



## UPDATE ON COBBS HILL PARK APARTMENT PROPOSAL

By Hugh Mitchell, Parks and Land Use Committee Chair

# ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP—Explore, enjoy and protect the planet SIERRA CLUB ECOLOGUE

For the last 1½ years, Sierra Club has been working with the Coalition for Cobbs Hill Park to preserve the unobtrusive Cobbs Hill Village which contains 60 very low-rent units for Rochester’s limited income elderly. The 29-member Coalition includes neighborhood, social action and environmental groups and has developed considerable political power.

In May 2016 Rochester Management (RM) applied to the City for permission to construct 5 new middle and ‘market-rate’ buildings on the site. Their proposal would tear down the current one story “motel-style” units and replace them with ‘townhouse’ buildings. We defeated the original plan, but RM came back with a new proposal which calls for two and three story buildings on the 9.7-acre plot. The three story buildings would present a ‘wall-like appearance’ immediately next to Norris Drive and would ruin the viewscape of the surrounding park. In fact, Roger Brown, head of the Community Design Center, recently commented on the whole project, saying, “The mass and scale of the proposed buildings is a critical and important issue.” The City Planning Commission agrees.

The Coalition has two main two objections to the project: first, the dense new apartment complex doesn’t fit in the park; second, the proposal doubles and triples the rent for the new apartments and will make them unaffordable in the future for the lowest income elderly. As has been frequently pointed out, the property was originally taken from Cobbs Hill Park due to the WWII war emergency, and then the park area was deeded for elderly use only on a time limited basis. The current contract for housing use expires in 2041, at which time the City may reclaim use of the land. We hope that

23 years from now the land can be returned to park use. Despite the very strong opposition to tearing down the original one-story units (which architectural review shows are still viable) Rochester Management has pushed their application ahead to reach the first key decision point. On January 8<sup>th</sup> the City Planning Commission reviewed the application and had a number of questions. They decided to send it back to Rochester Management to get answers to 12 questions about the project. It was clear from their comments that a key concern was the “wall” of buildings facing the Park which obviously would dominate and overwhelm the park viewscape.



Rochester Management claims the opposition to their project has cost them over \$2 million dollars. It looks likely at this point that the City will not accept the dense, large scale, current plan, but we don’t know how much more money the ‘not-for-profit’ organization will be willing to gamble on revisions. After all, City Council still has to vote. What is clear from this 1½ year dispute is that Rochester Management is badly out of touch with how much Rochester citizens love Cobbs Hill Park will work to defend, preserve and possibly have the lost acres returned.

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I'd like to look back at the topic of our 2017 Environmental Forum, intersectionality and environmental justice, because it is featured throughout this newsletter.

Intersectionality states that social categories such as class, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender, religion, and other aspects of peoples' identity are complexly interwoven, interacting on many levels. It states that we must acknowledge and understand these interrelated identities when addressing issues such as systemic injustice and social inequality because, just as identities are interrelated, so are the various forms of bigotry, such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, xenophobia, etc. Proposed solutions to problems, such as actions taken or laws passed, often fail to achieve objectives because they are only addressing one aspect of oppression.

To successfully combat climate change, we must focus on climate justice, which expands how we address climate change beyond a purely environmental issue, considering inequalities and discrimination and acknowledging the fact that climate issues have historically been a greater burden on people of color, people living in poverty, and other communities that struggle to make their voices heard. It is critical that we look at climate justice through the lens of intersectionality. Climate justice and migrant rights activist Henia Belalia explained this better than I ever could:

*"In the climate justice movement, an analysis of intersectionality helps explain why we cannot simply fight for a greener, cleaner version of this current system by reducing emissions, stopping deforestation and shifting to renewable energies like wind and solar. The collapse of our ecosystems and disasters like hurricanes and oil spills have always impacted certain people more than others. Usually, it's also those very communities who have less access to resources — such as reliable housing — that would help them survive the economic devastation that comes with ecological collapse. (...)*

*We must remember: Intersectionality isn't only structural. It is also personal. Most of us carry within us overlapping layers of privilege and oppression...Glossing over these very real distinctions ends up allowing*

