John Francis

"THE PLANETWALKER" WHO MARCHED ACROSS THE UNITED STATES
Francis is an American conservationist, educator, scholar, and best-selling author. Francis gained his nickname “the Planetwalker” after swearing off the use of motorized vehicles, opting to walk across the US while raising awareness of environmental issues.

Dr. John Francis began his walk after witnessing a 1971 oil spill in San Francisco Bay, California.
On his 27th birthday, just 2 years after his journey’s start, Francis took a vow of silence. Francis remained silent for 17 years, choosing to listen to others rather than argue with them.

At first, many who saw Francis didn’t understand or agree with his mission, leading to arguments and disagreements.
He has remained committed to educating others about important environmental affairs. His continued environmental commitment has allowed him to serve as a project manager for the US Coast Guard Oil Pollution Act Staff of 1990, giving him the opportunity to travel across South America to do research and speak with locals about regional environmental issues.

He also founded Planetwalk, a non-profit environmental awareness organization, which promotes environmental education, responsibility, and a vision of world peace and cooperation.

Francis continues to develop Planetlines, an environmental education curriculum based on his own pilgrimage for his non-profit organization.
Dr. Francis has inspired individuals and organizations through encouraging diversity and inclusiveness in conservation and environmental organizations and redefining the tourism industry. He’s done this work in hopes of creating a new, more inclusive perspective on global environmental issues.
The Planetwalker Today

Today, Francis continues his inspirational legacy of environmental stewardship through his teachings of environmental studies as a visiting associate professor at the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, at University of Wisconsin-Madison.
Untold Stories detail the hidden chapters & contributions by underrepresented groups in Natural Resources history. Stories are compiled by WCNR Students on behalf of WCNR Office of Diversity and Inclusion.