



18th Annual Environmental Forum Agriculture and Climate Change: Formulating Sustainable Choices

by John Kastner

The executive committee of your Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club is pleased to announce the 2016 forum, *Agriculture and Climate Change: Formulating Sustainable Choices*, with keynote presenter Keegan Khun, co-creator of the film *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*. This film was selected as one of Netflix' top ten documentaries of 2015.

Virtually absent from mainstream discussions of climate change, agricultural greenhouse emissions exceed the total emissions of the transportation sector. We felt it was important to open more discussion on this topic and to show the public how their choices matter.

Preceding Mr. Kuhn's presentation will be farm worker advocate Carly Fox, who will interpret for some of her Hispanic clients as the describe conditions on some New York dairy farms. Ms. Fox will be followed by New York organic farmers Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens, speaking about their work with Cornell University on organic agricultural research and their experiences with their own 1,600 acre organic farm and grain business. See page 3 for more information on all of our speakers.

Following the three presentations, the floor will open for what promises to be a lively Q&A discussion. We hope that this will provide useful information about how we can address the challenges of climate change with personal choices and action.

In addition to filming *Cowspiracy*, Mr. Kuhn has done extensive work documenting the lives and problems of our less visible and downtrodden citizens in other films. Prior to his film work, Mr. Kuhn spent nine years helping to develop small scale organic farms in the United States and abroad. The Martens have been similarly engaged in promoting organic farming within and beyond our borders.

Mr. Kuhn is also a professional musician, living and performing in the San Francisco area.

We have a new venue for this year's forum, courtesy of the First Universalist Church. It is located downtown at the corner of South Clinton Avenue and Court Street, next to Xerox tower. It was cho-

sen for its proximity to public bus routes and for the convenience of inner-city and non-driving residents. We hope this choice will improve accessibility for all locals interested in learning about agriculture and climate change.

The church seats about 350, so come early to secure your place and peruse the vendors offering information on various environmental goods and services. There will also be opportunities for this after the presentations.

Parking is available at two city-operated garages, one on Woodbury Blvd. across from Geva and the other on Court Street next to the Bausch and Lomb building.

We hope you will join us and that you will enjoy the presentations and the presenters.

18th Annual Environmental Forum Agriculture and Climate Change: Formulating Sustainable Choices

with keynote speaker

Keegan Kuhn, award-winning
documentary filmmaker

and panelists

Klaas & Mary-Howell Martens,
organic farmers for over 20 years
Carly Fox, Worker Rights Advocate
for farmworkers in New York state

Thursday, April 21

6:00-9:00pm

Program begins at 6:30

**First Universalist Church
150 South Clinton Ave.
Rochester, NY 14604**

Free and open to the public



From the Chair: About Hopefulness

Most everyone I have met (and I too), in the last two months has commented on what an easy winter we have had. I have to admit, though I love cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, I shiver when the thermometer drops below 30 and tire of scraping the car off and shoveling the walkways day after day. So as I think about climate change I try not to “enjoy” it too much because it seems to confirm my worst fears about how much we are affecting our planet. Some people have said that it is really due to El Niño. Since El Niño is due to the pooling of warm water in the Pacific that masses along the West coast of Central and South America, this year’s powerful effect to me seems linked also to climate change.

One of the hardest things for many people is trying to decide what they can do that will make a difference. We feel so miniscule in the big picture and our individual actions seem insignificant. For inspiration, I like to think back to another time when we were plagued with environmental problems that seemed gargantuan. Smog and air pollution in cities, contaminated and polluted drinking water, Lake Erie with large oxygen starved (dead) zones! There was a groundswell

of resistance and organizing in the 60’s and 70’s that swelled to millions of people, changed our vision, and resulted in an amazing period of new awareness and demand for change. The result was passage of a number of landmark laws that transformed our country and restored much of the environment. Here are a few: The clean Air Act-1963, the Wilderness Act-1964, the Water Quality Act (1965), the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act- 1968. Big changes start with little steps, and we are doing it again now. The most hopeful thing for me is to join a group which is already working to bring about change. Just being around other people do this helps me feel more empowered and hopeful.