*historical oppressions to continue to play out unchallenged, minimizing, silencing and erasing certain voices. ...It's also about understanding our own identities, where we benefit from the system and where we don't — and taking responsibility for our layers of privilege in how we move about the world. It's about established organizations being watchful of the inequalities they perpetuate, especially in terms of access to resources and to the job market within the non-profit complex. Through all of this, we have to commit to working slowly in spite of the urgency of our crises, and to holding ourselves accountable when destructive dynamics arise."*

Excerpt from "Intersectionality isn't just a win-win; it's the only way out", Waging Nonviolence, May 27, 2014. <https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/intersectionality-isnt-just-win-win-way/>

How does this topic tie into this issue of the *Ecologue*? Read "Update on Cobbs Hill Park Apartment Proposal." The residents of the apartments in question are elderly people on a limited income, and aside from the environmental impact the current proposal would have, it would also raise the rent to such a degree that living there would no longer be an option for people in the socio-economic class of the current residents. Also read "PLEX Neighborhood Association Brownfield Update". This is shaping up to be a success story about a neighborhood where the population predominantly consists of people of color and/or low-income individuals who have been living next to a brownfield (a former industrial site whose redevelopment is hindered by environmental contamination) for decades. And finally, read "The Price of an Education and Racism," which provides an eye-opening example of the long-lasting impact of racism and oppression, and the importance of playing a part in ending it.

The Rochester Regional Group has dedicated itself to placing more focus on environmental justice and intersectionality, and we will share our activities and progress in future issues of the *Ecologue*. If you would like to participate in these efforts, or if you have suggestions, please reach out to me or any other member of the executive committee. Jessica.a.slaybaugh@gmail.com

## PLEX Neighborhood Association Brownfield Update By Dorian Hall

The Plymouth Exchange Neighborhood Association push for a Level One cleanup of the Vacuum Oil Brownfield continues. Our PLEX strategy is to build a coalition of like-minded organizations and inform the public about their contaminated neighborhood land. They held open format (Google type) meetings to brainstorm about ideas to persuade DHD Ventures, The City of Rochester, and NY State DEC to pursue the best possible cleanup. The committee came up with three tools to gain support from people.

1. Nature walk with Peter Debes from The Sierra Club, discussing plants, trees and natural gifts the Genesee River has to offer in hopes of gaining support from people who care about land.
2. Press Conference to inform the public about The Vacuum Oil Brownfield Opportunity Area Contamination, BCP Brownfield Cleanup Plan Players, and gain more support nationwide.
3. News Letter Email Blast with information about DGEIS Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement and how to submit supporting comments using our PLEXBROWNFIELD.ORG link

PLEX held their press conference January 18th at 4:30pm on the corner of Flint and Exchange streets intersection. There were many supporters which include members from Rochester Sierra Club chapter, Mothers Out Front, Show up for Racial Justice, Pachamama Alliance, ABC Streets NA, Many Neighbors Building Neighborhoods, and the Rochester People's Climate Coalition. TV stations WXXI, WROC Channel 8 and local newspapers D&C, City News, and Open Mic covered the story. This was a very successful first step for PLEX. They received over 100 comments and both City of Rochester and DHD Ventures have expressed interest in meeting. Their next steps are to meet with DHD Ventures and discuss development project cleanup proposal. PLEX Neighborhood Association says "Thank You to everyone who has helped by supporting their call for a level one cleanup of the VOBOA." (Continued on Page 3—Photo at Press Conference)



(Continued from Page 2)

Above—PLEX Brownfield Press Conference photo, Dorian Hall at the mic with several supporting groups represented

## The Price of an Education and Racism

By Lucienne Nicholson



The year is 1962. On a Caribbean island nation where 95% of the population is of African descent, a five-year-old girl is about to have her first real life encounter with racism. The little girl is me and the place is Haiti. I am this little girl in the little blue cotton eyelet dress with puffy short sleeves that end with white dainty lace and cute bobby socks with finishing lace at the ruffled edges. The dress is

made to measure, sewn by my godmother; she affixes two wide sturdy sashes at the left and right side of my little blue dress which came to rest in one big bow, in the middle, then expands from side to side across my small back, covering most of my little pint-size body, looking like angel wings.

My very short hair is plotted in four precise parts designed to create order and harmony. Crisp, straight, and curved lines cover my tiny skull, simulating a beautiful brown and black topographical map. White ribbons like streamers trailing in the wind, making up for the rather stunt pig tails, at both sides of my small head.

My very clean tiny brown hands, my tiny, tiny brown feet fitted in impressive little black patent leather shoes were no match for the long giant stride of the "Soeur or Mere" (Sister or Mother), as nuns of the Catholic Church are typically referred to in my country. And I

was expected to keep up with her as she is the woman who will decide if I would get a chance to start kindergarten in her school, I had the good idea to reach for her hand and willfully be carried in her drag. At the speed of striking thunder, "Soeur or Mere" or "Sister or Mother", mightily swatted my little hand and, with the precision only a repeated offender would have mastered, she plunged her long nails into my tiny upper arm as she, in a perfect crescendo, exhales these words, "Don't You Touch Me, You Dirty Little Black Child!"

This is the day I would learn about racial power. This is the day where I would also learn about systemic power, although I will not have come to study the full meaning and application therein until much later in life. The nun's action showed me the limitation of my parents' and my community elders' ability to protect me physically, emotionally, and to provide for me one of the most fundamental requirements for later success and autonomy in life, access to a good education.

The nun also taught me that I can be utterly reduced to simply the color of my skin and that my skin was not desirable, wanted, or respected. The nun also wanted to inscribe that even though my mother gave me a bath, scrubbed my small body, soaped my skin, had me in a brand-new dress, shoes, socks, panty, ribbons, shampooed and brushed, and combed my hair, all these efforts faded, overshadowed by the abomination of my Black skin. All she could see is "a dirty little black child."

So, friends, acquaintances, and observers, "If you are doing INCREMENTAL work to end this kind of violent oppression against the bodies of children like I once was; children like my children once were; and the adults that my children and I are today, please stop. And too, if you are making decisions that truly concern the eradication of racist oppression in your hallways, classrooms, town halls, board rooms, and playground too *and the oppressed are not overwhelmingly represented*, please stop. Stop because you are not taking us anywhere too far from where we are standing today.

Children are dying.

Parents are dying.

The innocents are incarcerated.

We are targeted while driving

Access to real education denied.

Early death from Super fund sites and Brown Fields is a real thing.

Early death from diseases, both physical and mental, tied to a form of stress directly connected to systemic oppression, is a real thing.

And I can go on, and on, and on, and then I will get sicker. So, I am stopping with the list.

Again, we don't have time for incremental work when lives continue to be at stake. Where there is a will, there is *always* a way. And I trust that when the will has reached a critical level, the way will be clearly visible and acted upon. Systems are made by powerful people to benefit some people. Those "some" people can disrupt and replace systems.

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Note: Lucienne recently served on our Sierra RRG Executive Committee

# Do We Play a Part in the Proliferation of Lyme Disease? By Tom Krahl

In the fall of 2013 I was shocked when I discovered a tick embedded in my upper thigh two days after a hike in Durand-Eastman Park. The thing was pretty well embedded so I went straight from work to the doctor to have it removed.

This particular tick turned out to be a dog tick, not the Blacklegged Tick, a.k.a. Deer Tick, which carries the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria which causes Lyme disease. The hallmark of Lyme infection is a bull's-eye rash around the site of the bite, although this rash does not always occur and the bull's-eye rash may be a symptom of something else. Lyme disease presents as a flu-like illness, with fever, chills, sweats, muscle aches, fatigue, nausea and joint pain, and affected an estimated 10,000 people in the U.S. in 2016. New England and the eastern mid-coast states have the highest incidence of Lyme, followed by Wisconsin and Minnesota. Early detection of Lyme is important, and it usually responds well to antibiotics, although symptoms may persist for more than 6 months in a small percent of those infected.

