

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 1485

Title: An act relating to the Whidbey Island game farm.

Sponsors: Representatives Barlean and Anderson.

Background: The Whidbey Island game farm encompasses approximately 170 acres. About 120 acres of the game farm is located inside the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve established by congress in 1978. The Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve was established to commemorate the first thorough exploration of the Puget Sound area by Captain George Vancouver in 1792; settlement by Colonel Isaac Neff Ebey, who led the first permanent white settlers to Whidbey Island; the early active years of the Federal Donation Land Law of 1850-55; and the growth since 1883 of the historic town of Coupeville.

The former Department of Game, using revenue from the sale of hunting licenses, purchased the Whidbey Island game farm in 1945 from a private party for the purpose of developing and operating a game farm. The Department raised pheasants on the property for recreation there and elsewhere in the state. Over the past three biennia, the Legislature has appropriated \$2,175,000 in the Capital Budget to consolidate the Department's game farms operations into Lewis County and since then, the Whidbey Island property has been used for a game bird holding and distribution center.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife has a proposal to sell 130 acres of the former game farm that is surplus to the Department's needs to address a shortfall in receipts to the Wildlife Account. The portions that are not proposed for sale are 30 acres for the game farm operations and 10 acres of native prairie habitat and its buffer.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Fish and Wildlife is prohibited to sell any part of the property known as the Whidbey Island game farm.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.