Whirlpool State Park Rim Trail and Overlook

1. Project Description

The Niagara Gorge Rim Trail takes hikers to an overlook that provides unparalleled views of the Niagara River Whirlpool, and Lower Rapids. This location was first improved in the 1940’s to include natural stone stairs, stone pavement and a natural stone monument with integral stone seating. The Overlook was dedicated with the placement of a plaque, as evidenced by an outline carved into the face of the rock. The plaque has been missing for many years and the dedication remains a mystery.

Time, and gravity, has exacted their toll on this overlook. The retaining wall that supports the overlook pavement has partially collapsed which in turn has pulled the footings out from under the barrier railing. The pavement and approaching stair have also started to slide in the downhill direction. In addition the stone paving has been overlaid with asphalt. Nearby lengths of the Rim Trail have been closed because of the erosion of supporting soils due primarily to undirected drainage from upland park areas, and from the foot traffic of fisherman that enter and exit the gorge via the wash-out areas.

We would like to rebuild the overlook retaining walls, replace the railing and footings with the new design barrier rail, and rehabilitate the natural stone pavements and stairs by removing the asphalt veneer and rebuilding the floor and stairs. We would like to also move upland threatened portions of the Rim Trail, control drainage, and improve access to the Overlook with a ramp, landings and parallel railings.

2. Consistency with Key Principles, Goals and Criteria for the Niagara Greenway

- **Improve Access/Connectivity/Make Connections/Development of an Integrated Trail and Park System** – This project is part of an interrelated trail system both in and along the rim of the Niagara Gorge. This is a segment of the rim trail at Whirlpool State Park. The rim trail extends from Niagara Falls State Park to Devil’s Hole State Park. The upgrading of this section will serve as the “model” for the upgrading of the entire length of the rim trail.

- **Celebrate History and Heritage** – Interpretive signage will be updated and upgraded and will provide information on the formation of the gorge and uniqueness of the Whirlpool

- **Focus Area** - This project is located along the rim of the Niagara River Gorge and is consistent with the Niagara River Greenway principles and vision statement.

3. Project Budget

   (a) capital costs
Planning/Design $ 40,000
Construction $440,000
Administration $ 20,000 (includes construction management)
Total project cost $500,000

(b) maintenance costs
The proposed project is part of the New York State Park system (Whirlpool State Park) and is maintained by the Niagara Region of NYSOPRHP.

4. Planning Documents / Support

This project is consistent with the “draft” Niagara Gorge Trail System Development and Improvement Plan.

5. Environmental Setting / Existing Conditions

The project is located along the rim of the Niagara River Gorge within Whirlpool State Park. The proposal will rehabilitate an existing facility. No natural systems or areas will be affected. Refer to attached photographs for existing site conditions.

6. SEQR Compliance

The project is consistent with the draft trail system development plan. A long form Environmental Assessment Form will be filled out and any required mitigation measures will be identified. The Environmental Assessment will be undertaken and coordinated through NYSOPRHP’s Resource Management Group and Environmental Management Bureau.