Human activity may play a role in the spread of Lyme disease. The primary vectors for the Blacklegged Tick are mice and voles. These small mammals become infected with the Lyme bacteria, which pass the infection on to tick nymphs, which in turn infect people. A study in the Netherlands found that the rate of *B. burgdorferi* infection among ticks in areas with high activity of small-mammal predators (foxes and stone martins) was only 10 to 20 percent the rate compared to areas in which the predators were actively hunted. Small mammal activity is lower in areas where there are more natural predators. Efforts to encourage the activity of alternate predators may help control tick populations. Cats, snakes, owls, and hawks will take mice and voles, and Guinea Hens and opossums will eat ticks.

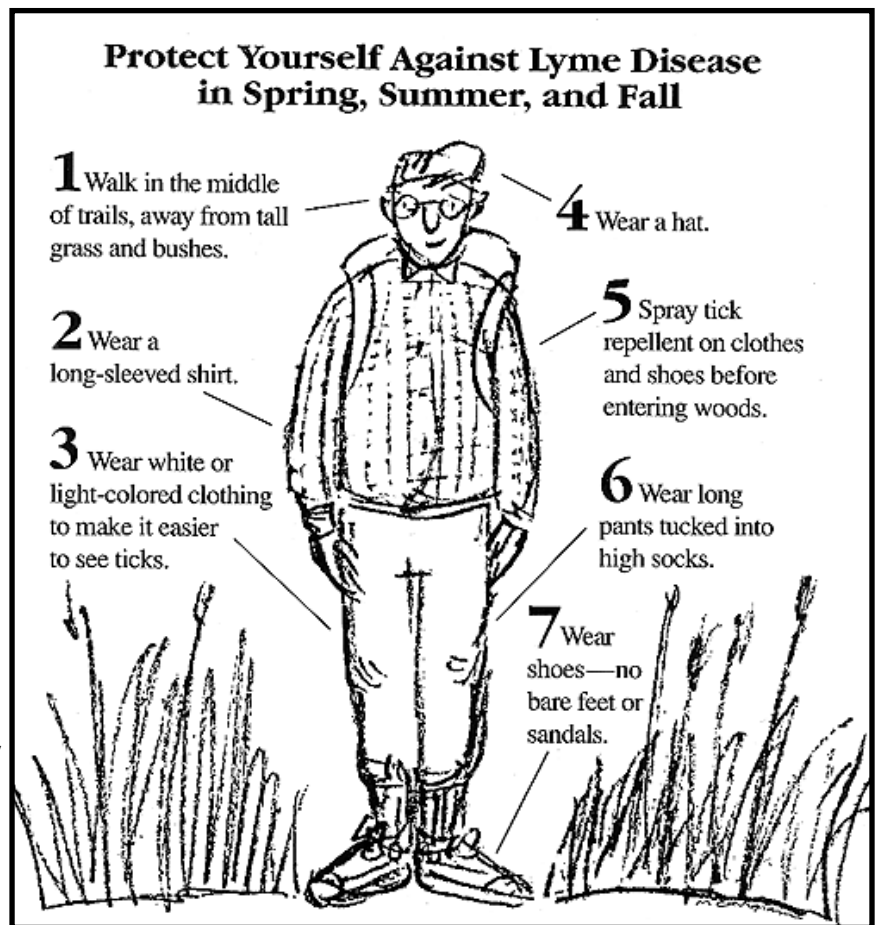
There is a Lyme vaccine available for dogs, however there is nothing on the market for humans at this time. SmithKline Beecham had a vaccine from 1998 to 2002 which was discontinued due to lack of demand. The vaccination regimen consisted of 3 injections over a period of 1 year, with an 80% success rate for adults. The success rate would have been somewhat higher for children.

Following inaccurate reports and lawsuits claiming that the vaccine caused arthritis, demand dropped from small to nil, and drug companies chose to pursue products for which there was a greater need and demand. Again, the vaccine did not cause arthritis. There is ongoing research at the CDC for an improved version of the vaccine but this has not yet resulted in a product on the market.

While we await the availability of a human Lyme vaccine there are a few tips to reduce our chances of picking up a tick and contracting Lyme.

- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter
- Walk in the center of trails
- Use repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET, picaridin or IR3535
- Use products that contain permethrin\*\*\* on clothing only
- Find and remove ticks from your body

If you should discover an unwelcome hitchhiker, there are tick identification charts hosted by the CDC, USDA and others which are very well done. It should be noted that in some areas of the country there are serious diseases transmitted by other tick species.



**\*\*\*Permethrin must be applied outdoors and allowed to dry thoroughly before wearing clothes sprayed. It must not under any circumstances be allowed on skin, eyes, etc.**

# CLEAR CUTTING ALONG THE ERIE CANAL

By Elizabeth Agte

On November 20th three strangers rebelled against a project in progress to clear cut trees along the banks of the Erie Canal. By December 2nd, Elizabeth Agte, Virginia Maier, and Jill Miller had created a movement. We started a Facebook page STOP the CANAL CLEAR CUT. Our attempts at communicating with the Canal Corporation were met with condescending letters repeating that they knew what they were doing, leave it to them. A drive out to Orleans County to photograph the cutting already done fueled our determination. Our research debunked their claim that removal of all trees is essential for safety. We called everyone we could think of for support. I called the Sierra Club, and my conversation with Jeff Debes was the first time that anyone listened to me.

Prior to our December 8th rally, my husband and I passed out fliers as we walked our dog along the Canal. The outrage and shock was unanimous. Our canal-side rally brought the major press outlets and the overwhelming support of our Town Supervisors from of Brighton, Pittsford and Perinton, but most importantly it brought citizens, lots of them. Our membership climbed rapidly with people eager to help.

In just ten days we had generated so much heat with phone calls and letters to Governor Cuomo, State Senators and the Canal Corporation that a town hall meeting held on December 18th was standing room only. A hastily arranged private meeting between the town supervisors and the Canal Corporation in Rich Funke's office that afternoon was the result of public pressure. Agreement was made to delay the start date of the cutting on the east side of the county, and to hold two public information meetings in January.

Ten days later Bill Smith, the Pittsford Town Supervisor, and John Callaghan, from the Canal Corporation, and I were on WXXI's Evan Dawson show. Evan was mystified why our little cause had resulted in jammed phone lines and piles of emails. Meanwhile, on our FB page, members were posting letters and responses. A standard response from the Canal Corporation was "The Governor has asked me to write you..." We were making waves.



*Dewitt, NY in Sept. 2015: Protesters carry signs near the Erie Canal Pathway in DeWitt. State Department of Transportation planned to start paving a 4.5 mile stretch of the canal path. Local runners and park users don't want the path paved.*

We formed a steering committee in preparation for the January meetings. We wanted maximum impact and that was going to be accomplished with

well researched questions, not anger and rage. The January 17th Perinton meeting showed them we had done our homework. By the next night in Pittsford, they had agreed to more concessions. As good as those concessions sounded, it was only a moratorium until the end of this winter's work season, not for next year.

We felt real and persistent grief for our westside neighbors, and on February 1st we held a meeting in Brockport to offer information and solidarity.

February 6th, the Town Supervisors, filed their lawsuit against the Canal Corporation citing lack of the required SEQRA, State Environmental Quality Review Act. This lawsuit halts all work until the courts have ruled.

Two days later I attended the Governor's talk in Rochester as a Sierra Club representative, when I was approached by his people, impressing upon me that the governor was concerned about this issue. Can we appeal to him to pressure the Canal Corporation to take a more measured approach to our beloved Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor?