Last year, your Rochester Regional Group brought world-famous scientist Dr. Jim Hansen here to educate us more about the reality and severity of climate change. What was not so obvious was what each of us can do to make a difference. This year, we are bringing a filmmaker to Rochester who has opened up the debate on how agriculture is contributing to climate change. We are bringing filmmaker Keegan Kuhn to Rochester and several other speakers to help us understand the relationships between how we conduct agriculture on a large scale



and our environment and climate. We are excited about this Forum because the information you gain will lead to immediate actions you and your friends and family can take that will start making a difference. See pages 1 and 3 on our 18th Annual Environmental Forum, Agriculture and Climate Change: Formulating Sustainable Choices.

AND...here’s something else you could do. Right now, our Executive Committee seeking people who want to organize actions and make a difference. We are a delightful group and dedicated volunteers. Please send us a message at SierraClub.Roc@gmail.com, or email me (see below) and we’ll invite you to our next meeting.

Peter Debes,
Chair
peter8245debes@gmail.com

Mothers Out Front Sponsoring Earth Week Climate March Thursday, April 21

Mothers Out Front Rochester is sponsoring an Earth Week Climate March Thursday, April 21, 5:00 - 6:00pm, starting and ending with a rally and music at Washington Square Park (at Clinton and Court Streets). Everyone is wanted; bring your own signs! Check Mothers Out Front Rochester, NY on Facebook to RSVP and see additional details. To help out, contact wendylow@rochester.rr.com and put “climate march” in the heading.

Join Us at Pick Up the Parks Ellison Park - South Side Saturday, April 23 - 9:00 - 12:00 PM

The Sierra Club will be working at Ellison Park, picking up trash and fallen branches to prepare the park for Spring activities. Coffee and donuts will be provided. It is a fun day outside ending with a very visible accomplishment. We will meet on the south side of Blossom Road - just look for Sierra Club signs at the bottom of the big hill on the right side of Blossom.

Registration is not required but is strongly recommended. Call 585-753-7281 or fill out a form at www2.monroecounty.gov/parks/pickuptheparks.

We hope to see you there!

18th Annual Environmental Forum: About Our Guests



Keegan Kuhn

Keegan Kuhn is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, co-director of the groundbreaking film *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*, and professional musician living in the east bay of San Francisco. Kuhn's films center around social justice issues that shed light on the most downtrodden in our society. Prior to filmmaking, Kuhn spent 9 years as an organic farm developer, designing and installing small scale organic production farms around the USA and abroad.

Klaas & Mary-Howell Martens

For over 20 years, Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens have farmed organic grain crops and livestock with their three children in Penn Yan, NY. They have been involved in numerous national organizations and advisory committees, including the Organic Farming Research Foundation's Board of Directors and the Farm Foundation Soil Renaissance (Klaas); the USDA Advisory Committee on 21st Century Agriculture and the Dean's Advisory Committee of the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Mary-Howell). They also have written numerous articles for Acres USA, New Farm, and other publications. Mary-Howell is in the office of Lakeview Organic Grain (Penn Yan, NY) every day, preparing rations, scheduling feed deliveries, maintaining accounts, paying bills, and generally being "mom." Klaas works on the farm every day but is often "on call" at Lakeview, advising and assisting with facility repair and upgrade and providing agronomic assistance to customers.



Carly Fox

New York State is the third largest dairy producing state in the country, and first in Greek Yogurt production. Over recent years, many dairy processing plants have opened in our region - increasing demand for milk. On dairy farms, those who milk, herd and take care of cows have shifted from a mostly white, North American workforce to mostly Mexican and Central American. This change in workforce demographics has led to increased labor exploitation in the industry.

Carly Fox is a Worker Rights Advocate with the Worker Justice Center of NY - a legal service organization that pursues justice for those denied human rights. As such, she has spent the last 4.5 years visiting hundreds of workers at farms across the state to share information about workers' rights, conduct trainings and providing opportunities for workers to become leaders for workplace justice and to fight for their rights as workers.

Farmworkers have always experienced some of the most egregious labor conditions - made worse by labor laws that exclude them from rights that workers in other industries enjoy such as a right to a day's rest, overtime pay or protection from retaliation when engaging in collective bargaining.

With the rapid increase in production in the dairy industry, combined with a trend towards hiring immigrant workers, the dairy industry became even more dangerous. Since 2006 there have been over 100 workplace fatalities on dairies. Despite the dairy industry being ranked one of the most dangerous occupations, OSHA does not have jurisdiction over 98% of New York's dairies because of the size of their workforce. In response to this health and safety crisis, Fox has begun to partner with worker centers to advocate for workers and to fight for systemic change to improve health and safety, end wage theft, and fight for workers' dignity and respect.

