

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

January 28, 2003 LB 306

\$53.6 million. So, I spoke with the Game and Parks to see, well, where did you find that balance? They are going into their cash fund to balance some of the operating costs that they are now experiencing in the agency. Again, they do not increase their fees for extra cash. They do it to improve facilities and opportunities for those that buy the permits and the licenses. Another point that I would like to bring out, that wildlife conservation, wildlife, fisheries, law enforcement, 93.5 percent comes from their cash funds, 6 percent from General Funds, 5 percent from federal funds. So we're looking, again, at an agency that is primarily...relies on the fees that are generated from people who use the services. And I guess that's where I differ as far as, this is a tax on all people, because only if you are using these permits and these licenses will you pay the extra cost, which I believe is only fair, because you are the one that is partaking of the recreation. Yesterday, I also mentioned, some of these hunting and fishing fees, besides going to the wildlife management, monitoring weed control, that the disease control has become a very important issue. I will be handing out an article that I found in the paper last night about the West Nile, and also the chronic wasting disease. But the West Nile disease has certainly hit. It hit the United States in 1999, and it is spreading across the country. In fact, one of the quotes was: in my years of working, I've never seen a mosquito-borne virus spread so quickly, said Robert McClean, with the Ag Department's National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins. West Nile is not fatal in all animals, but particularly the wildlife. But as I also pointed out, not only the birds, the crows...and this is how they first discovered it. This past summer, over 14,000 horses died of the West Nile disease. So those are only...beside the education programs that are provided by Game and Parks, and there's always an increased demand for boating safety,...

SPEAKER BROMM: One minute.

SENATOR STUHR: ...hunting safety classes, these are some of the reasons that we are...this bill proposes to allow an increase in the cap. It does not say that it will happen immediately, but allows it. And it has been ten years since that cap was raised. Thank you.