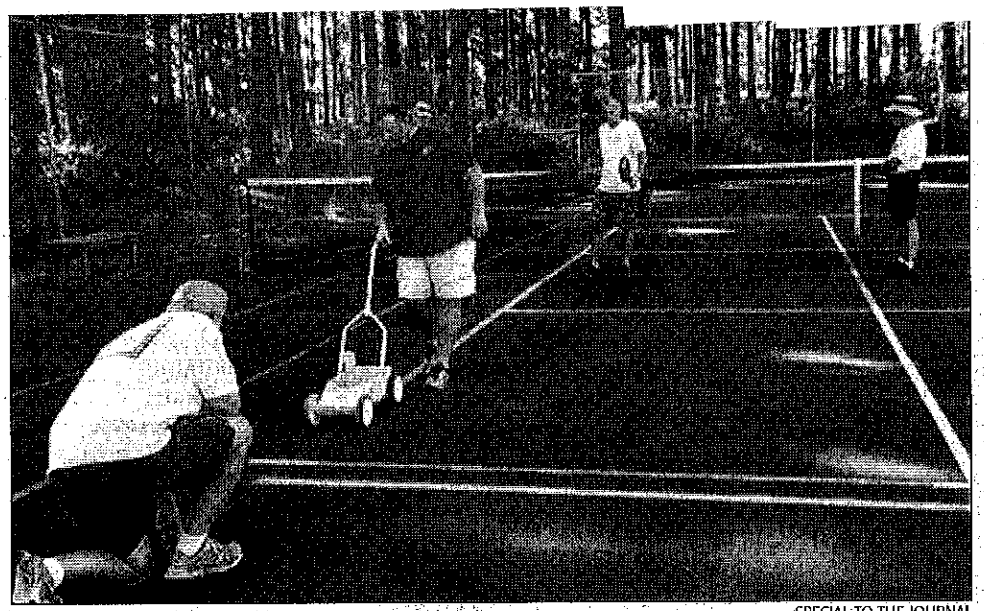


SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

**Pickleball player Doug Hof, left, helps Oconee County director of parks, recreation and tourism Phil Shirley mark pickleball court lines on the tennis courts at South Cove County Park.**

# *South Cove adds pickleball courts*

**BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK**
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — South Cove County Park just got a little bit better. The park's four tennis courts have become dual purpose — offering pickleball players a more convenient outdoor venue.

A combination of tennis, badminton and ping-pong, pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports in the country. The easy-to-learn and fun-to-play game came to Seneca in February, and it's still played every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to noon at Gignilliat Community Center.

"I've had a lot of people call me and say they'd like to play, but since we play in the weekday mornings it's inconvenient for their schedules because they work," pickleball start-up coordinator Dave Hartman said. "This gives them a nice place to play when they're available to play."

Oconee County director of parks, recreation and tourism Phil Shirley said the long-term plan is to rebuild the courts and paint them for dual purpose, which would create a total of eight pickleball courts and add two more tennis courts. But until the budget allows for the renovations, the courts can now accommodate both sports.

"We didn't want to wait any longer," he said. "We decided to just go ahead and put some lines on what we've got. We bought the paint and went out there and took care of it."

Shirley said the project wasn't expensive. The park already owns a machine to mark lines, so it only cost about $50 plus Shirley's time and the time volunteered by a group of dedicated pickleball players.

Since the park is open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. and the courts are well-lit, more people will be able to play the game. Shirley has already noticed an influx of park visitors from the addition, and many more annual passes are being sold.

"This allows another user group to come into the park," Shirley said. "Our goal is to provide as much as we can to as many as we can, so this is very beneficial for us and for our community."

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