

Funds, Feuds, Future Plans Cloud Outdoor Playgrounds

Continued from Page One

It does begin buying, prices may well have gone up.

Congress gave the park service \$285,000 in standby land acquisition funds for Shackleford a year ago.

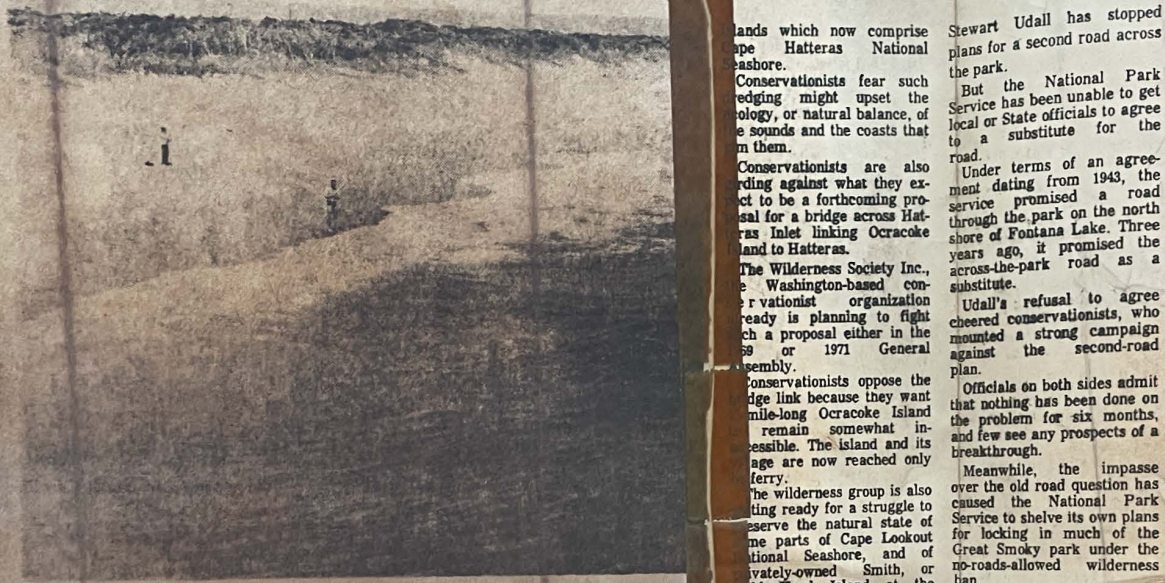
That money is still available. But as the government waits, land prices climb.

As an example, the park service had earlier estimated Shackleford might be acquired for \$161,000. The \$285,000 figure was set only a year later.

In late 1966, headlines proclaimed that the 89th Congress was "playing Santa Claus to the North Carolina coast" by approving a blueprint for a series of beach erosion projects embracing nearly the entire sweep of coastal islands and soundside mainland.

But Santa Claus's goodies remain no more than a promise.

The projects, which would have cost nearly \$44 million, would have sent dredges to work along 140 miles of offshore islands and 54 miles of soundside mainland, constructing dikes and sand dunes.



State's beach (and mountain) areas threatened by budget cuts

Main Justification

The major justification for the projects was recreational. Once completed, they would have guaranteed public use of nearly all of the State's ocean and soundside beaches. Under terms of the congressional authorization; the projects could be undertaken only with the promise of public access to miles of privately-owned beach and of orderly zoning and development of all such areas.

The projects authorized such work on 18 miles of the heavily-developed Dare County coast north of Oregon Inlet; 31.4 miles of the area proposed for Cape Lookout National Seashore; 10 of the 48 miles comprising the coastline of Pender and Onslow Counties, and 22.9 miles comprising the entire Brunswick County coastline from the mouth of the Cape Fear River to the South Carolina line.

Mainland projects were approved for 48 miles of the Hyde County coast and for about six miles of the Carteret County mainland between Bogue Inlet and Moore Inlet.

Later, a project was also approved for Ocracoke Island.

But no funds have yet flowed from either the federal treasury or state-local sources, and the blueprints remain only blueprints.

Local or state sources would have to put up over \$18.7 million for the various projects (mostly in Dare and Brunswick Counties). So far, neither the State nor local governments have developed any policies for supporting such cooperative projects.

But even if state-local money was ready, the budget squeeze in Washington would almost certainly block any beginning on such projects.

The White House and Congress indicated lightfisted policies for public works projects when they denied funds for construction of dozens of proposed dams and reservoirs which were not only expected to be valuable for recreation, but also for water supplies in urban areas.

Such was the case in North Carolina, where funds for starting the \$20 million Falls of Neuse dam in Wake County were denied, and annual construction outlays for New Hope Dam and reservoir in Chatham County were trimmed.

