



## **MUSINGS AFTER ELECTION DAY**

By Jack Bradigan Spula JBSpula@gmail.com

**Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet** 

After this past Election Day, when I take my daily constitutional in Highland Park I hear the whispering pines as a cosmic *Whew*! Finally, a turnaround. Definitely looking up. Maybe a revolution. (I can hope!)

Sure, the pandemic rages, and social and racial injustices are still entrenched. But sane, if not ideal, national policies to address the climate crisis and mass extinctions, develop safe alternatives to fossil fuels, cut pollution of all types, build more environmentally-friendly transport systems, etc., seem a lot more achievable than they did during the now-ending Four Years' War on the earth.

Many Americans are welcoming the Biden-Harris

climate-action plan as the most ambitious ever put on the table. Biden has at times said nice things about the Green New Deal, but at other times has said he won't support it, and he's spelled out a somewhat weaker alternative plan. But architects of the



true-blue GND like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez endorsed the ticket and actively campaigned for the candidates. So the climate-justice movement will have a proverbial seat at the big table, at least for a while.

Even with its limitations and ambiguities, Biden's stated plans do represent a great leap forward. But the country was already a mile behind, so the leap only puts us back at square one. Biden has put an emphasis on the environment, and his pledge to immediately rejoin the Paris Accord is heartening, but his reluctance to lead with a forceful GND might mean we'll see little more than baby steps. And who knows what will happen in the 2022 midterm elections? If history is a guide, these elections, preceded by the usual public disillusionment and frustration with a new regime, could help the opposition take both houses of Congress. The Democratic Party, which likely will stay the minority in the US Senate anyway, already lost House seats this year and could be on track to become the 2023-24 minority there, too.

So there's no time for complacency — but when was there ever? Environmentalists have traversed hills and valleys of elation and dejection before, and they'll do it again. And we've got more spirit and muscle than ever, with our organizations buoyed by young activists who won't take no for an answer. The US environmental movement, which is growing more globally-aware and diverse, will never again look on passively as Congress does its thing. (There I go, hoping again!) Indeed, there are signs of a positive shift in movement strategy and tactics -starting with rhetoric (and hopefully not ending there). For example, the national Club's post-election statement sounds encouragingly like a manifesto; it acknowledges we suffer from a plague of "systemic racism" and looks toward "resisting fascism in all of its forms," while deploring the fact that "over 68 million [at last count, ~73m] people still voted for a white supremacist."

> Yes, much of the language, though positive, is pretty standard. The Biden-Harris victory follows "four years of pain and destruction" and clearly "is a win for our democracy, our climate, and a first step toward repairing the damage." Also, we're "committed to fighting for a livable planet, safe communities and a

democracy [of, by and for] the people." But the seeds of a radical movement -- anti-racist, multi-racial, projustice, egalitarian, multidisciplinary and thoroughly intersectional -- are obviously there to cultivate.

When it comes to building a local movement for true environmental justice, the Rochester Regional Group has only begun its work. But it seems that recent electoral victories at both the state and federal levels – achieved in large part because of the grassroots energy generated by Black Lives Matter, Indigenous Rights struggles, the Women's Movement, and so forth – signal more good news ahead.

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#### FROM THE CHAIR: We miss you, and we need your help Jessica A. Slaybaugh Jessica.A.Slaybaugh@gmail.com

To say that 2020 has been a trying year would be an understatement. Most of us have struggled, many of us have experienced loss, and I doubt that any of us ever thought we'd have to live in a world like this.

I know that this is certainly true for the Rochester Regional Group. We've never gone so long without connecting face-to-face with our members and community. Our annual forum and all of the events we traditionally have a table at were canceled. I am very thankful that we were finally able to engage with you (with masks on and socially distanced) at our tree planting event in October (see p. 4). But even that didn't make up for the time together that we lost – nothing could.

Interacting with and educating our community is the number one reason why we host and attend events, and is also what we've missed the most. Second to that is the opportunity that these events provide for us to raise funds. These funds are vital to the work we do.

As a solely volunteer-based group, every dollar we raise goes toward education and our efforts to combat climate change, environmental justice, and more. *Donations also go toward publication of the Ecologue, and the bank account that we typically rely on to fund the Ecologue is almost depleted.* The bank account that we rely on for our other work isn't faring much better.

