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FLOOR DEBATE

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discussion on the Republican River and their water use throughout this debate, and can you tell us a little bit about what kind of reduction in water uses they've managed to obtain, and how that has affected them?

SENATOR SCHROCK: Yes, Senator Langemeier. This year the Republican River Basin, which is overappropriated or fully appropriated, they all have limitations and meters on their wells. They only use 70 percent of their allocation. You couple that with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, which we can give direct thanks to Congressman Osborne for, which is going to retire 70,000 acres in that basin, a lot of that has been signed up, and more is going to be signed up, and I think by this year we'll have at least 50,000 of that in the program, if not all of the 70,000, and that's going to have a tremendous effect. And then he's also getting money appropriated--or certainly attempting to get money appropriated--to kill some vegetation in the river basin so that the waters will flow better. We had an exceptional dry year in the year 2003, the driest year of my lifetime of farming, and it spread not only from the Republican Basin, it caught all western Nebraska. That's the reason we have the problems now. I'm fairly confident, given anywhere close to normal conditions, we're not going to see this again, considering the measures that have been taken. I will also have an interim study this summer to study the possibility of transfer from the Platte River Basin to the Republican River Basin. You can stand on Central's irrigation canal and throw a stone in the Spring Creek, which empties into the Republican River Basin by Oxford. And I think it's very possible, but until we get a little more water in the Platte River Basin, that's probably not possible, and we have all the political concerns there, too, with the municipalities downstream, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the Whooping Crane Trust. But you could take flows in the fall and the wintertime, when there's not birds on the river, and you could put some water in there and do it a lot cheaper than what we had to do this year with the buyout of the Bostwick irrigation districts. Thank you. I'll give you back the rest of my time.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator.