

## -- MEDIA RELEASE --

### For Immediate Release

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(English/Spanish)

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### ***Nature, Connectivity and Credit (Naturaleza, Conectividad y Crédito):***

**FREE Latino Conservation Week Bilingual Resource Fair Pools Together Banking, Education, Responsible Recreation and Other Resources to Help Ensure Access to the Outdoors for Underserved Communities.**

**Free Food (Two tacos to each of the first 200 attendees!), Music, Drawings, and More!**

Bishop, CA – In a recent trend, more and more national parks are going “cashless” and accepting payment of entrance and possibly other fees via credit or debit card only. This implies administrative efficiency and significant cost savings for the parks—to the tune of \$40,000 per year just for Death Valley National Park, which did away with expenses related to armored car transport for bank deposits, as well as staff time spent counting cash and processing paperwork, when it instituted cashless payment for entrance and camping fees on June 1. However, cashless payment could create a barrier to access for unbanked community members who lack credit.

In response to this development, Bishop-based conservation nonprofit Friends of the Inyo, in partnership with AltaOne Federal Credit Union, Cerro Coso Community College, the U.S. National Park Service and other organizations, is putting together an English/Spanish bilingual resource fair called ***Nature, Connectivity and Credit (Naturaleza, Conectividad y Crédito)***, scheduled to take place from 4 to 7 p.m. Saturday, July 15, at the parking lot of the AltaOne FCU Bishop Branch at 462 N. Main Street downtown.

This is a FREE event open to the entire community. It will include food—two free tacos for the first 200 attendees, with other food available for purchase—music, drawings for prizes, lots of useful information in English and Spanish, and the opportunity to find financial solutions that can make access to nature easier.

Attendees who do not have a credit or debit card are welcome to come to this event bringing with them a valid ID, matricula or passport; their social security number or ITIN (Individual Taxpayer

Identification Number); and their two most recent pay stubs as proof of income, so they can apply for an account and/or credit card with AltaOne.

“The idea is to have the local Latino and other underrepresented communities come and learn about credit, apply for a credit or debit card account with AltaOne, get hands-on assistance on navigating national park websites and the National Park Service app, and obtain information on a whole range of other resources to improve their quality of life, such as how to recreate responsibly in nature, how to strengthen their home against wildfires, how to recycle waste properly, how to enroll for courses at Cerro Coso Community College, how to find local jobs, and more,” said Louis Medina, Friends of the Inyo’s Communications and Philanthropy Director.

The event is part of Latino Conservation Week (LCW), which this year takes place from July 15 to 23. According to the **LatinoConservationWeek.com** website, LCW is an initiative of Hispanic Access Foundation “created to support the Latino community getting into the outdoors and participating in activities to protect our natural resources.” During Latino Conservation Week, organizations and agencies hold events throughout the country “to help promote conservation efforts in their community, and provide an opportunity for Latinos to show their support for permanently protecting our land, water, and air.”

But it all begins with access to nature, Medina said. “Through *Naturaleza, Conectividad y Crédito*, we want to help make access possible for those who might otherwise be left out of enjoying our beautiful national parks altogether—as well as open the door to other opportunities that credit might allow,” he said.

Chris Lowe, Director of Marketing & Community Development for AltaOne FCU, which serves Mono, Inyo, Kern and Northern San Bernardino Counties, said, “Part of our mission is to improve access to financial solutions. By partnering with Friends of the Inyo and the National Park Service, we can offer services that give community members the ability to enjoy nature and in turn help with conservation efforts in the area.” In 2022, AltaOne was certified by the U.S. Department of the Treasury as a Community Development Financial Institution, a designation that allows it to receive grants from the CDFI Fund to bring access to communities that have limited or no availability of financial services.

Helping with multigenerational outreach is Cerro Coso Community College, whose students in Bishop, Mammoth and other Eastern Sierra communities can help spread the word among their parents and other relatives about *Nature Connectivity and Credit*. “Outreach plays a critical role within Cerro Coso Community College by creating meaningful connections with our community and empowering all students to achieve their educational goals,” said Ivan Ibarra, the college’s Program Coordinator of Outreach Services. “Outreach is also critical for our marginalized communities that may not have prior experience with college or access to college information and resources. Students from these communities are vital in bridging that gap for their parents and older relatives that may be interested in Cerro Coso but don’t know where to start. Students can feel empowered by advocating for their

parents, and parents can form a deeper connection to education when they share their goals with their children,” he said.

Bishop Mayor Pro Tem Jose Garcia, who has been supportive of this outreach and even participated in planning meetings, will deliver a bilingual greeting to attendees during the event. Other organizations expected at our local LCW outreach are the Whitebark Institute, the Farmworker Institute of Education and Leadership Development (FIELD), Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association (ESIA), Owens Valley Paiute Shoshone Cultural Center, Inyo National Forest, and Friends of the Eastern California Museum. We are still accepting additional interested exhibitors. Please write to [info@friendsoftheinyo.org](mailto:info@friendsoftheinyo.org) by Monday, July 10 at the latest. Exhibitors must bring their own table, chairs and shade.

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