrpk/VAC%20OIL%20BOA\\_Implementation%20Strategy%20Document%20and%20GEIS\\_09.27.17%20%281%29.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/4yd15j7hr4zlrpk/VAC%20OIL%20BOA_Implementation%20Strategy%20Document%20and%20GEIS_09.27.17%20%281%29.pdf?dl=0)

**On Google, enter: The legacy of Vacuum Oil (Democrat and Chronicle)**

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## From The Chair— By Jessica Slaybaugh

### Resolutions For a Better Planet

As I write this article, it's the time of year when many of us begin to think about the long-standing tradition of making New Year's resolutions. Often, these are related to bettering ourselves (eat healthier, start exercising, save more money, etc.). I've made plenty of those types of resolutions myself (with varying degrees of success), but last year I decided to switch priorities and focus on resolutions to reduce my carbon footprint and fight for our planet. I'm doing the same thing this coming year. Here's what's on my list for 2018:

- 1. Use reusable containers for leftovers:** Last year, I resolved to bring my own containers with me to restaurants for leftovers, rather than using the containers offered by the restaurants (which almost always turn out to be Styrofoam). I put a bag of cheap plastic containers in my trunk, with the intention of using them whenever I wanted to bring food home. I'd say that I had about a 50% success rate with this, as I often found myself forgetting to bring the containers back out to the car after I'd washed them. I'm committing to being better about this in 2018.
- 2. Stop wasting food:** I find myself throwing away an embarrassing amount of food because I either forget about it or buy too much of it to eat quickly enough before it goes bad. I'm going to start putting a list on my fridge that shows me what's there and what date I should use it by. I'll also buy smaller amounts of food and, when that's not possible, freeze or give away things I know I won't be able to consume before they go bad. Freezing might mean a little work (whip up a batch of something, blanch veggies, etc.), but the effort is worth avoiding food waste.

- 3. Buy local and seasonal produce:** I live right next door to a Wegmans, so heading over there and buying fruits and vegetables that were grown thousands of miles away is really convenient. In 2018, I'll focus on buying the local produce at Abundance Food Co-Op and the many farmer's markets we have to choose from around here. Not only will this contribute toward reducing my carbon footprint, it will also allow me to support small, local businesses.
- 4. Don't drive when I don't have to:** I have two embarrassing confessions to make here: 1) I frequently drive to the Wegmans next door to me rather than walking there, and 2) I haven't ridden a bicycle in years. Both of those facts need to be remedied. I'll buy a bicycle, relearn how to ride (hopefully without humiliating or injuring myself in the process), and either walk or ride my bike to places when I don't have a valid reason for driving.

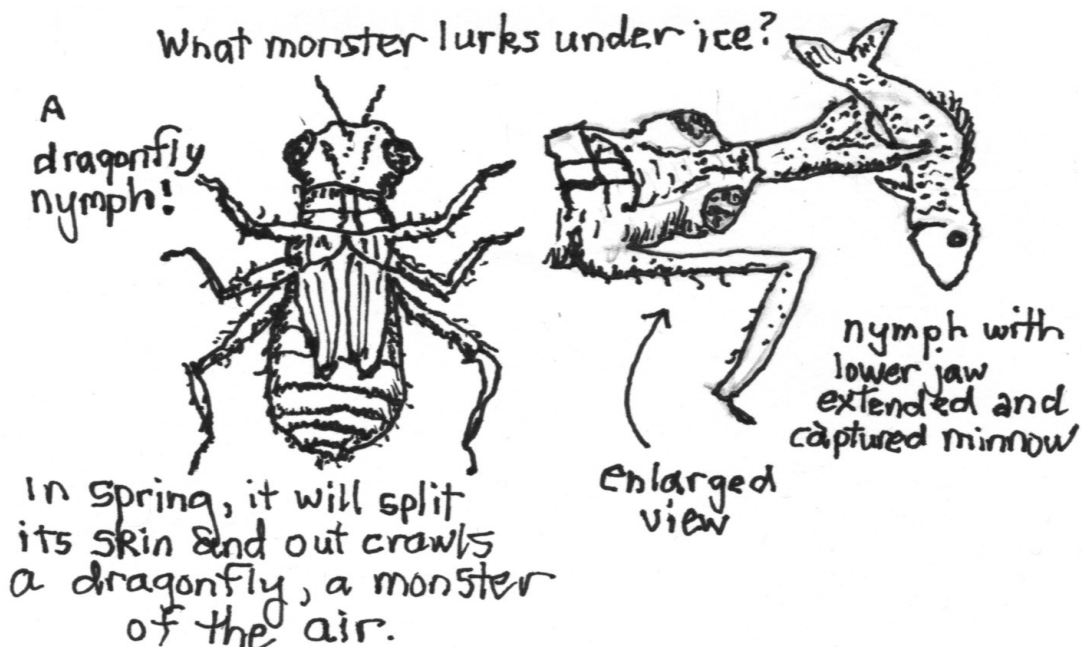
For the most part, these changes aren't too challenging. Sure, it will be tough to break old habits and they will require a little more time and effort, but if I'm not willing to make changes to help save our planet, how can I in good conscience ask others to?

