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FLOOR DEBATE

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there's two of them in the Panhandle, and the other three are in the Republican River Basin, which, of course, was the subject of a lawsuit, and part of the settlement was that well drilling would be curtailed. So there's not going to be many new wells drilled in ground water management areas, but this does apply to replacement wells. And in those NRDs...and, by the way, there's quite a few replacement wells being drilled because the ground water table in some of those areas is lowering and if a producer wants to keep the capacity of that well up he or she may have to drill the well deeper to get that extra water they need for crop production. And I can tell you this summer if you had a well that was not pumping very well, let's say it was only pumping 500 gallon versus 800 gallon per minute, you probably saw a drastic reduction in your yields. The lower performing wells this year, their crops did not yield very well, because it was kind of start the well on the 15th of June and don't shut it off till the 1st of September. So there won't be a lot of new wells drilled, but there will be some. This is not...this is not intended to increase the burden of the cost of crop production in this state, but we thought it was a good idea for those areas where there's ground water management plans, and they have to be regulated by the NRDs to give them an additional fee for that regulatory process. Any questions, I'll answer them.

SENATOR ENGEL: Are there any questions? Chair recognizes Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Just one question, Senator Schrock. If the purpose is to help with the regulatory cost in a management area because of the extra regulatory cost, why isn't there some fee that applies to all other wells in the management area, since they benefit as much from the regulation as does somebody who happens, by circumstance, to want a new well or a replacement well? I'm just asking as to the question of equitability. I understand the politics of it, but why is that equitable?

SENATOR SCHROCK: I think you said it, Senator Beutler--the politics of it. Farmers are deathly afraid at some point in time we're going to tax water, whether it be an annual fee on a well or so much on a per gallonage, and they will agree to about anything rather than a fee or a tax on water. And so we thought