



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

RANDY SIMONS
Commissioner *Pro Tempore*

JOHN HONAN
Western Capital District Manager



**Niagara River Greenway Commission
Greenway Related Projects and Programs**

**Niagara Falls State Park Wayfinding Signage
Project Submission
August 2024**

Niagara River Greenway Commission Consultation and Review Form

Date of Submittal:

Project Registration Number (*office use only*):

Type of Review Required (please check one):

- Mandatory Consultation for proposals seeking Greenway Funding
- Voluntary Review and/or Endorsement for proposals not seeking Greenway Funding

PROJECT SPONSOR INFORMATION

Name:	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Mailing Address:	P.O. Box 1132, Niagara Falls
State:	New York
Zip Code:	14303-0132
Federal ID#:	14-740026K
Charities Registration #:	

PROJECT TYPE (Please check only ONE)

- Trail Development / Improvement
 - Interpretation / Cultural Monuments
 - Ecosystem / Riparian Habitat Restoration
 - Stewardship
- Niagara River Greenway Placemaking / Public Access / Wayfinding

FUNDING COMMITTEE

- Host Community Standing Committee
- Ecological Standing Committee
- Buffalo and Erie County Standing Committee
- State Parks Standing Committee
- Unsure at this time / N/A

TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES

Source	Amount

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name:	<u>Niagara Falls State Park Wayfinding Signage</u>
Location (include GPS coordinates if possible):	
Project Site Address:	Niagara Falls State Park - 332 Prospect St, Niagara Falls
State:	New York
Zip Code:	14303
Minor Civil Division(s):	
County:	Niagara
Project Proponent Property Interest (own, lease, easement or other):	

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

Name:	<u>John Honan</u>
Title:	Western Capital District Manager
Business Address:	3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
State:	New York
Zip Code:	14305
Work Number:	716-299-0811
Cell Number:	716-990-2449
E-Mail Address:	john.honan@parks.ny.gov

PROJECT POINT OF CONTACT

Name:	<u>John Honan</u>
Title:	Western Capital District Manager
Organization / Firm:	NYS OPRHP
Business Address:	3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
State:	New York
Zip Code:	14305
Work Number:	716-299-0811
Cell Number:	716-990-2449
E-Mail Address:	john.honan@parks.ny.gov

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Please attach material which responds to the following six items in the order that they are presented.

1. In a brief paragraph, describe the project and its purpose, how and when it will be accomplished, and why it is important.

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) is requesting funding to complete wayfinding signage design and construction drawings for parks along the Niagara River Corridor. The parks focused on in this project include Niagara Falls State Park, Whirlpool State Park, Devil's Hole State Park, and DeVeaux Woods State Park. NYSOPRHP has received significant capital investments in recent years, including the creation of Riverway, Gorgeview and the Niagara Falls State Park Welcome Center. The current signage has evolved over decades through various phased projects and is inconsistent. The wayfinding signage project will upgrade all signage at once to the current NYSOPRHP standards, provide standardization throughout the Niagara River Corridor parks, and properly integrate the Niagara River Greenway Shoreline Trail.

NYSOPRHP hired Starr Whitehouse to plan, design and create construction drawings for wayfinding signage for parks in the Niagara River Corridor. This work has been broken up into multiple phases. Phase 1 and 2 focused on identifying and mapping key point of interest within the Niagara River Corridor to create a comprehensive inventory of the existing signage system. This work was finished in early 2023. Phase 3 of the project requires more funding to complete design work and provide NYSOPRHP with final construction drawings. This phase also includes detailed design, development, and production artwork for wayfinding maps, and identification of sitewide interpretive signage opportunities with recommendations for removal, replacement, new locations, and overall content. Information will be carefully curated and presented to facilitate ease of wayfinding, and to ensure a positive experience for all. All signage will comply with NYSOPRHP Wayfinding Signage Guidelines and Niagara River Greenway Shoreline Trail signage standards where applicable.

