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CHIPPEWA CO. CONVEYANCE

House Bill 4564 as introduced
First Analysis (5-20-93)

Sponsor: Rep. Pat Gagliardi
Committee: State Affairs

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

A farm about six miles southwest of Sault Ste. Marie, in the Upper Peninsula, was one of many farms contaminated in the 1970s with polybrominated biphenyls (PBBs) that had been accidentally mixed with silage. Soil samples from the farm (known as the "Harm Veldt" farm) revealed PBB concentrations of up to 2,030 parts per billion (ppb) around the farm buildings. The Department of Agriculture acquired the Veldt farm in 1982 for \$87,000, and cleanup operations were begun on a 1.1 acre area (47,000 square feet and six farm buildings) that showed more than 50 ppb of PBB, the target cleanup level (a level based on instrument detection limits and technical feasibility at the time, and 20 times more stringent than the cleanup level for PBB contaminated soils recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). Site cleanup operations included the demolition of all six farm buildings and the removal of the top 8 to 12 inches of PBB contaminated soil (about 4,500 cubic yards of soil and building debris altogether). After the cleanup was completed in May, 1988, at a cost of \$402,270, soil samples again were taken and showed less than 50 ppb of PBB. The farm was "de-listed" by the Department of Natural Resources from its annual Michigan Environmental Response Act (Public Act 307 of 1982) list of environmentally contaminated sites.

The Chippewa County Soil Conservation District is interested in acquiring the land in question for use as a demonstration farm.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would allow the state administrative board to convey two forty-acre parcels of land in Chippewa County (in Dafter Township) currently under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture to the Chippewa Soil Conservation District for one dollar. The state would retain coal, gas, oil, and other mineral rights, and the land

would revert to the state if the land were used for other than public purposes.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Fiscal information is not available.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Although the contaminated soil on the state-owned Veldt farm has been cleaned up, the stigma of PBB contamination apparently has adversely affected the farm's market value, making its sale by the state at fair market value difficult if not impossible. The bill would allow the Chippewa Soil Conservation District to put to good use vacant farmland that the state otherwise has no use for and for whom the state would have difficulty in finding a commercial buyer. Reportedly, the soil conservation district plans to plant demonstration "no till" plots on part of the land and to reforest part of the land.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Agriculture supports the bill. (5-19-93)