



Congressman Pete Stark's Statement

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Tribute to Alfredo Montes June 5, 2003

Mr. Speaker:

I rise today to share with you the well-articulated environmental message of a fourth grader. Alfredo Montes, winner of the Friends of San Leandro Creek's 11th annual poetry contest. This contest was held in conjunction with the annual Watershed Festival Event, held in my district and cosponsored by the city of San Leandro, the Friends of San Leandro Creek (FSLC), and the Alameda Countywide Clean Water Protection program.

Organized in 1991 and officially incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1995, the FSLC is a wonderful organization that brings the Bay Area community together around the San Leandro Creek in order to raise awareness of environmental issues. In addition to the Watershed Festival, the FSLC frequently organizes educational programs such as field trips and conservation projects for students in kindergarten through 12th grade; and regular cleanup and revegetation projects. I also regularly participate with other legislators in the FSLC's annual environmental forum. The FSLC's latest project – hopefully to be completed within the next two years – is building a new environmental education center at a new site.

Alfredo is a student at Monarch Academy, an Aspire Public School in Oakland, CA. His teacher, Andrea Main, thanked the FSLC for substantially helping to “complement my curriculum” with activities like field trips and water quality testing that “totally inspired my kids.”

Ms. Main described Alfredo as a “diligent, hardworking” student who hopes to become an elected official when he grows up. His work was selected from about 20 poetry entries, by a panel of judges from the FSLC's board of directors and active members. FSLC Watershed Awareness Coordinator Susan Criswell added, “I am in awe of the energy, talent and determination of this young man. It gives me hope for the future of our environment to see such dedication.”

Alfredo attended an FSLC-organized field trip with his class and said, “I always go to places like the creek that have shallow water, because they have pollution in them, and that's what inspired me to write this poem.”

THE CREEK
(By Alfredo Montes)

The creek grows weak,
the frog no longer speaks,
the water almost falls asleep,
the trees continue to seek,
the creek feels like it has a leak,
like every time growing weak,
it gets lower and shallower as we speak,
so I will have to speak no more and hit the poem's core,
we have to clean up the pollution so we keep on the revolution.