1 – Project Goal

The goal of this project was to thoughtfully expand and enhance visitor access to Harbison Forest while preserving its natural character and promoting sustainable use.

To achieve this, we collaborated with the **South Carolina Forestry Commission, Harbison State Forest Management** and a **civil engineer** to develop a strategic site plan. This plan was designed to:

- **Double the existing parking capacity**
- **Maintain the visual and ecological integrity of the forest**
- **Minimize tree loss during construction**
- **Accommodate key infrastructure upgrades**, including a water station, improved bike facilities, gating, updated kiosks, and enhanced ADA accessibility

In keeping with our commitment to sustainability, trees that were removed were responsibly milled and repurposed as interior paneling for the South Carolina Forestry Commission office—ensuring that materials were reused in a meaningful, conservation-minded way.

2 – The Goals Achieved

- **Improved Safety:** Doubling the parking capacity eliminated the need for roadside parking along active roads, reducing traffic hazards—especially important due to increased visitation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Modernized Payment System:** A new fee kiosk streamlined the parking pass process, improving efficiency and increasing user compliance.
- **Environmental Protection:** Upgraded gating allows trails to be closed during wet conditions, preventing erosion and preserving trail integrity. The elimination of roadside parking also stopped further damage to forest edges.
- **Increased Capacity & Access:** The expanded lot doubled the number of available spaces, significantly improving access to the forest for a growing number of visitors. The inclusion of dedicated ADA-accessible spaces ensures the site remains inclusive for individuals of all abilities.
- **Revenue Growth:** Higher permit sales from the new lot provide sustainable funding for ongoing forest maintenance and improvements.
- **Infrastructure Enhancements:** The addition of an ADA-accessible water station, an upgraded bike wash station, and improved communication boards modernized the site and enhanced the visitor experience.
- **Education & Outreach:** Updated kiosks and signage now offer visitors detailed information about rules, forest management practices, trail etiquette, and the mission of the Friends of Harbison.

3 – How the Public Benefited from the Project

- **Safer Access:** Expanded parking, improved lighting, and the removal of roadside parking significantly reduced the risk of accidents, creating a safer environment for both drivers and pedestrians.
- **Improved Visitor Experience:** Organized, accessible parking and a streamlined payment system made visits smoother, more efficient, and more enjoyable.
- **Better Trail Conditions:** Gating allows for temporary trail closures during heavy rainfall, preserving trail quality for hiking, biking, and other recreational use.
- **Greater Access for All:** With more parking and enhanced amenities, a broader range of visitors —including families, pet owners, and cyclists—can enjoy the forest's resources.
- **Support for Cyclists & Pet Owners:** The new ADA water station serves both visitors and their pets, while the upgraded bike station helps conserve water and support active use.
- **Increased Awareness:** Enhanced signage and a central communication board provide clear, accessible information on responsible use, forest rules, and conservation efforts.
- **Reinvestment in Public Benefit:** Revenue from increased permit sales is reinvested into trail upkeep, facility improvements, and habitat conservation—creating a sustainable cycle of public benefit.

Overall Impact

Together, these improvements enhance safety, protect natural resources, promote responsible forest use, and provide a more inclusive, enjoyable, and informed experience for all Harbison Forest visitors.

Gratefully,

Diane Perdue-Shupe

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Vice President, Friends of Harbison State Forest Board

friends
OF HARBISON STATE FOREST