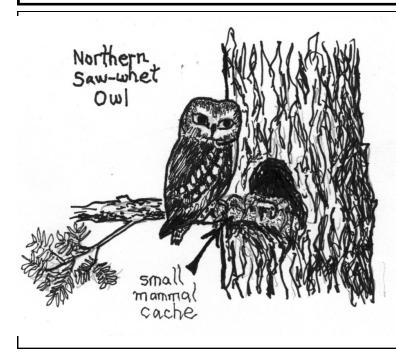
There's so much we want and need to do in 2021. While our causes have achieved a major victory via the recent presidential election, we have a lot of work ahead of us. The damage that the Trump administration has done through dismantling environmental regulations, empowering white supremacy, and sowing division is unprecedented. Our work is more important than ever, and while it's a step in the right direction, the Biden administration alone cannot repair all of the damage

that has been done. Much of the work lands on the shoulders of US citizens.

The Rochester Regional Group is committed to participating in these efforts to repair this damage, but we can't do it without funds. This has been a difficult year for many of us economically, so if you don't have anything to give, we understand. But if you can spare even a few dollars, it would be so appreciated. To donate, please send checks payable to the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club at PO Box 10518, Rochester, NY 14610-0518. If you want your donation to go toward publication of the *Ecologue* – please write "Ecologue" in the memo section. *You can also order a tote bag!* Thank you for your consideration, and thank you especially for being members and caring so passionately for our planet.

We still have a half dozen of these 100% cotton Made in USA tote bags! Just \$25 + \$8 shipping. Send check to the address above, and make sure to indicate shipping address.

Naturalist's Corner by Peter Debes Peter8245Debes@gmail.com Northern Saw-Whet Owl



Meet our smallest owl, the Northern Saw-Whet Owl, found only in North America. It prefers coniferous forests or mixed forest. They make an alarm call that is similar to the sound of a knife on a whetstone- hence its name. Though they migrate south in winter, many remain in freezing areas. Only recently has it been learned that they can stash frozen prey (small mammals) and then thaw them when prey is scarce by "incubating" carcasses as if they were eggs. Check with local birders on how to see these endearing creatures at arm's length in the Spring, near Braddock Bay, as they migrate back north. Oh, and an afterthought - warmer winters may now "spoil" the meat these owls stashed in the "freezer" making it more difficult to survive!

#### The Washington Grove Forest Welcomes You

By Peter Debes

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In 2008 the Sierra Club helped fund an initiative by me and other community leaders to develop a plan to ensure this marvelous old-growth forest would be preserved for future generations. This forest is a gem to be proud of. Trees that were growing here when the area was part of the Haudenosaunee-Seneca homeland still stand. Since 2008, that community group has evolved and incorporated and is known as The Friends of Washington Grove. The Friends of Washington Grove are recognized by the City as official stewards for helping to maintain the Grove to reflect what the original forests of our area were like.

Over more than a decade, The Friends have organized volunteers to remove invasive species, plant native species to maintain the original diversity in the forest, educate people about the Grove and its importance, and maintain and upgrade trails to accommodate increasing use of the Grove. They are working with the city on new signage for all the major entries that they anticipate will be installed in the spring of 2021.

In the past three years, the Friends recognized the need to improve the main entrance to the Grove on Nunda Blvd. They embarked on an extensive project involving developing a design, getting approval for the design from the City and community, architectural planning, fund raising and finally construction. This new Nunda entrance is now complete. Please visit the Grove and enjoy the benefits of immersing yourself in nature right here in the City.

We invite you to take a walk and see the impressive outcomes of this project, an entry befitting such a beautiful forest. The boulders at the entrance reflect the glacial history that formed the terrain, and the design mimics the original 1937 post and lintel design. A winding trail invites you to go up sturdy steps of historic red Medina sandstone that were once City street curbstones. The Sierra Club thanks The Friends of Washington Grove for all the time they invested in bringing this project to completion and particularly for raising the substantial funds that made this project possible. **[Photo of new entrance below]** 

## 2020 Forum Postponement

Last April, the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club working with people of color who are leaders in our community had developed a ground breaking program for our annual Environmental Forum. Our presenters are, Rev. Dr. Johnathan McReynolds of the Aenon Baptist Church, Kim Smith of the Rochester Peoples' Climate Coalition, Terry Chaka of the Baobab Center, Ron Garrow, Haudenosaunee Mohawk, Dorian Hall of the PLEX Neighbor hood Association and Peter Debes, of the Rochester Sierra Club. You can hear a podcast about the program on the Evan Dawson Connections program on April 16 (go to the WXXI website}.

We had to postpone the Forum due to COVID last Spring and hoped to hold it in the Fall. Since public gatherings are still too risky, and there is



much confusion in the country about the election, we have decided to further postpone our program until next year, possibly until Earth Day on April 22. We will notify everyone of the new date of the program as soon as it is secure. The mission statement for the Forum acknowledges the following:

Climate change worsens all injustices. It directly impacts the health, environment, and economics of our communities. Throughout 2020, we are committed to establishing an

committed to establishing an inclusive and comprehensive movement that educates, responds and benefits all.