That being said, I have a request. As you think about your resolutions for 2018, consider committing to making at least one change that will reduce your carbon footprint and/or fight for our planet's survival. We often find ourselves saying "How can one person make a difference?" but this is exactly how we do that. We each commit to making positive changes in our daily lives. Collectively, that can have a tremendous impact.

I wish all of you a happy and successful new year.

Jessica Slaybaugh, [Jessica.a.slaybaugh@gmail.com](mailto:Jessica.a.slaybaugh@gmail.com)

## Naturalist's Corner— By Peter Debes



# TEST YOUR ENERGY IQ, a quiz from RG&E

By using energy wisely, you can better manage your energy costs while maintaining the comfort of your home and help protect the environment. Test your energy IQ with the following quiz:

## What is your thermostat setting?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. In winter during the day if your setting is:<br>[ ] 68° or less, score 6 points<br>[ ] 69°, score 5 points<br>[ ] 70°, score 4 points<br>[ ] 71°, score 3 points<br>[ ] 72°, score 2 points<br>[ ] 73°, score 1 point<br>[ ] 74° or more, score 0 points | 2. On winter nights if your setting is:<br>[ ] 60° or less, score 10 points<br>[ ] 61°, score 9 points<br>[ ] 62°, score 8 points<br>[ ] 63°, score 7 points<br>[ ] 64°, score 6 points<br>[ ] 65°, score 5 points<br>[ ] 66° or more, score 0 points |
|---|---|

SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

## Is Your House Drafty?

To check drafts, hold a tissue where windows and doors meet their frames.

3. If the tissue doesn't move, there is no draft around your windows. Score 10 points.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_
4. If there is no draft around your doors, score 5 points.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you keep your fireplace or woodstove damper closed to block the air flow when it's not in use, score 6 points. (Score 6 points if you have no fireplace.)  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_
6. If you have storm windows or high-efficiency insulating windows, score 10 points.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_
7. If you have storm windows or a vestibule, score 5 points.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

## Is Your House Insulated?

8. If you have 6" or more in your attic, score 20 points. If you have 2 to 4" score 10 points.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_
9. If all exterior walls are insulated, score 10 points.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

## Is Your Floor Insulated?

10. If there is an unheated space under your house and your floor is insulated, score 10 points. If you have a heated basement and the basement walls are insulated, score 10 points.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

## Space And Water Heating

11. Depending on your heating system, score 6 points if your heating system was serviced since last winter or you regularly change filters on your forced air system, or you clean baseboard units on your baseboard heating system.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_
12. If the water heater temperature setting is 120° or lower, score 6 points. If above 120°, score 0 points.  
SCORE \_\_\_\_\_

**NOW ADD LINES 1 – 12 TO GET YOUR QUICK QUIZ TOTAL SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_

What Your Score Means

**84 or above:** Congratulations! You're making energy-wise decisions. To further control costs, look at the age and ENERGY STAR® rating of your appliances.

**70 to 83 points:** Review the areas where your score was lower and visit [www.rge.com](http://www.rge.com) (click on "Using Energy Wisely" under the "Usage and Safety" heading).

**69 or under:** There's room for improvement. Look at the quiz again. The areas you scored the fewest points may be the best places to start.



# First-Ever NY Climate Solutions Summit - Huge Success!

By Neely Kelley, Mothers Out Front and Linda Isaacson Fedele, Rochester People's Climate Coalition

Several co-sponsoring organizations came together to organize this informative, exciting event in Rochester in October. Co-sponsors were: The Harley School, Rochester People's Climate Coalition, Alliance for Clean Energy NY, New Yorkers for Clean Power, Mothers Out Front, NY-GEO, Frack Action and the Alliance for a Green Economy.

The summit accomplished its aim of building a larger movement across New York State prepared to act to implement effective climate solutions. It also provided an opportunity for new and experienced clean energy and climate organizers from across Central and Western NY to come together to share projects, case studies, resources, experiences, and skills.