West Virginia and Its Environment
The Mine Wars: West Virginia's Coal Miners March on Public Television

by Bill Lewis

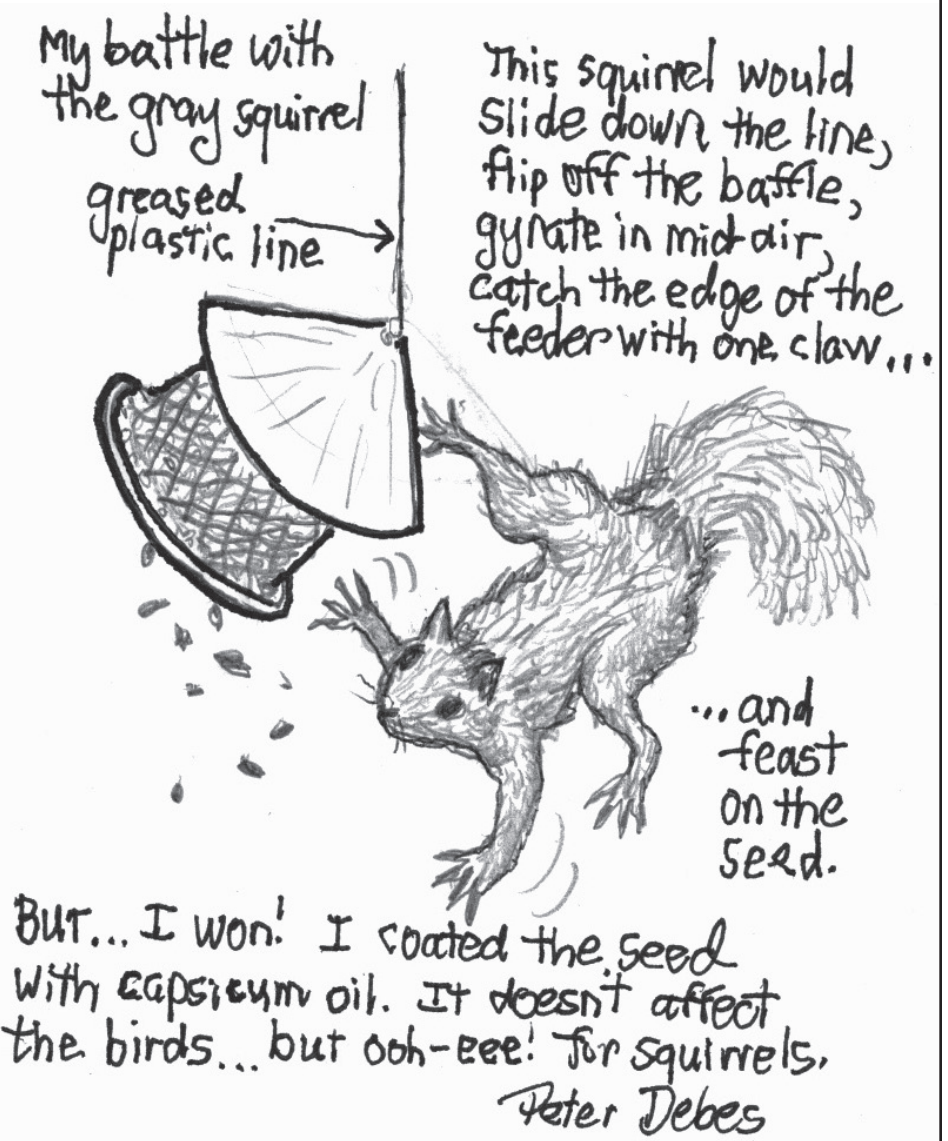
The documentary *The Mine Wars: West Virginia's Coal Miners March*, based in large part on James Green's book, *The Devil Is Here in These Hills*, chronicles the hurdles coal miners in southern West Virginia encountered from 1900, when Mary "Mother" Jones sought to organize the workers, to the early 1920s, when the coal miners went on an armed march to unionize Southern West Virginia.

Like Green's book, the film follows the life of Charles Francis "Frank" Keeney Jr., a West Virginia native and militant UMW leader, who was determined to try all means necessary to get coal operators to treat miners fairly.

Coal mining remains a dangerous occupation today, but it was enormously dangerous in the early 20th century when Keeney was working in the mines. On average, from 1905 through 1930, well over 2,000 U.S. miners would die every year. "Coal operators were very cavalier about accidents and what caused them," Giardina explains in the film. "The assumption was that mining is just inherently dangerous and that's just part of the job. You're lucky you have a job anyway. We're just going to go about business as usual."

