

Landowners join ECOS in suit

Groups seek halt to island highway

by Vernon Loeb
Staff Writer

Property owners in three coastal North Carolina towns have joined ECOS, Inc., and other environmental groups in a suit to halt N.C. Department of Transportation plans to build a five-lane highway through Bogue Banks Island, Drew Diehl, executive director of ECOS, Inc., said Tuesday.

At a hearing next month before the New Bern division of the U.S. Federal District Court for eastern North Carolina, ECOS lawyers Michael Curtis and Tom Schoenbaum, a UNC law professor, will seek a restraining order against possible state plans for an expanded highway system on Bogue Banks. Diehl said they will try to delay the action "because we're not sure what the Highway Department's intentions are."

Bogue Banks Island, which includes the towns of Atlantic Beach, Salter Path and Emerald Isle, is very delicate ecologically, Diehl said. A five-lane highway and the residential and commercial development it would bring to the island could create serious ecological problems there, he said.

The state says it now only plans to widen a potentially dangerous two-lane highway which runs through the island. Charles Adkins, assistant manager of the Planning and Research Division of the Highway Department, said at this time the state only plans the widening but added, "The option to build a five-lane highway is still open to us, but at this point no plans have been made."

Although ECOS objects to any widening

of the road because it thinks the plan is too extensive, Diehl said the basis for the lawsuit is the state's environmental impact statement, a document that must be written by any organization proposing construction that would alter ecological conditions.

Diehl said the impact statement refers at least 10 times to the possibility of a five-lane highway being built through the island, however.

"Impact statements were created to protect the environment and provide citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions concerning ecological affairs," Diehl said. "The state, however, planned a project and then wrote an impact statement to justify it." Duke geologist Orrin Pilkey said the impact statement is a "very inadequate document which overlooks the geological, ecological and sociological effects that a five-lane highway would have on the island."

According to Pilkey, such a highway could:

- act as a seal wall and wipe out the beach at Salter Path because of its reflection of wave energy;
- decrease the amount of fresh water input into the water table and create possible water and sewer problems;
- affect local fisheries due to its drainage systems;
- reduce the sand movement on the island and increase erosion.

"There would be other bad effects on plants and animals that I'm not really qualified to comment on," Pilkey said.



Lester Diggs

Diggs new BSM head

by Vernon Loeb
Staff Writer

Lester Diggs, a junior from High Point majoring in political science and speech, was unanimously elected chairman of the Black Student Movement (BSM) Wednesday.

A member of the BSM for three years, he is also on the Student Attorney General's staff.

Diggs said he will seek total participation of blacks from the University community in the BSM, including black faculty members and administrators as well as Chapel Hill mayor Howard Lee.

"The BSM's function is primarily to provide avenues for expression and fulfillment of the needs of black people of this community," he said.

Diggs also said better rapport must be established between the BSM and the UNC administration. "The attitude of the administrators toward the BSM needs a total change. Their attitude toward us is presently benign sensitivity. I hope it can be changed to one which is nothing less than malign deference," he said.

Diggs said he has been very impressed by the past achievements of the BSM and hopes to direct his "result-oriented administration" toward similar goals.

Housing board admits mistakes

The Chapel Hill Housing Authority Wednesday admitted federal auditors' charges of poor budget management in their agency were true, but said ways to improve accounting were currently under discussion.

The auditors recently criticized public housing accounting and record-keeping procedures followed since 1969.

They also cited faults in the redevelopment program.

Housing officials said they believed the errors in their records were not irregular, considering the long period (five years)

covered in the report.

The auditors found budget overruns of \$36,222 since 1969, including \$14,716 in 1973.

Alvin Stevenson, Housing Authority executive director, is currently completing a report to explain the agency's plans for preventing future errors.

Green attributed the budget errors over the past five years to an inexperienced accounting staff.

He said there will be no public housing budget overruns in the 1974 report.

Jones

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top who make the salaries, according to Jones.

To eliminate the major problem of overcrowding and to protect prisoners from inmate violence, Jones has proposed the construction of a multi-million dollar high-rise prison with individual cells instead of the mass dormitories which now exist.

"There will be no rehabilitation until we can get adequate facilities," he said.

Jones believes "the general public will never be sympathetic to criminals. We do, however, need to educate them to let them know the prisons are not all filled with murderers and rapists."

Jones believes punishment has a definite role in the prison system. "When a person commits a severe crime, he should be severely punished," he said.

Although often mentioned as a Republican gubernatorial candidate in 1976, Jones, a former businessman, emphasized that he had not made any plans at this point. "My major concern right now is the improvement of the prison system."

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