With COVID, the reality of the disparate impact a health crisis like this has on people of color is being well documented and emphasizes the importance of addressing environmental justice when preparing for the effects of climate change.



### **ONE THOUSAND TREES**

By John Kastner

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After nearly a year of planning, the generous support of Sponsors and club members and the help of our consultants, suppliers and volunteers, our Cool the Planet tree giveaway at Seneca and Genesee Valley Parks on October 24th was a total success. Thanks to the promotional efforts of our vice chair, Peter Debes and Climate Solutions Accelerator media person, Evan Lowenstein, both sites enjoyed a steady stream of drive through visitors during the five-hour event. Over a thousand trees were given away and the Club collected almost \$600 in donations, helping to offset the \$3000 cost of the event. Additionally, seventy leftover trees were planted on property owned finally fall nicely in place to produce a perfectly successful outcome. Ellen Banks, from the Atlantic Chapter, was so impressed that next year she is going to organize a similar event for her home group, Niagara, our neighbor to the west. I am hopeful that Atlantic will encourage all groups in the Chapter to try this kind of event in their areas. With your help, we, here at the Rochester Regional Group, intend to repeat this success with an even larger goal next year.

For now, we'd like to thank everyone involved in this year's success starting with our sponsors: Climate Solutions Accelerator( formerly Rochester People's Climate Coalition), Dr. Jenny Servo, Dr.

and managed by The Genesee Land Trust. A pair

of disasters nearly squashed the project. The Covid pandemic swung its grim scythe taking many lives and changing the rest. The National Sierra Club responded by ordering all Club meetings and activities cancelled.



Meetings went online and all events had to be redesigned to mitigate health risks, submitted to national for approval or abandoned. Originally intended as a family tree planting event at Genesee Valley Park, our project was transformed into a drive through tree giveaway. In my opinion, I think this was actually an improvement over the original plan. Planting trees on one's own property made the event more personal. Many thanks to our board president, Jessica Slaybaugh, who secured the necessary permission from National.

The second disaster was a little thing called climate change, which was the impetus behind this project in the first place. Anyone paying attention has noticed our winters arriving later and ending sooner. One week before the event, our tree supplier, Meadow View Tree Farm in Naples NY, notified us that they wouldn't be able to deliver our trees. There had not yet been the hard frost necessary to prepare the trees for harvest. Owner, Ben Lowe, said he would work with us to see what he could do. Walking his fields, he found a single species, not among the four we originally chose, that was ready to harvest. Instead of the red oak, red maple, tulip and white pine we ordered, we got a thousand plus of the less popular silver maple.

This episode underlines the importance of meeting the challenges of climate change. The unreliability of the weather is affecting far more than tree giveaways. In addition to the hugely destructive storms created by this man-made disaster, weather unpredictability also bedevils the efforts of farmers to provide our food and disrupts the natural cycles of many species of flora and fauna. Fortunately, for our narrow purposes, everything did Evan Kastner. The Genesee Land Trust. Irondequoit United Church of Christ, the board and members of the Rochester Regional Group, especially Joe Grinnan. Jessica Slaybaugh, Peter Debes, Jack Spula and Patrick Suter...our consultants: Gary Coplun, of the New York State DEC and Brian Liberti, city of Rochester forester, whose support, advice and enthusiasm contributed immensely and thanks to our volunteers: Ellen Henry, Brenda Campbell, Linda Isaacson Fedele, Laura Joslyn, Randy McDonald, Hugh Mitchell, Daryl Odhner, Cindy Adams, Josie Estill, Jeanne Grinnan, Cameron Glenn, Togzhan Seilkhanova and Leslie Delpopolo. Thanks also to Mark Quinn, director of Seneca Park, Gay Mills and Will Macaluso, from the Genesee Land Trust, RIT tree planters: Melissa Skyer, Jose

Nunez, Baguma Rushmeza, Prabjhot Singh, Joe and Karen Putz and Christina Nitche and Todd from Accelerated Mailings for their excellent and timely work on our poster and directional signs. Finally, thanks to Steve Orr for his most helpful article in the D & C and to Abundance Co-op Food Store for donating the bags for the trees. My sincere apologies to anyone I may have left out. You have my permission to pinch me if you can find my hiding place. Now, on to next year. Let's all work like our lives depend on it... because they do, and many other lives as well. [Photos courtesy of RIT student Dylan Baker]



## Eager - The Surprising Secret Life of Beavers

Book Review by Daryl Odhner

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I found this well-researched work by environmental journalist Ben Goldfarb to be not only interesting, but also offering a very promising message. Mr. Goldfarb describes the history of beaver-human relations from the earliest expeditions of European trappers into North America to the present day. Historically, European humans ruthlessly exploited beaver for their pelts nearly to extinction, leaving a drier, altered landscape. He writes "[Early white explorers] found a continent that not only teemed with beavers, but had been profoundly shaped by them," yet over more than two centuries, "a conquering army of white trappers and traders ...ravaged beavers in every stream and pond they encountered, leaving ruins in their wake."

