

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

February 10, 1999 LB 231

problem--nitrates in the water. And it says also apparently that Nebraska does not intend to hold the fertilizer industry accountable and responsible for the detrimental effects of the massive applications of chemical fertilizers to our fields. Let's talk a little bit first about where the money went. The money from the fertilizer fee tax goes back to the natural resource districts, who, in turn, use it to deal with problems of water quality mostly related to nitrate problems. The Natural Resources Enhancement Fund has set out a program whereby 50 percent of the money goes back to NRDs in accordance with the amount of fertilizer used in that NRD, so that if it's an area of the state that has heavy applications of fertilizer then more of the money would go to those NRDs. Twenty percent of the money goes to NRDs equally, and another 20 percent and then some goes to those districts that have particularly difficult groundwater problems right now. So, in other words, this program has been designed to go back as closely as possible to deal with the problems created by the industry whose product created the problem--the fertilizer industry. Those of you who are new, I don't think we've had a detailed discussion of NRDs yet and what they do. I wanted to take just a moment, at the risk of boring some of the older members, to let you know that there are 23 natural resource districts in this state. They are designed along river basins. Some river basins have more than one. They are primarily concerned with groundwater pollution, although what they do has an enormous impact on surface water pollution as well. With respect to fertilizers, for example, fertilizers can leach down through the ground and enter the groundwater through the continual leaching effect that occurs rainfall after rainfall after rainfall. Or, on some occasions, nitrates may be applied to the fields in the fall or in early winter and they can wash off the fields and flow into the surface water and cause pollution of the surface water. Every area of the state is different, have different soils, different rain patterns, a number of different circumstances. And when the NRD system was created, it was created with the genius of allowing each one of those districts to treat differently the problems in their area because those problems are a little bit different. So with respect to...with respect to groundwater management, we've required each NRD to have a groundwater management plan and the level of sophistication of the plan, most of them have one, two, three, four levels and they go to a