

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pickerel Lake Conservancy Announces 80-Acre Land Purchase

July 2, 2024 --Today, The Pickerel Lake Conservancy (PLC) has announced the purchase of 80 acres of property in the Chekapa Creek watershed. This will be preserved as natural wetland and prairie and will create significant protection for the water quality of Pickerel Lake.

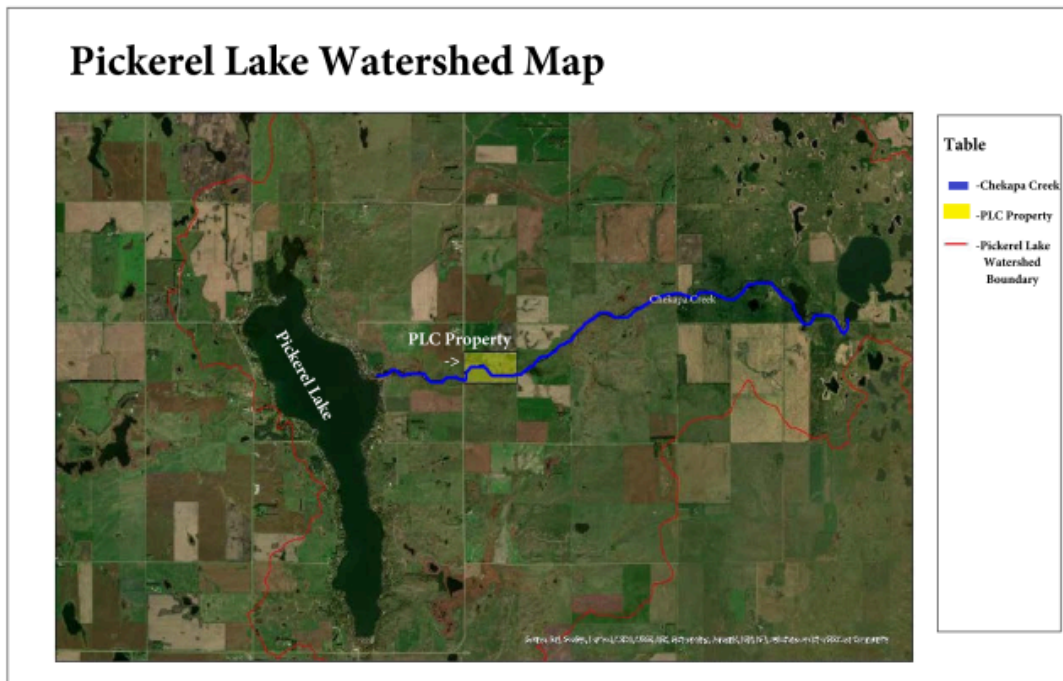
According to Mark Schulze, PLC President, "The PLC has taken another step to expand our footprint into the watershed to protect the water quality for the long term. Chekapa Creek is a primary tributary flowing into Pickerel Lake, and this protection will have a meaningful impact on the water quality of the lake well into the future."

PLC has acquired the 80-acre Stanley Gruby farm and homestead property, now known as the Chekapa Creek Watershed Project, thanks to the generosity of donors to the Conservancy's Watershed Protection Fund. The Watershed Protection Fund was established in 2018 by the PLC to support permanent protection of water quality on Pickerel Lake. Property acquisition allows the establishment of permanent vegetative buffers in sensitive areas of the lake's 19,779 acre watershed to prevent erosion and runoff from contaminating the lake.

Chekapa Creek, which drains from One Road Lake four miles east of the property, is one of Pickerel's two major tributaries. Chekapa meanders the entire half-mile length of this property and is joined near the east end of the property by another southerly flowing ephemeral stream. These features make this acreage a vital segment of the Conservancy's initiative to protect Pickerel's water quality for future generations.

PLC is working with Cory Zirbel, Project Manager for the Prairie Coteau Watershed Improvement and Protection Project at the Day Conservation District, to enroll much of the property into conservation programs, including RBI (Riparian Buffer Initiative) and SRAM (Seasonal Riparian Area Management).

The PLC is profoundly grateful to the family of Stanley and Sadie Gruby who chose to sell the property to the PLC, and to the supporters of the Pickerel Lake Conservancy whose contributions enabled the purchase of this significant portion of the watershed so it can be preserved and protected. The PLC plans to erect a monument on the land paying tribute to the Gruby family, whose original homestead was here.



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Pickerel Lake is a 955-acre spring-fed lake located in Day County, South Dakota. Pickerel Lake is part of the Glacial Lakes Region that encompasses much of Northeast South Dakota and stretches along the Coteau des Prairies hills. The area was formed thousands of years ago by glacial activity.

The Pickerel Lake Conservancy (PLC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization run entirely by volunteers with a mission to protect the water quality, natural resources and eco-systems of Pickerel Lake and the surrounding watershed for future generations. More info at PickerelLakeConservancy.org

About Stanley and Sadie Gruby

This 80-acre property, the Chekapa Creek Watershed Project, is dedicated to the memory of Stanley and Sadie Gruby, who made their home here, as newlyweds, in 1938. They raised five children on this homestead, all of whom attended the District 176 Kosciusko Township School north of their farm.

During their decades in this place, Stanley and Sadie formed lasting friendships with many Pickerel Lake people who came to depend on the Grubys to watch over and help maintain their lake properties. Stanley's skill as a builder was particularly well known and prized. Many reminders of his solid integrity and craftsmanship still stand on Pickerel's banks, including cabins, stonework and other structures. Sadie was a wonderful cook and baker, and together the couple managed and operated two lakeside resorts: RoyKota Beach at Roy Lake from 1957 to 1961, and the East Shore Resort, formerly known as Hyde Park, on Pickerel Lake from 1962 to 1964. The demanding standard of service and hospitality they maintained during those years was never surpassed before or since.

Stanley died in 2003, Sadie in 2011. Their graves are in the cemetery at Zoar Lutheran Church, visible on the ridge to the north. Stanley and Sadie were active Zoar Church members until it closed in 1963. The church's lovely Gothic revival building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is open to visitors year-round.

The Pickerel Lake Conservancy acquired this property from the family of Stanley and Sadie, Helen and Eugene Wike, and it is now under permanent protection as a natural prairie.

