

# Prospects Dim for Developing State's Playgrounds

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WASHINGTON — Once-bright prospects for developing significant outdoor recreation areas in North Carolina have dimmed because of budget cutbacks, unsettled old feuds, and uncertainties over future policies here and in the State.

Summer crowds jamming outdoor playgrounds are noticing the problems of

overcrowding brought on by budget squeezing.

The recent success of a drive to acquire Pilot Mountain in Surry County as a State park was one of the few breakthroughs in conservation efforts.

On the other side of the ledger were these debits:

—Federal budget cuts have slowed plans for developing new national playgrounds on the coastal Outer Banks and

around proposed lakes near cities.

—Other cuts have threatened maintenance levels in existing parks, halted beach erosion efforts on coastal islands, and postponed prospects for acquiring new park areas by both the state and local governments.

—A possible battle over a route for a phosphate-shipping channel and a clamor for another coastal bridge are viewed with alarm by conservationists.

—A 25-year-old feud over a road through the Great Smoky Mountain National Park has stymied wilderness plans and portends another period of official uncertainty over the future of that most-used national playground.

In addition to the problems which mainly involve the role of the federal government, there also is uncertainty over whether, when, and under whose direction the State might embark on long-made

plans to develop more outdoor recreation resources of its own.

The most visible sign of doldrums in the outdoor recreation atmosphere is the drying up of government dollars to acquire new park areas and develop and maintain existing ones.

North Carolina is feeling the impact of the drought in both areas.

Lack of both State and federal funds has clouded the

future of the Cape Lookout National Seashore, a future which seemed bright when President Johnson signed a bill early in 1966 authorizing it.

The State has only just embarked on a drive to acquire isolated private land holdings on Core Banks and Portsmouth Island which were not collected in an early land-buying program.

Until the State has completed its part of the bargain

and turned over the two islands to the National Park Service, the federal government is slowed in its own land acquisition on Shackleford Banks. The three islands comprise a 38-mile area which would be within the boundaries of the Cape Lookout National Seashore.

But if the State were suddenly to come upon money and land titles the federal agency might be stymied. Even after

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ounds.

g on nearly all outdoor recreation development projects in the State.

A study group named by Moore is developing a catalog of areas which should be acquired as public recreation areas.

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

claimed 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.

## Main Justification

The major justification for the projects was recreational. Once completed, they would have guaranteed public use of

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

The Corps of Engineers plan to have to put up over \$19.2 million for the various projects (mostly in Dare and Brunswick Counties). So far, neither the State nor local governments have developed anything for supporting

workers in Cape Hatteras National Seashore in the middle of the summer season, and the denial of \$1.5 million for beach erosion control there, was a result of the congressional cuts in the 1968 budget.

Congress cut three per cent off the request for operation and maintenance, but had

ready is planning to fight such a proposal either in the 1969 or 1971 General Assembly.

Conservationists oppose the bridge link because they want the 5-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 mouth of the Cape Fear river.

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 plan.

The service would put about \$100,000 of the park's \$12,000

## Wants No Roads

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

Earlier, society experts had proposed such designation for Shackleford Banks, across from Beaufort City and plan-



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