



A regional alliance dedicated to  
protecting nature and enriching life

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 15, 2014

**2014 Chicago Wilderness Congress  
Keynote Speaker Announced**

- WHAT** Chicago Wilderness is pleased to announce that **Dr. John Francis**, environmental educator and leader, will be the keynote speaker for the 2014 Chicago Wilderness Congress. The 2014 Congress, themed “**Natural Allies: Partners in Conservation**,” will highlight diverse conservation partnerships among nonprofits, health organizations, cultural institutions, faith-based organizations, government agencies, and other groups that are critical partners in regional conservation.
- WHEN** **Thursday, April 3, 2014**  
8:00 am to 7:30 pm CST
- WHERE** University of Illinois at Chicago Forum  
725 W. Roosevelt Road, Chicago, IL
- REGISTRATION** Registration will open in early 2014 with the schedule of presentations, roundtable discussions, and networking sessions.  
[www.chicagowilderness.org/congress2014](http://www.chicagowilderness.org/congress2014)
- DESCRIPTION** The Chicago Wilderness biennial Congress brings together hundreds of conservationists, students, educators, volunteers, community partners, and interested members of the public in a dynamic exchange of ideas to advance conservation in the greater Chicago metropolitan area. The day-long forum will feature presentations, roundtable discussions, networking, and unique opportunities for students and emerging professionals to connect with leaders in the fields of conservation, environmental education, and community engagement.
- KEYNOTE  
SPEAKER** **Dr. John Francis** is an environmental educator and former United Nations Environment Program goodwill ambassador to the world’s grassroots communities. His work began 1971, when he witnessed an oil spill in San Francisco Bay. Later, he stopped using motorized vehicles and began to walk. In 1973, to learn to better listen, he took a vow of silence that lasted 17 years.

During that time, he founded Planetwalk, a non-profit environmental awareness organization, and walked back across the US from California to his home in West Cape May, receiving three degrees, including a PhD in Land Resources and Environmental Studies, as well as an Honorary Doctorate in Community Service. He ended his silence on Earth Day 1990, telling the assembled crowd, “Environment is about how we treat each other.” He served as project manager for the United States Coast Guard Oil Pollution Act staff of 1990, in Washington, DC, where he assisted in writing oil spill regulations. He is the author of *Planetwalker: 17-Years of Silence, 22-Years of Walking*, published by the National Geographic Society.



## **CHICAGO WILDERNESS**

Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance that connects people and nature. We are more than 300 organizations working together to restore local nature and improve the quality of life for all who live here, by protecting the lands and waters on which we all depend. The four key initiatives of Chicago Wilderness – to restore the health of local nature, promote green infrastructure, mitigate climate change, and to leave no child inside – reflect our commitment to using science and emerging knowledge, as well as a collaborative approach to conservation, to benefit all the region’s residents.

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For additional information about Chicago Wilderness Congress, please contact Lucy Hutcherson, Chicago Wilderness Director of Conservation & Communication Programs, [lucy.hutcherson@chicagowilderness.org](mailto:lucy.hutcherson@chicagowilderness.org) or [630-234-3906](tel:630-234-3906).