

# The Great Trading Path Selected for 2025 World Monuments Watch List

*The World Monuments Watch—a global initiative to preserve endangered heritage sites—has selected the Great Trading Path as one of its 25 cultural sites of 2025.*

MEBANE, NC, UNITED STATES, January 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Great Trading Path](#) was an important route of cross-cultural exchange and connection for Indigenous communities in the past and is a vital anchor of identity for their descendants in the present. Also known as the Occaneechi Path, the trail allowed the flow of people, goods, and ideas across the American Southeast for hundreds of years.

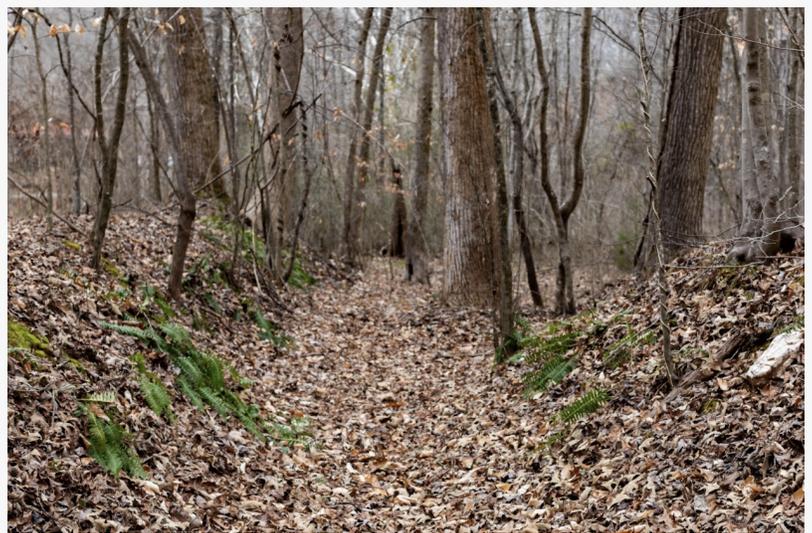


Photo: Roderico Y. Díaz, Iximché Media

The route arose from a constellation of minor footpaths through the rolling hills of North Carolina's Piedmont region. From the 1670s, the Occaneechi and other Siouan Nations

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*Dr. Crystal Cavalier*

prospered as middlemen in the bustling fur and deerskin trade that was enabled by the expanding trail. During this period, the Path ran from present-day Petersburg, Virginia, to Charlotte, North Carolina, before splitting into two branches extending through South Carolina.

For the Occaneechi People—lineal descendants of the Saponi, Occaneechi, and related Indigenous tribes—their

connections to this land are vital to their heritage and identity. Surviving segments of the Path remain sacred sites. [Yet, recent industrial and commercial development](#) threatens further erosion of this land's cultural and ecological integrity while obstructing the band's access to their ancestral landscape. Insufficient recognition of the Path's significance and the Occaneechi community's marginalization in local and state decision-making processes compound these challenges.

[Occaneechi community member](#) and a leading force in the effort to protect The Great Trading Path, Dr. Crystal Cavalier Keck, responded: “The Great Trading Path was like an ancient highway, a site of trade, cultural exchange and even human burials for those who died along their journeys across the Southeast. My Occaneechi ancestors, the original stewards of the Piedmont region, were right in the center of it. We have been fighting to protect this Sacred Place for centuries. Today our Indigenous communities exhale and stand tall in the feeling of recognition. The Great Trading Path has been selected for the World Monuments Fund’s 2025 Watch List, a rare honor that elevates endangered heritage sites worldwide, and supports the communities defending them against destruction and erasure.”

#### About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world’s most treasured places to enrich lives and build mutual understanding. For 60 years, working at more than 700 sites in 112 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through the World Monuments Watch—a biennial, nomination-based program—WMF uses cultural heritage conservation to empower communities and improve human well-being. In partnership with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide.

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