

Getting in a pickle

Pickleball taking over one county park

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
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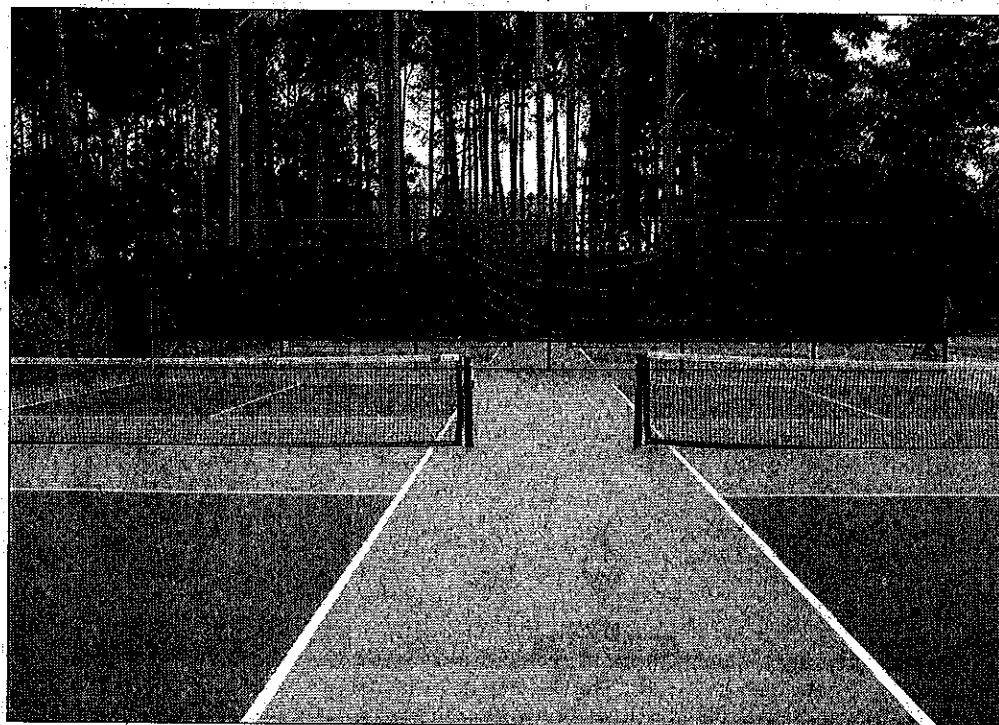
SENECA — “An explosion of pickleball” has taken over South Cove County Park and led the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission to recommend more than \$20,000 in funding to add another court for the sport this winter.

Parks, Recreation and Tourism director Phil Shirley received a recommendation last week from the committee for \$23,000 in funding to add another pickleball court at the park, replacing a current tennis court.

Shirley said more than a year ago courts were redone at the park and four tennis courts were available.

“We took one of those tennis courts and turned it into four pickleball courts,” he said. “What we’ve seen is an explosion of pickleball. It’s less harmful on the knees and not as much moving as tennis, and it’s taken off like crazy. Four pickleball courts fit onto one tennis court and you can house 16 people playing on one court. Then they’re taking the second tennis court and putting tape down and starting to play on it, and now they’re starting to get on my third tennis court.”

At any given time, Shir-



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Pickleball courts at South Cove County Park may soon become more common as the demand for the sport increases.

ley said he will see 30-40 people waiting to get on a pickleball court. Currently, only 20 can play.

“We very rarely have all three tennis courts full,” Shirley said. “When we do, it’s one person on each one with a machine hitting their own ball. We’ve got a couple folks who live close by and bring their own machine down for practice. We’ve only got a handful of people that are playing tennis in the mornings and evenings. Pickleball has just taken over.”

After the project’s completion, Shirley said he would have to turn to another location if the sport’s popularity continued to grow.

“This will be the most I’ll do for pickleball at that particular location,” he said. “If we outgrow that, I’ll have to look at another place somewhere else to add pickleball, because I need to keep the tennis courts.”

Shirley told the committee the work to renovate a current tennis court into

a pickleball court cost about \$15,000 with an additional \$7,500 coming in to repaint all the courts. Shirley added \$500 in contingency funds for the project.

The recommendation for funds will go to the Sept. 17 Oconee County Council meeting for final approval.

rmorningstar@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6685