"The West Virginia coal, and the men who mined it, were fueling the nation's enormous surge in wealth, and the demand remained strong in the early part of the century. Because many of the coal company investors lived in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia or London, the miners often resented the fact they were producing wealth for people who did not live in West Virginia. A lot of outside investors were coming into West

Naturalist's Corner
 by Peter Debes, Chair



Virginia, buying the land and natural resources and one of the major components of this is that they were pushing aside the old mountaineer families," Carnegie Mellon University history professor Joe William Trotter Jr. explains in the film.

While watching WXXI.2, World Events on Thursday night of January 28, 2016, this was a documentary about the coal mine and its operation in the state of West Virginia. This took place in the most Southern part of West Virginia, McDowell County and Mingo County. This was a depiction of conflict between the miners and the owners of the coal mine. All of the owners of the coal mine were

residents of different States and none from the state of West Virginia, so none of them lived where this coal was being extrapolated from the bowels of the earth.

This documentary became personal to me because I was born and raised in the very same community that this was taking place, McDowell County. I could and did relate to this documentary. As a matter of fact, my eight grade English teacher, Elis Ray Williams, was doing some of the documentary about the history of this event.

I was born in the Southern part of West Virginia, grew up there and attended school there. (contd. p. 5)

(continued from p. 4) My family and I moved to Rochester in 1970. I do have close friends that continue to live there, but not many of them because the overwhelming majority of us left the state to seek careers and opportunities.

Another thing that made this personal to me is that my father was a coal miner and he eventually died from Black Lung, which comes from coal dust covering the lungs and preventing you from breathing properly and eventually from not breathing at all. He was a very strong supporter of the union. Unfortunately he died in Rochester, New York. This documentary also gave me insight into many questions I had about the pollution of the air, the ground around and under us, and the water, including the Tug River, which flowed directly behind our house. I used to question the adults about the water being so clear when the mines were shut down for two weeks in the summer while the miners were on vacation. Immediately afterward, it all resorted back to the filth that we had to endure for the next 11 and a half months. This filth included the chemicals that were used to eradicate the weeds

and other growth that existed in the very community where we all lived.

Even though this documentary was about the conflict between mine owners and the employers it was also the environment, race relations, exploitations of the natural resources with cooperation and blessings of government workers, politicians and others with the power to support the mine owners.

Moving up to the 1940s through the 1960s there were concerns about the corruption that allowed the miners to continue to pollute the water and the air. Being an African American, we had to swim in the rivers for recreation because only whites were permitted to swim in the swimming pools. While swimming we often had to dodge waste (feces) floating over our heads. We would often say, "Duck, here comes a turd." We were too young and dumb to understand the consequences of our behavior or lack of behavior. Unfortunately, health was not an issue. If our parents caught us, punishment was on the way. They understood the health danger we were subjecting ourselves to.

The other reason I was enamored with this documentary was because it allow the outside world (outside of West Virginia) to get a glimpse of the pollution the miners are subjecting the rest of the world to. The current president of the United States has tried often to force the state to "clean up its act" more efficiently than the previous ones. They are also destroying the landscape by scraping the top of the mountains to extrapolate coal from the surface instead of digging down, which is a little more difficult but more beneficial to the earth and the environment. This has been a great bone of dissention with the current White House administration and other people interest in maintaining the quality of the environment.

This documentary means so much to me is because it is personal. To you, it will be educational. Given the opportunity to see it, you may enjoy it almost as much as I did. You will truly get insight into how corruption has been one of the major causes of companies getting the green light to illegally pollute the environment with impunity.

Generation at Risk: Unplugging Your Grandchildren and Connecting Them with Nature - May 21, July 16, and Sept 17, 2016

In a digitally focused world, children are losing valuable relationship connections. The Generation at Risk program will teach you the secrets of how to get your kids and grandkids away from their digital distractions by providing activities that: awaken all the senses; teach effective storytelling so you can share your wisdom and family heritage; and develop a routine that makes nature a part of their lives

The Generation at Risk program is spread over three separate day-long adventures that are focused on nature and connecting with family. These adventures will be offered during the three seasons of spring, summer and fall. On each day we will focus on awakening your past child so that you can share and connect with your kids and grandkids in a profound and lasting manner.

