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FLOOR DEBATE

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issuing these permits for open lots; not lots that have lagoons or control facilities, but the open lots. That same general permit is also issued, at the bottom of the page, you'll see, for an operation that has only 400 animal units. One permit for 85,000 head of cattle; same permit for 400 head of cattle. One boilerplate kind of permit, and everyone gets the same. And there's no opportunity for public comment. So on these very large units where there may very well be a lot of concern for the potential to discharge into the waters of the state, the public isn't even informed, isn't given opportunity for public comment, and certainly isn't given an opportunity for any public hearing where they could voice opposition, concern, problems. That is of concern to me. The amendment that I have before us is one that would require NDEQ to issue an individual permit rather than a general permit. Both permits would expire in five years, same time frame. The difference, essentially, is that the individual permit would allow for public comment, would allow for public input into the process, so that where there were problems the would have...the public, that is, in the "they," have an opportunity for that comment. To me, that's central in this area in siting in any kind of facility. It's central in a democracy. Any democratic form of government encourages the public to have input, encourages people to have an opportunity for say, just as we do in the Legislature in holding our public hearings. So I see public opportunity for input as essential to our way of life in a democracy, but particularly in these permits where I really don't believe one size does fit all. And from my understanding from NDEQ, they're anticipating issuing approximately--it's still a guesstimate--but 90 percent of the permits that they will issue will be general permits. And there are feedlots that could well be in excess of 85,000 head of cattle in one location. That has a tremendous potential for discharge into the waters of the state, and I think is of concern. I think an individual permit is more appropriate in those cases. It's my understanding from NDEQ that where there has been concern from the public, that they are likely to take that into account, and that they would do an individual permit in some of those cases. That could be the 10 percent that I didn't identify when they're looking at 90 percent general permits. Ninety percent, 10 percent, I'm not sure that's the best average. I think looking at these more