The postponement of the Falls of Neuse project was almost certain to further increase land costs and confuse planning for recreational development there.

A struggle already seems likely over the extent of public ownership of the lakeshore which would be formed behind the dam.

The Corps of Engineers plan for the dam and reservoir proposes nearly 9,500 acres in public ownership. So far, local interests are agreeing to something over 5,000 acres.

Congress did approve legislation guaranteeing about \$200 million a year in the land and water conservation fund, which supports federal and state recreation land-buying.

The Pilot Mountain Park was made possible largely by a big grant from that fund.

Helped 60 Projects

Such funds have been used allocated for more than 60 projects in North Carolina in the past three years, a total of over \$3 million.

But such projects require 50-50 matching on the part of state local governments, and so far North Carolina has not developed a comprehensive plan for selecting and acquiring outdoor areas.

Moreover, while Congress appropriates large sums, its appropriations committees don't actually appropriate them. The land acquisition fund in the 1968-69 budget is only \$90 million, or \$10 million less than requested.

Congress also slashed operating and maintenance budgets for the National Park Service.

The layoff of maintenance

workers in Cape Hatteras National Seashore in the midst of the summer season, and denial of \$1.5 million for beach erosion control there, were results of the congressional cuts in the 1968-69 budget.

Congress cut three per cent off the request for operating and maintenance, in effect reducing the current budget below last fiscal year, despite the continued increase in visitors.

Lawmakers whacked the proposed construction budget from \$13.9 million to a standstill \$4.3 million.

The Tar Heel workers were paid from the maintenance budget. The erosion project would have been paid for out of the construction budget.

The squeeze on dollars is not the only problem facing outdoor recreation resource development.

Paradoxically, two of the problems seen from the conservationists' viewpoint are usually involved the possibility of development.

The U. S. Interior Department has already indicated skepticism over a Corps of Engineers study of possible routes for a big ship channel serving the phosphate-mining industry in Beaufort County.

Some of the routes would require extensive dredging across the sounds between the mainland and the coast-

lands which now comprise Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Conservationists fear such dredging might upset the ecology, or natural balance, of the sounds and the coasts that surround them.

Conservationists are also arguing against what they expect to be a forthcoming proposal for a bridge across Hatteras Inlet linking Ocracoke Island to Hatteras.

The Wilderness Society Inc., the Washington-based conservationist organization, is already planning to fight such a proposal either in the 1969 or 1971 General Assembly.

Conservationists oppose the bridge link because they want the 12-mile-long Ocracoke Island to remain somewhat inaccessible. The island and its age are now reached only by ferry.

The wilderness group is also getting ready for a struggle to preserve the natural state of some parts of Cape Lookout National Seashore, and of privately-owned Smith, or Old Head Island at the south of the Cape Fear river.

Wants No Roads

The society hopes to convince Congress that part of the 58-mile stretch of the park should be designated as wilderness — an area closed to road construction.

Earlier, society experts had proposed such designation for Shackleford Banks, across from Morehead City and Beaufort. Now, they are planning to propose it for parts of Wicomico Island, the northernmost island in the entire national seashore.

A nationwide survey of islands, expected to be completed next year, will be the catalyst for another conservationist effort to get near the Bald Head Island in public ownership.

That study is expected to reinforce previous proposals for either federal or state ownership of the island, now the property of Charlotte businessman Frank Sherrill.

Road Controversy

Another round in a long-standing dispute over a second road across the high vastness of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which is clouded wilderness plans for the national park which embraces that roofland of the eastern United States.

Secretary of Interior

Stewart Udall has stopped plans for a second road across the park.

But the National Park Service has been unable to get local or State officials to agree to a substitute for the road.

Under terms of an agreement dating from 1943, the service promised a road through the park on the north shore of Fontana Lake. Three years ago, it promised the across-the-park road as a substitute.

Udall's refusal to agree cheered conservationists, who mounted a strong campaign against the second-road plan.

Officials on both sides admit that nothing has been done on the problem for six months, and few see any prospects of a breakthrough.

Meanwhile, the impasse over the old road question has caused the National Park Service to shelve its own plans for locking in much of the Great Smoky park under the no-roads-allowed wilderness ban.

The service would put about \$900,000 of the park's \$12,000,000

acres under the no-roads recreation development matters in the State.

Conservationist groups have proposed 350,000 acres, including the route of the now-defunct second transmountain road.

Both sides agree now that the impasse is unlikely to be broken until new administrations show up in both Washington and Raleigh.

That is also the reading that most conservationists are tak-

ing on nearly all outdoor recreation development matters in the State.

A study group named by Gov. Moore is developing another master plan and catalog of areas which should be acquired as public recreation areas.

But until a new man takes the oath as governor, the future of such plans is clouded in the mystery of politics.