By all measures, the summit achieved its goals and exceeded all expectations. More than 200 people attended from Buffalo, Rochester, Southern Tier, Finger Lakes, and the Capital Region.

Aaron Mair, former Executive Director of the Sierra Club, kicked off the summit with an impassioned talk: "Repeal and Replace the Dirty Energy Agenda."

*"The 'T-Rex Economy' and the 'pollutocracy' are threatening to destroy our democracy. The political fight for a just transition is our path forward," Mair said.*

Oren Lyons, Onondaga Nation, Turtle Clan Faithkeeper and internationally renowned advocate for the rights of indigenous people, addressed the crowd at lunchtime. *"Peace is not the absence of war, Peace is hard work," Lyons said.*

It was an amazing and inspiring day. Attendees shared their thoughts:

- *Congratulations on organizing an excellent conference! It was a stimulating and encouraging day. The keynote speakers and panelists were thoughtful and inspiring.*

- *I only wish I could have attended more workshops!*
- *Wow! [The workshops on...] intersection of race, justice, and climate were the most powerful!*
- *[The workshop on...] engaging across political ideologies, though not directly relevant to climate solutions, was terrific and incredibly important."*
- *"Fabulous programming. Congratulations and thank you to your wonderful planners and volunteers."*
- *"KUDOS ON THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS!!"*

Governor Cuomo has proposed one of the strongest mandates for renewables in the nation, calling for 50% renewable energy by 2030 ("50 by 30") and a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The state has also set ambitious goals for electric vehicles and EV infrastructure, calling for 30,000 EVs on the road in NY by 2018 and 1 million by 2025.



**Former Sierra Club Executive Director Aaron Mair gives opening Keynote, with ASL interpreter extraordinaire Christopher Coles**

The 2017 Climate Solutions Summit set us on a collective path to achieve these ambitious climate goals. **Sandra Steingraber**, acclaimed ecologist, author and leader of the successful anti-fracking movement in NYS was the Summit's closing keynote speaker. According to Sandra:

*"Implementing meaningful climate solutions requires two Herculean actions. We need to slam the door shut on further fossil fuel*

*build-out -- including gas-fired power plants and the pipelines, compressor stations, and storage depots that feed them — while, at the same time, throwing the door open to renewable energy technologies. And this commitment to innovation must be carried out with jobs and justice for all, which means we need to assemble not just solar panels but a powerful social movement. As the NY Climate Solutions Summit shows, New Yorkers are up for the task. Roll up your sleeves."*

# Hit the Trail: Put Your Best Boot Forward

By Jack Bradigan Spula

Quick, you hikers, XC skiers and snowshoers. Name a local trail system almost 1,000 miles long.

Stumped? Don't worry. Even some inveterate outdoor types know little about the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT).

If you've done any exploring in more-or-less local open spaces, public lands and famed tourist regions, you've probably experienced some part of this system without realizing it – or fathoming how big it is. The ca. 960-mile-long system is constructed around the "Main Trail," which runs from the New York-Pennsylvania border in Allegany State Park, about 125 miles southeast of Rochester, all the way to the Long Path in Ulster County in the Catskills.

Let's look at the system piece by piece, starting with the Main Trail, which runs about 580 miles and thus accounts for by far the largest piece of the system.

Now, you might ask: Since the road distance between Allegany Park and the trail's eastern terminus is only about 280 miles, how does the Main Trail manage to bulk up that much? Well, chalk it up to uncounted twists and turns on narrow pathways, and to the reliably hilly terrain – after all, this is the edge of the Appalachian Plateau. You'll be surprised at some of the climbing involved.

And speaking of ascents and descents: I'll swear up and down that some Main Trail sections afford scenery second to none in eastern North America. Letchworth's Genesee River gorge and parts of the Catskills are obvious in this regard. Likewise with some southern Finger Lakes high-elevation vistas, which are the stuff of fine wine labels.

But it's not just the big place-names. On a four-day summer hike I took with my son years ago, I was amazed by the beauty of lesser known trail sections, like one accessible just south of Cortland, where the FLT runs through Tuller Hill and Kennedy state forests.

The branch trails are not to be missed, either. Here are some near Rochester: the so-called Conservation Trail, which runs from skier-friendly Ellicottville (Cattaraugus County) north to Akron (Erie County) and then west to Niagara Falls; the Letchworth Branch, which runs the full length of the state park; and the Bristol Hills Branch, which runs north from the Main Branch near Bath, NY, up through Naples, ending in Ontario County Park.