While over the centuries the appetite for beaver pelts has significantly diminished, contemporarily, beavers have mostly been considered a nuisance to human landowners because of the creatures' land-altering ability. However, Mr. Goldfarb describes an emerging class of people, including land managers, wildlife experts, and property owners who have become "beaver believers"—people who have been convinced not only that beavers and humans can coexist, but that beavers can effect essential ecological benefits related to water conservation, nutrient management, and benefits to fish, and other mammals including even livestock.

We meet two consultants who help landowners with beaver problems, even in the more densely settled northeast. Both attempt to facilitate coexistence as a primary choice. They have perfected the use of flow devices and fencing that can in many cases successfully limit the depth of a rising beaver pond, or keep a culvert from being clogged, while allowing the beaver ponds to remain.

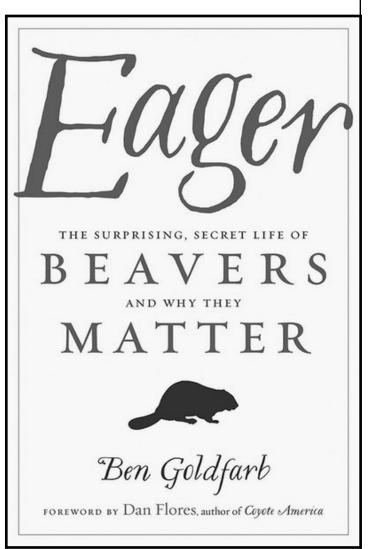
We meet a rancher turned beaver believer who says "[w]ater is a Nevada rancher's most important asset, and any force capable of capturing it and retaining it is a godsend." He describes himself as "one of the biggest advocates of the beaver."

And while many lay people and fishery biologists have believed the presence of beavers is deleterious to salmon, trout, and other fish, research shows otherwise. The author notes that prior to the subjugation of the continent, "North American streams were stacked with hundreds of millions more beaver dams than they are today—and yet our rivers so churned with fish that European colonists claimed 'they ran silver."

Re-introduction has not always been a slam-dunk, however. In Yellowstone, it turns out that without wolves, beaver don't flourish. This is because, in the absence of wolves, elk overgraze riparian areas, decimating vegetation that beaver require. Wolves not only predate elk, but also keep them on the move.

It's heartening to be presented with evidence for a principle many of us already hold, namely that humans need at least to learn to share this planet with other creatures, and optimally to develop respect and admiration for these others. It's also heartening to believe that reestablishing beaver—particularly in the arid west—may be another tool to conserve scarce water and defend against fire.

This book is an impressive contribution to our understanding of beavers and humans.



#### Meet the Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region

By Evan Lowenstein

The Climate Solutions Accelerator is a nonpartisan 501(c) (3) nonprofit dedicated to inspiring and facilitating a largescale climate mobilization in the nine-county\_Genesee-Finger Lakes Region. Its mission: to create a healthier, more equitable, and environmentally sustainable community by catalyzing local efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and address the effects of climate change. Founded in 2014 as the Rochester People's Climate Coalition, the organization rebranded in fall 2020.

Seventy organizations currently are members of the Accelerator, including the Sierra Club Rochester Regional Group. These member organizations support, participate in, and benefit from collaborative work for bold, rapid climate solutions. The Accelerator pursues its mission and vision through several strategic initiatives and programs:

Collective Impact Initiative: Building on its successful history as a collaborative organization, the Accelerator is now using the principles of Collective Impact to effectively organize key stakeholders in coordinated action to expedite our region's transition to a clean energy economy. The Accelerator is currently working to convene key decision-makers from a wide range of sectors (government, business, health, housing, transportation, and

agriculture, education, etc.) to develop a shared understanding of the threats and opportunities that climate change presents for our region and shared vision for how to reduce emissions to net-zero in a swift and equitable manner.