All the hard work is done by the program facilitators so that you and your grandchild can share in the bounty and beauty of nature together. Both generations will leave sharing common memories and stories of your time spent in nature having fun together and with a new understanding of each other.

Program: The day's events are organized around the four elements: Earth, Water, Air and Fire. Each will be focused on different activities. We will break for lunch at mid-day around a campfire.

Register now; space is limited! Early registration price is \$195 per family for all three days. After May 5, the registration price is \$255 per family, or \$95 for any single day per family. Registration and payment can be made to the Sanctuary at Crowfield Farm at www.crowfieldsanctuary.org. For additional information, contact Steve Aman at m1bobcat@gmail.com or 315-945-5559.

This event is being co-sponsored by Sierra Club and Sanctuary at Crowfield Farm.

New York State Charges-Up For a Drive!

by Jeff Debes

Good news in New York: New York residents may soon be able to affordably purchase or lease an electric car/SUV (EV)! You first heard it here in our newsletter. The word 'soon' is an indefinite term, but I'm here to report that Governor Cuomo and the New York legislature are now considering the implementation of a state program to provide rebates or tax credits for EV buyers.

If you or I were to walk into a car dealership today with intent and interest to purchase an EV, we'd likely find that the sales persons were either disinterested in talking about EVs or, more surprising yet, uninformed of the capabilities and advantages of the EVs that they sell.

So why aren't the auto sales people excited about EVs? Mainly it is because most of their clientele are not yet excited about EVs. And why is this? One reason lies in the price of purchase of most EVs: The average purchase price of an EV (excluding the Tesla and other luxury EV models) before any rebates is about \$34,000. So can we blame anyone for wondering why they should buy an EV

that has a range of < 100 miles yet costs almost two times as much as an economy gasoline-driven model? Good question! I'm happy to be able to say that those assumptions behind the buyer's conclusion are no longer valid. Here's why:

The EV Range Issue: Solved!

Example: A number of EVs have no range limitations because they have supplemental gasoline engines - the Chevy Volt, BMW I3, Toyota Prius Plugin and Ford Fusion to name a few. Improvements can be expected to the electric-only range of these cars. Many newer (electric only) EVs are getting closer to the "magic" barrier of a 100 mile range. (e.g. BMW I3)

The EV Cost vs Usability Issue:

Potentially Solved. The purchase costs of EVs has been higher than conventional gasoline-driven cars. Assuming that New Yorkers are vocal in support of a state EV rebate program, we may soon have affordable and practical EV purchase or lease options. There is an existing \$7,500 federal tax rebate. Adding to that a matching state rebate would make EVs affordable to a much broader range of household income levels.

Oh course, the main reason why any of us, especially those of us who are Sierra Club members, would want to drive an EV is because we want to eliminate the use of fossil fuel transportation system pollutants. We all want to clean up our atmosphere and stop the damage to Earth that climate change is bringing. An EV purchase or lease will help you to do your part in changing the course of human-induced climate change.

So if you are considering purchase of a new or used car, consider an EV this time around. Even if you may not be sold on buying an EV, you can do your part in promotion of EVs just by asking sales people questions about their EVs. Questions about EVs will help generate interest at dealerships and this interest will eventually percolate through to decision makers in Albany.

Please explore and enjoy the Sierra Club links below to the features, prices and carbon footprint savings of EVs:

<http://content.sierraclub.org/evguide/>

<http://content.sierraclub.org/evguide/pick-a-plugin>

Opportunity Knocks

by Robert Withers

Ten thousand years ago, humans first wrote and cultivated food. We have accumulated a great deal of knowledge since then. This knowledge has birthed science. The more we know, the more power we have. The laws of physics have been tested and retested on everything in reach. We know and trust the laws of physics. We have built our lives on science. That knowledge and power has been of the physical world. We have done well with it.

Science tells us we are at or near the brink of catastrophic climate

change. Ten thousand years from now, what there may be of humans will still be suffering from deeds committed in our lifetime.

What of the world that exists in the minds of humans and in our society allows us to ignore science and steal the future from our children? The laws of humans can ignore the laws of physics, but they cannot change them. It is morally unacceptable behavior. It is a sign of mental illness.

Why do we allow the criminally selfish interests of a few people to thwart the human rights of billions of people? The tools they use of deception, distraction and will-

ful ignorance are not enough to hide their disgrace. They should not be enough to gain them victory.