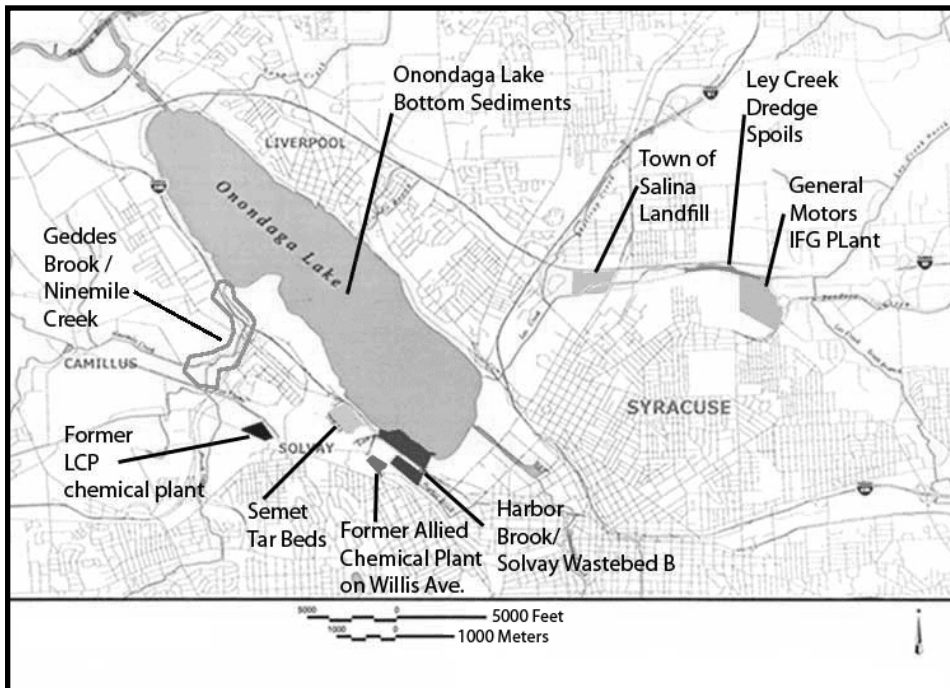
Stay tuned.

## IS THERE HOPE FOR THE PLANET? By Tom Krahl

Today we are dealing with global climate change, the most pervasive and damaging environmental crisis the planet has seen. When we think of the denial, the political opposition, and entities which profit from the status quo it seems that efforts to address the root of the problem are doomed. But this country has a history of creating environmental messes and then rising to the challenge of fixing them. Here are four examples of hard-won environmental successes for context.

Fifty years ago smog caused serious health problems. In the U.S. smog was formed largely from tailpipe emissions of motor vehicles. Following the **Clean Air**

**Act of 1970** pollution from motor vehicles has been reduced by 98%, and today smog is not an issue in this country. While early attempts to clean up exhaust gasses had some problems, eventually manufacturers developed technologies which were cleaner, more efficient and required less maintenance.



Recently Honeywell announced that work to clean up **Onondaga Lake** would be complete by the end of November 2017. Onondaga Lake had been described as the dirtiest lake in the country, polluted with mercury, PCBs, pesticides, raw sewage, heavy metals and fertilizer runoff. Since 1992 various initiatives have been made to stop sources of pollution and clean up the water and sediments. Today fish species not seen in the past century have returned and eagles are nesting in the area again, both signs that water quality has greatly improved.

In 1948 the pesticide **DDT** started to be used widely as a means to stem the spread of diseases such as malaria, typhus and dengue fever which are transmitted by insects. Within a decade DDT was also being used in the U.S. as an agricultural pesticide. By the 1960s the effects of DDT on peregrine falcon, eagle and California Condor populations were demonstrated, as were the correlations between DDT use and cancer in people. Following Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962, public awareness was raised about of the adverse effects of DDT, but it was not until 1973 that the EPA

banned most uses of the chemical. Today DDT is not used for agriculture and the damage to the environment has been reversed.

John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* dramatizes the **Dust Bowl** phenomenon of the American and Canadian prairies in the 1930s. Failure to practice dry land farming techniques combined with years of drought common in the affected areas produced extreme wind erosion of the topsoil and dust storms which deposited up to 3 feet of dust in places, reduced visibility to as little as 1 meter, and produced red snow in New England. Under F.D. Roosevelt the Civilian Conservation Corps

(CCC) planted 200 million trees from Canada to Texas to break the wind. The government also developed and promoted improved farming methods including crop rotation, contour plowing, strip farming, and terracing to reduce the negative effects of farming in this region. Again, a natural disaster caused by man was addressed and remedied.

