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LB 962

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, while we're fresh and perhaps some people are listening, I want to talk a little bit more about the financing of all this. Because if there is one thing that I hope we would do, it is to insist that there be a fee related to water use, so that at least...not all of it, but at least half of the cost of the current costs are picked up by a fee system. I'll get into why this...a number of reasons why this is a good idea. But let me emphasize to you now, one, that we don't have any money, and two, this is going to be enormously expensive. The bill itself creates one of the most elaborate bureaucracies that you can imagine. And I would ask you to flip through it and start looking at the cooperation that's necessary between NRDs, between the Department of Natural Resources and the NRDs, the initial preliminary determinations, and then final determinations, and then interbasin agreements, and then integrated water plans, and then if you don't agree you go to...not arbitration, but mediation, and then if you don't agree you can go to the Governor's committee. It's an enormous, detailed bureaucracy that will be an expensive process. The current number in the A bill is \$4.5 million. But let me tell you, that doesn't even come...that's not even going to come close to what some of the costs will be on this. And some of the costs that are not even being discussed yet but are there and are huge are going to be the cost of buying out the appropriations in over-appropriated basins like the Republican and like, mostly, the Platte and its subsidiaries. And that cost, I don't think there's any doubt but that cost will be at \$8 million to \$10 million for maybe two or three years, and that cost will come up and will have to be dealt with as we enter into this agreement with Wyoming and Colorado, the cooperative agreement. So we should plan ahead now and we should insist on anticipation by all parties now so that we can get a handle on this in some sort of reasonable way. We may not have those General Fund monies for several years out in quantities to deal with this sort of thing. About ten years ago or so, I offered a bill, an amendment, that said, for all new ground water wells drilled after that point in time, that they would be subject to the right being withdrawn, because of the problems that we foresaw in the future. But the same group of people who is