Color Your Community Green: Our municipalities--towns, villages, cities--possess a great deal of authority and autonomy in "home rule" New York, meaning that much of the climate progress needed in our region can only happen when municipalities take action. This is why the Accelerator is mobilizing climate action across the nine-county Genesee-Finger Lakes Region through the Color Your Community Green (CYCG) initiative. CYCG aims to connect and organize concerned individuals, by municipality or neighborhood, to form a network of climatefocused citizen action teams that will identify locallyrelevant, high-impact climate solutions and develop strategies to move those solutions forward.

Go All Electric: The Accelerator has spearheaded local efforts to promote beneficial electrification by bringing together prominent local institutions to collaboratively develop a Go All Electric campaign. Beneficial electrification is the use of cleanly-generated electricity to meet energy needs that would otherwise consume fossil fuels (e.g., natural gas, propane, oil, gasoline). For our region, this primarily means switching our heating systems to heat pumps and combustion engine vehicles to electric vehicles, because buildings and transportation combined are responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions. In our region, our electricity supply is already about 90% fossil -fuel free, coming primarily from nuclear and hydro power. By using this electricity to meet our home heating, transportation, and other energy needs, we have the opportunity to dramatically and rapidly reduce local greenhouse gas emissions, while also improving air quality and public health. As demand for electricity grows, we must meet this demand by increasing the production of

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Sustainable Homes Rochester/HeatSmart Monroe:

renewable energy from wind and solar.

Sustainable Homes Rochester and HeatSmart Monroe are New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)-supported clean heating and cooling

campaigns that educate, encourage, and incentivize home and building owners to install cleaner, greener heat pump heating/cooling systems. These campaigns actively promote and assist the transition from gas and oil heating systems to cleaner, greener high-efficiency electric heat releases more global warming emissions from buildings than any other state, but with the technology that currently exists, we can lessen

our carbon load and make our homes and buildings safer and more comfortable.

**Collaboration Team:** Climate change is a complex challenge that demands coordinated action. The Collaboration Team was established to build connections between and among the Accelerator's most directly climate -focused member organizations. Collaboration Team participants combine their strengths to channel energy towards strategic, impactful climate mobilization efforts.

Outreach, Education, Action and Advocacy: The Accelerator constantly communicates climate news and issues, science, and action/advocacy opportunities through its events and trainings, presentations, website and social media, electronic newsletter, and more. In addition to encouraging citizen and organizational action through its outreach, the Accelerator directly engages in action and advocacy at the local, regional, state, and national levels.

The Climate Solutions Accelerator's staff is mighty but small--so volunteer involvement is always needed, encouraged, and welcomed! Learn more about the Accelerator, its initiatives and programs, people, action and volunteer opportunities, climate science, and much more at www.climategfl.org, and through its social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube). Reach out anytime via hello@climategfl.org.



# 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 2020. 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 2020-2021. Members may vote for those nominated and/or write in (a) candidate(s).					
Jessica Slaybaugh	Joe Grinnan				
Peter Debes					
Jack B. Spula					
Daryl Odhner					
	CUT HERE				
Once again it's calendar time, your local Rochester Region breathtaking images of our beautiful planet and space for daily plann our bills. We depend on your generosity to get things done. Please so many and which kind of calendars you want to: Rochester Regiona P.O. Box 10518 Rochester, NY 146 They make great holiday gifts. Thank you for your continued support.	10-0518 can be hand-delivered, contact-free, at no charge. If outside the city, please				



Enjoy, explore, and protect the planet

2021 SIERRA CLUB CALENDARS		ORDER F	ORM	
	ITEM	COST	QTY	TOTAL
STERRA CLUB	Wilderness Calendar	□\$14.95		
	Engagement Calendar	□\$15.95		
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	"Sierra Club" and mail to the return address shown on your newsletter.		GRAND TOTAL:	
	SHIP TO:			
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	CityState	eZip		
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#### 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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\*The opinions expressed in the articles within are those of the authors and are not necessarily an official Sierra Club position or policy.\*

Winter 2020 Calendar DATE DAY TIME			SIERRA CLUB and other environmental events MEETING/EVENT LOCATION		
December 1st	Tuesday	6:30- 8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person	
January 5th	Tuesday	6:30—8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person	
February 2nd	Tuesday	6:30—8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person.	
All year	Every day	See Facebook for COVID hours	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	
Nov.29- Dec. 20	Sundays	10-11:30 a.m.	Brighton WINTER Farmers Market	Brighton High parking lot, 1150 S. Winton Rd. 14618 www.Brighton FarmersMarket.org	

# Watch our Facebook page and website for information on upcoming community meetings, outings & 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. The Ecologue is printed on 100% recycled paper with green plant-based toner by ACCELERATED MAILING