The FLT system provides almost limitless opportunities for winter trekking or sauntering. Of course, in the climate change era, the trail can lack the snow-depth optimal for skiing or snowshoeing even in January at higher elevations. But when the snows of yesteryear arrive (I'm thinking back to the 1970s), the Trail will deliver for any level of skill and experience. Just check your topo maps, guidebooks, and so forth.

If there's a downer, it's that the FLT frequently has to cross or be located on roadways, which is necessary for connectivity on a somewhat developed landscape. And because the trails are often on private property, thanks to the generosity of landowners, there can be closures or detours. (Watch out during big-game seasons, especially.)

As with the Adirondack 46ers, the FLT has its own sets of recognized hyper-achievers, as well: "end-to-enders" who do the whole thing, sometimes including the branches. But I promise: Going even a few hundred yards on some sections can be mighty fulfilling.

For general trail information, maps, etc., go to [www.fltconference.org/trail/](http://www.fltconference.org/trail/). For an intro to the FLT in winter, go to <http://www.fltconference.org/trail/go-hiking/special-places/winter-flt/> and other FLT Conference pages.

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[Editor's note: The second link has gorgeous photos like this one, and a very inviting short article. It even made me think I should dust off my XC skis, and I haven't liked winter for years.]



Watkins Glen Falls from the trail—by M. Beckley

## **PLEX Community**— Continued from page 1

View of the Genesee River and Downtown Rochester from its bank



### **Join our revitalized Climate Change Committee, with Frank Regan**

New **Climate Change Committee** forming for the Rochester Sierra Club. Frank Regan (former chairperson, Transportation and Zero Waste creator/leader, and host of RochesterEnvironment.com for twenty years) is bringing together Sierra Club members who want to work on climate solutions that will help our region mitigate and adapt to climate change. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Frank at [FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com](mailto:FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com) with subject line "SC Climate Change Committee". We intend to be very active and work on addressing Climate Change on many fronts through efforts such as letters to the editor, enhancing social media effectiveness, coordinating with other groups and governmental authorities, petitioning, and starting our own initiatives. As soon as I get a number of responses, you will be contacted about where and when to meet as a group.

### **A MEANINGFUL WAY TO SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SIERRA CLUB GROUP**

#### **We need a TREASURER**

**The Treasurer manages funds for Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club: writes checks, makes deposits, forwards charitable contributions and requests charitable reimbursements from national group, maintains record of receipts and disbursements on Quicken and balances to bank statements, makes year-end reports to the Atlantic Chapter. Generally takes no more than a few hours a month. Mentoring available.**

**Are you the person for this vital job for your Sierra Club? Contact Jessica Slaybaugh, RRG Chair, at [jessica.a.slaybaugh@gmail.com](mailto:jessica.a.slaybaugh@gmail.com) or call 585-234-1056. We would love to have you with us.**

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BALLOT for Sierra RRG

Each year the Nominating Committee recommends candidates to serve a term of 2 years on the Executive Committee. Please cut out this ballot and mail by December 26th. Ballots will be counted at the first ExCom meeting in 2018.

\*\*\*Mail ballots to: **Elections—Sierra Club RRG, P.O. Box 10518, Rochester, NY 14610-0518**

Please vote for up to 6 candidates for the term 2018-2019. Members may vote for those nominated, or write in (a) candidate(s).

\_\_\_\_\_ Margie Campaigne  
\_\_\_\_\_ John Kastner  
\_\_\_\_\_ Jack B. Spula

----- CUT HERE -----

## ALL HANDS ON DECK FOR THE LOCAL PLANET by John Kastner

Last Columbus got lost day, I was sitting under a bower of dripping hemlock branches at the edge of a beaver pond. I watched patterns on the water change with shifts in wind speed and direction. I noted the animated reflections of reeds, grasses and the bones of sunken trees that poked up from below the surface. My mind, swirling with the usual chaos of civilized minutia, grew still and drifted with the mists into the orange and yellow woods on the opposite shore.

Were it not for the lawsuit that effectively killed fracking in New York, brought by the Sierra Club and Earth Justice on behalf of the town of Dresden, this pond might have been sucked dry or poisoned with spent fracking fluid. The Sierra Club still has important work to do on our own doorstep....supporting the city of Rochester in its commitment to renewable energy, resisting thoughtless development in city and town parks and open spaces, advocating for local design and control of renewable energy infrastructure, intelligent management of water resources, environmental education and building membership to resist the Trump agenda.

