

State Holding Up Seashore Park

By LUKE WEST
Governmental Affairs Editor

RALEIGH — Sen William W. Staton of Sanford, chairman of the Senate Conservation and Development Committee, charged Tuesday "the state is to blame for holding up the Cape Lookout National Seashore," not the property owners Staton represents.

Staton also said at a news conference that he is innocent of a conflict of interest regarding his serving as an attorney for the property owners — who are appealing land condemnation proceedings — and his service as chairman of the Senate Conservation and Development Committee.

"I can find no basis for the charge of conflict of interest —," said Staton. He refused, however, to say how much money he has received in attorney fees from property owners.

Staton represents property owners of about 725 acres of land at Cape Lookout's Core Banks, part of the proposed site for the national seashore.

His clients are appealing condemnation proceedings on their property due to a difference of opinion over the property's value. Additional

properties are involved in the national seashore program, but Staton said he is not involved in any of the land acquisition matters relating to Cape Lookout.

The property owners Staton represents are Charles Reeves, Jr. and Sam Bass, Reeves' brother-in-law.

Staton said he has been their attorney "since before the 60's — The true fact of the matter is that the state is to blame for holding up the Cape Lookout National Seashore."

"— Mr. Reeves had attempted to work with every administration since the passage of the act (creating the national seashore) to get this matter settled but had been met with nothing but bureaucratic red tape of the same type that caused the people of our state to lose Bald Head Island.

"You will recall that back in the 30's the General Assembly voted to direct the Board of Conservation and Development to purchase Bald Head, but they failed to appropriate funds to carry through and nothing was done.

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Staff Photo By NANCY SZOKAN

Cape Lookout From Top Of Lighthouse