What are we to do? How much effort opposing climate change is required to not be complacent in, or perhaps only slightly worse, complicit in the greatest Crime Against Humanity ever committed? When we have made climate change part of every election and have aligned the laws of man with the laws of physics, we will have made almost enough effort.

Opportunity knocks.

February 10, 2016 - Notes by Hugh Mitchell

by Hugh Mitchell

In 2000, the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club's Executive Committee funded a study of the Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA) and distributed about 100 copies - including one to the New York State Attorney General. In this paper, we charged the MCWA with Republican Party nepotism and 'pay-to-play'. Essentially, we were exposing the fact that Monroe County Executive Jack Doyle and the Monroe County Republican Party were not only appointing cronies like John Stanwix to be the Executive Director, but also that there was a strong suggestion that developers would pay what amounted to a fee for MCWA water pipes to be constructed to their sub-divisions through contributions to the Republican Party Housekeeping Committee.

Eventually the State Attorney General found Stanwix to have feathered his retirement nest

egg with MCWA money. He got off with a slap on the back of his hand. Later, Maggie Brooks saw to it that the MCWA Board hired her husband, Robert Wiesner, at a salary of \$82,472 (to start) with a 211 Civil Service waiver permitting him to work full time and still receive his police pension. The Water Authority hired Wiesner, creating the unnecessary job of Directory of Security.

Eventually Mr. Wiesner was convicted of a charge of bid rigging in the local development corporation (LDC) scandal, but was given what amounted to a slap on the wrist and was allowed to keep his full NYS pension. Wiesner oversaw the MCWA's purchase of security and communications equipment from Navitech Services, headed by Daniel Lynch, who now faces two and a half to seven years for the multi-million dollar scheme.

The key element in the LDC scandal which relates to our "Sprawl Follows the Pipes" paper is the way Daniel Lynch was able to

grease the wheels of the county's Republican administration while enriching himself and the other co-defendants, including police Captain Wiesner. Money from Lynch's LDC was donated to the Monroe County Republican Housekeeping Committee, which helps fund Party activities. We were not able to directly charge this same 'pay-to-play' from developers to the Republican Party, but indications were very strong and confirmed by 'behind the scenes' information that we had been give.

There's plenty more dirt that could be dug up about the LDC scandal and the way the Board of MCWA (five Republicans with two Conservatives and no Democrats) consistently acts as a goose laying golden eggs for the Republican Party. It's my hope that such scandals under the prior two Republican County Executives (Jack Doyle and Maggie Brooks) will never again occur under the leadership of Cheryl Dinolfo, our new County Executive.

Cartoon by John Kastner

Speaking of cows, don't forget to join us at the 18th Annual Environmental Forum:

*Agriculture
and Climate
Change:
Formulating
Sustainable
Choices*

**Thursday,
April 21
6 - 9 p.m.**





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of the Sierra Club**
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Spring 2016 Calendar

*All Committees are local volunteer groups of the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club.
 Also follow our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SierraROC/) to keep up to date on new events throughout the year.*

Date	Day	Time	Calendar/Event	Place
March 15	Tuesday	6:30-8:30pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Location TBD. Call (585) 234-1056 to receive notification of location.
March 22	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First United Methodist Church 1010 East Ave., Rochester (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)
April 5	Tuesday	6:30-8:30pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600
April 21	Thursday	5:00-6:00pm	Mothers Out Front Rochester Earth Week Climate March (see p. 2 for details)	Washington Square Park (at Clinton and Court Streets in Rochester)
April 21	Thursday	6:00-9:00pm (program begins at 6:30)	18th Annual Environmental Forum: Agriculture and Climate Change: Formulating Sustainable Choices (see p. 1 for details)	First Universalist Church 150 South Clinton Ave. Rochester, NY 14604
April 23	Saturday	9:00am-12:00pm	Pick Up the Parks (see p. 2 for details)	Ellison Park South Side - look for Sierra Club signs at the bottom of the hill on the right side of Blossom Rd.
April 26	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First United Methodist Church 1010 East Ave., Rochester (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)
May 3	Tuesday	6:30-8:30pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600
May 21	Saturday	9:00am	Generation at Risk: Unplugging Your Grandchildren and Connecting Them with Nature (see p. 5 for details)	Sanctuary at Crowfield Farm 2480 Arcadia Zurich Road Newark, NY 14513
May 24	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First United Methodist Church 1010 East Ave., Rochester (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)

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.