Our local group board, many of whom have been long serving, desperately need your help. Many of our members are well into their senior years and some have physical problems to deal with. Many, out of necessity, are doing much more than is healthy for them. We need a treasurer. We need people who can help with the

newsletter. We need workers and leaders on our committees...Great Lakes, conservation, climate change etc. we need an alternate delegate to the Sierra Atlantic Chapter in Albany (some travel required). We need people who can staff our information and membership table at local events, we need people with administrative, organizational and PR skills who can speak to the press and public officials. We need people who can show up at city and county meetings and demonstrations.



There are so many ways that modern life tears at our time and attention it's a wonder that we are not all raving lunatics. Yet, the very things that give us respite from the noise, clamor and pace of our frenetic society, indeed, the very things that sustain our lives will disappear without a strong commitment to preserve them. So much sweat and suffering by those who came before us made our lives easier and richer. It remains our responsibility to be worthy of their sacrifice by working to

make sure that those who come after us have the possibility of a decent future.

Please help by doing what you can for the planet, for future generations. Contact us by email from our website: <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/rochester...> or come to a board meeting held the first Tuesday of every month, 6:30 to 8:30 on the 6th floor of the Harro East building (west of the fire house at North and Andrews Streets, downtown). Call our warm line at (585) 234-1056 first so we know to expect you. Thank you.

**Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club**

**P.O. Box 10518**

**Rochester, NY 14610-0518**

Message line: 585-234-1056

www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/rochester; Find us on **Facebook** and **LinkedIn!**

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Jeff Debes, Atlantic Delegate and Webmaster:

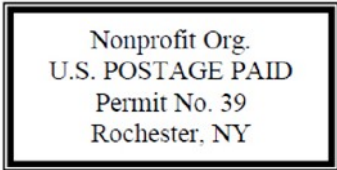
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| <b>Winter 2017-18 Calendar SIERRA CLUB and other environmental events</b> |             |                                |  |   |
|---|-------------|--------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>DATE</b>   | <b>DAY</b>  | <b>TIME</b>                    | <b>MEETING/EVENT</b>   | <b>LOCATION</b>   |
| December 5  | Tuesday     | 6:30-8:30 pm                   | Reimagine RTS: Learn how RTS could improve mass transit                      | Rochester Regional Joint Board Workers United<br>750 East Ave., Rochester 14607   |
| December 5  | Tuesday     | 6:30-8:30 pm                   | Executive Committee Meeting  | Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600  |
| December 5  | Tuesday     | 6:30-8:30 pm                   | Intro to Drawdown, Paul Hawken's 100 ways to REVERSE Climate Change          | Mercy Spirit. Center, 65 Highland Ave. <b>REGISTER</b> at <a href="https://connect@pachamama.org/en/node/522">https://connect@pachamama.org/en/node/522</a> |
| December 1, 2   | Fri. & Sat. | 5-9 pm, 10-4 pm                | Metro Justice Alternative Fair - gifts: local, fair trade, handmade, etc.    | First Unitarian Church, 220 S. Winton Road, 14610<br>\$5 donation, meals available, entertainment   |
| January 2   | Tuesday     | 6:30-8:30 pm                   | Executive Committee Meeting  | Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600  |
| January 10  | Wednesday   | TBA                            | Intro to Drawdown event by Color Brighton Green; details to follow           | TBA; more details - SueStar1@rochester.rr.com   |
| Nov.26 – May 6  | Sundays     | 1-4 pm                         | Brighton Farmers Market INDOORS  | Brookside Center, 220 Idlewood Rd, Brighton 14618   |
| All year  | Every day   | M-F 8am-9pm<br>Sat-Sun 9am-8pm | Abundance Coop Food Market: local, organic, sustainable food, open to public | 571 South Ave., Rochester, NY in South Wedge<br>(585) 454-2667 <a href="http://www.Abundance.coop">www.Abundance.coop</a>                                   |
| February 6  | Tuesday     | 6:30-8:30pm                    | Executive Committee Meeting  | Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600  |

**\*\*\*Watch our Facebook page and website for information on upcoming community meetings & other activities\*\*\***

*All Committees are local volunteer groups of the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club.*

Follow us on Facebook to keep up-to-date on new events throughout the year—[www.facebook.com/SierraROC](http://www.facebook.com/SierraROC)

Executive Committee meetings are open to Sierra Club members. All other meetings are open to everyone.

**The Eco-Logue is printed on 100% recycled paper with green plant-based toner.**