The pattern in addressing environmental messes has been (1) we make the

mess, (2) we deny that we made it, (3) we do the science and discover the root causes and (4) we put limits on the pollutant or activity causing the problem. A critical point in this process is the commitment of the government to fund, educate, legislate and enforce the process needed to fix the problem. As we know, at this time the government is not in agreement with the majority of Americans, or with other countries on the issue of climate change. We need to take lessons from past successes.

- Be vocal: let your representatives know this is an important problem that has to be dealt with.
- Demand accountability from government.
- Be persistent and positive.
- Be responsible for our own part of this in our lives - what we eat, what we drive, what we buy.

"If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. We need not wait to see what others do." - Gandhi



## New Year, New You! - Wasting Less in 2018

As we start the New Year, we welcome our New Year's resolutions ranging from eating healthier to saving money to learning a new skill or hobby. This year, why not make a resolution to support waste reduction? Reducing your waste doesn't have to be an all or nothing goal. Try just one or two of these simple ideas to make changes that can help you keep a waste reduction lifestyle. Pledge to become a better recycler too!

### Think Reusables

- Pack environmentally friendly, **zero waste lunches** - use reusable containers for sandwiches and snacks, bring reusable cutlery and carry it all in a reusable lunch box rather than a single use plastic bag or container.
- Carry a **reusable water bottle** - not only will you reduce your waste, but you'll save money.
- Invest in **rechargeable batteries** and recycle them when they've reached the end of their useful life.

Use a **reusable coffee mug** - some stores give a discount for bringing your own mug.

### Purchases

- **Sharing is caring** - ask to borrow an item from family and friends before purchasing something new. Is there a local tool lending library in your area? Try to **repair** items before you replace them with newly purchased items. Explore repair cafes in your surrounding area.
- **Reduce packaging** waste - buy in bulk, look for items packaged in recyclable materials and avoid individually packaged and over-packaged goods.

Buy items made with **post-consumer recycled content material**. This helps to make sure what we put in our recycling bins gets turned into something new.

### Go Paperless

- Convert to **online billing** and save payment confirmations electronically.
- **Refrain from printing** emails or online material. Recycling paper is great, but it takes energy to recycle and produce new paper.
- **Cancel subscriptions** you no longer read or subscribe to the electronic version of your favorite news source.
- Remove your name from junk mail and catalog mailing lists.  
*Opt Out* of receiving a phone book.



### Food Waste

- **Reduce food waste** - plan your meals, serve leftovers or incorporate them in a new recipe.

Learn more about *product dating* and common misconceptions - What is the difference between *best if used by* vs. *sell by* vs. *use by*?

Learn how to *store* your food for prolonged freshness and a longer shelf life.

- Bring a reusable container for your restaurant leftovers.

**Compost** your food scraps in your backyard compost pile or contact local hauler to see what services are available.

changes that  
can help you

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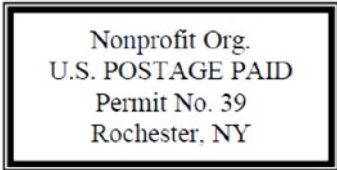
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<b>Spring 2018 Calendar</b>			<b>SIERRA CLUB and other environmental events</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	<b>DAY</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>MEETING/EVENT</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
March 4	Sunday	1:30 pm	"Merchants of Doubt" FREE screening	1010 East Ave., next to Asbury United Methodist
March 6	Tuesday	6:30-8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Suite 600
March 24	Saturday	8:30 am - 4:30 pm	5th Annual Genesee River Basin Summit	Port of Rochester, 1000 North River Street ***SEE Eventbrite.com to REGISTER***
March/April/May	Any	Many	See www.RochesterEnvironment.com	Find details of many more events on this calendar
April 3	Tuesday	6:30-8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Suite 600
April 22	Sunday	Earth Day; TBA	Rochester People's Climate Coalition	Events in Downtown Rochester TBA
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 Sat-Sun 9am-8pm	Abundance Coop Food Market: local, organic, sustainable food, open to public	571 South Ave., Rochester, NY in South Wedge (585) 454-2667 www.Abundance.coop
May 1	Tuesday	6:30-8:30pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Suite 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

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

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