

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1346

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Environment

**Title:** An act relating to allowing additional hunting opportunities on state land.

**Brief Description:** Allowing additional hunting opportunities on state land.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Blake, Takko, Sawyer, Appleton and Buys.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Environment: 1/26/15, 2/12/15 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Commissions a pilot project to allow hunting in four state parks over the course of three years.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Fitzgibbon, Chair; Peterson, Vice Chair; Shea, Ranking Minority Member; Short, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fey, Goodman, Harris, Pike and Taylor.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative McBride.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Farrell.

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

**Background:**

The Washington Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) manages recreation at 124 state parks. The Commission also plays a management or coordination role with other recreational sites such as underwater parks, water trails, and the Seashore, Green River, Mount Si, and Yakima River conservation areas.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manages hunting in the state. Specifically, the WDFW has the authority to determine the time and place where hunting may lawfully occur and the manner of hunting that is allowed.

The Commission is authorized to coordinate the recreational functions of the various state agencies; however, hunting is specifically prohibited in any state park. It is a criminal misdemeanor to kill, or pursue with the intent to kill, any bird or other animal in a state park except for permitted research purposes. The Commission does not have the discretion to allow hunting on any land it manages or oversees.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Commission and the WDFW are required to partner in a pilot project exploring the feasibility, limitations, and benefits of allowing hunting in state parks. The pilot project must allow some level of hunting activity in four state parks during the 2016, 2017, and 2018 calendar years.

The four parks in the pilot project must be located in both eastern and western Washington and be chosen through an open, public process that considers a number of factors. These factors include: a location that is a suitable distance from dense residential areas or is in a remote area; proximity to other lands that experience higher than average levels of wildlife-caused damage; proximity to areas that allow waterfowl and other hunting opportunities; existence of large populations of game species in the park that could potentially benefit from active wildlife management; and status as an undeveloped or lightly used park during any proposed hunting seasons.

The WDFW is responsible for identifying the time, place, and manner of hunting that occurs in the four state parks. The hunting activity must be tailored to the unique qualities of the participating parks and any potential effects of the pilot project on non-hunting state park visitors must be minimized. All hunting must be consistent with hunting regulations enforced by the WDFW. The Commission must ensure reasonably adequate signage and public notice so that park visitors are aware of potential hunting activity in a given park and ensure that one segment of the population does not have the opportunity to hunt in a state park if the opportunity is not available to all segments of the population.

After the pilot project, the Commission and the WDFW must issue a report to the Legislature that summarizes the lessons learned from the pilot project, makes suggestions as to whether or not the pilot project demonstrated limited hunting as an appropriate recreational activity at state parks, provides information as to whether or not hunting in certain state parks can reduce wildlife conflict within the park or on adjacent private lands, draws conclusions as to whether or not hunting is an effective wildlife management tool for certain state parks, and accounts for any increase in Discover Pass sales or hunting license sales.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The original bill authorized the Commission to allow hunting in state parks, but did not mandate it to occur.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 12, 2015.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) There is a conflict in state law that lists hunting as a use that the Commission must preserve in the Seashore Conservation Area, but there are other laws that specifically prohibit hunting in state parks. This prohibition has closed off traditional hunting grounds and erodes public support for the acquisition and conservation of new lands by the Commission, like the hundreds of acres located adjacent to waterfowl hunting grounds that could be subsumed by the Commission. The prohibition also can limit tribal access to ceremonial hunts and frustrate landscape-level wildlife management to protect endangered species like the snowy plover.

Hunting is a popular recreation that parents like to share with their children. Land open for hunting is becoming limited in the state. The Commission can be trusted to decide if hunting is appropriate in state parks, and if it is, where and in which parks it should occur. This flexibility is reasonable and in line with parks in other western states.

Hunters must purchase a Discover Pass to hunt on land managed by the Department of Natural Resources; however, a very significant share of the revenue goes to the Commission. The hunter sees no value in their Discover Pass investment if hunting is never allowed in a park.

(Opposed) The Commission already has more work before it, and demands on it, than it has the time or budget to manage. The discretion to allow hunting in parks could result in annual requests on the Commission to evaluate proposals. Hunting in state parks is not unheard of in other states; however, those states manage parks with a singular agency that has a portfolio of land holdings with different purposes. Washington has different agencies that manage different lands for different purposes. Two agencies already manage land for hunting; an activity that does not match the land management purposes provided by the Commission.

The developed state parks are all managed under plans that have been put together at great expense and with countless hours of volunteer labor. Hunting is not a part of any those management plans and allowing it would require the plans to be redone. Once hunting is allowed, some parks would be essentially off limits to non-hunters during hunting season. Parks are not an appropriate place for hunting. Many parks are located in close proximity to neighborhoods and large population centers. Hunting can create safety risks and an additional rate of trespassing on private lands adjacent to a state park. Park users go to parks

as a refuge from activities such as hunting and having that experience taken away will lead to a growth in anti-hunting sentiment.

Any discussion about hunting in state parks should only be the result of a slow and public process.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Blake, prime sponsor; and Jerry Gibbs.

(Opposed) Janie Brumfield; Stet Palmer; Lisa Lantz, State Parks; and James King, Citizens for Parks and Recreation.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.