2. Referring to the Niagara River Greenway Plan, clearly document and describe how the proposed project will advance the Niagara River Greenway vision including the goals, principles, and criteria that define that vision.

- Excellence/ Ecological Integrity: The Niagara River Corridor was designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) for its significance in providing habitat to over 338 species of migratory and resident birds. It is the first IBA to be recognized by both Canada and the United States. This area was also listed as the 40th Ramsar Site in the United States, designating the corridor as a wetland of international importance. These designations help preserve and protect these natural resources and wildlife habitats in the parks. Including this information on new interpretive signage can showcase these exceptional and rare designations and demonstrate how NYSOPRHP and the Niagara River Greenway support preserving these globally significant resources.
- Accessibility/ Connectivity: One goal of the wayfinding project focuses on identifying and marking ADA accessible trails on new signage. Considering the trail system along the Niagara Gorge, which was developed over decades, current signage does not properly outline all ADA accessible trails, nor does it clearly outline how all trails connect within the same trail system. Updating signage will provide a sense of

continuity as visitors travel through the parks while also bringing them front and center to views of the Niagara Falls and Niagara River, only found in the Niagara River Corridor.

- Public Well-Being: The wayfinding project aims to promote public well-being by identifying key points of interest in the parks along the Niagara River Corridor. Once signage is updated to current NYSOPRHP standards, park users will be able to easily and confidently navigate parks and find different amenities such as trails, viewsheds, and concessionaires; encouraging them to use the parks and get outdoors.
- Authenticity/ Celebration: The proposed project will celebrate the unique natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources in the Niagara Falls area and Niagara Gorge through interpretive signage included in the wayfinding design package. Interpretive signage will be placed at overlooks, along trails, and at key points of interest to educate park users on the exceptional resources which make the Niagara River Corridor one of a kind.
- Partnerships: If the Niagara River Greenway funds this project, it would further strengthen the existing partnership between both groups. Many parks within the Niagara River Corridor are connected to the Niagara River Greenway Shoreline Trail. Updating signage to current NYSOPRHP standards would improve the wayfinding experience and help guide park users through the parks and the Shoreline Trail.
- Community Based: Upgrading signage to the current NYSOPRHP standards will aid the local community and out of town visitors alike by providing a sense of continuity as visitors travel through the parks. Updated signage will identify and guide park users to various recreational opportunities, educate them on historic and cultural resources, and outline connections to the city through public trail systems like the Shoreline Trail.

3. Define the budget for the total proposed project and include costs for the following:

Planning	\$ 550,000.00
Construction	\$ TBD
Acquisition	\$
Administration	\$
Operation and Maintenance / Year	\$
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$ 550,000.00

Identify all sources of funding and the amount of funding expected from each source. Identify and quantify funds that are already on hand or have been allocated for the proposed project. Explain how the project will be operated and maintained.

All funding requested will be allocated towards finalizing wayfinding signage design with Starr Whitehouse. Phase 1 and 2 of mapping and analysis is complete, however, funding needs to be secured to complete design and procure construction drawings from the consultant. The project is being managed by NYSOPRHP capital staff. Once construction is finished, it will be operated and maintained by NYSOPRHP maintenance staff.

- 4. Describe the measures taken at the local level to gain community and government support for this project (hearings, petitions, public surveys, resolutions of support or other methods). If this project has been cited or described in a local planning document or some equivalent thereof, attach copies of that documentation highlighting the sections that are relevant to the proposed project. Describe the role of municipal agencies, stakeholder groups, consultants, volunteers or others who will be involved in the proposed project.**

NYSOPRHP has consulted with stakeholders throughout Phase 1 and 2 to collaborate on preliminary design work. Stakeholders with a common interest in improving wayfinding signage include the City of Niagara Falls, the Aquarium of Niagara, and the Niagara River Greenway. Any improvements within NYSOPRHP affects the overall Niagara Falls area since many features interconnect. Involving these groups in the design process allows NYSOPRHP to create a uniform and cohesive signage system to be used by state parks and stakeholders alike.

The City of Niagara Falls and NYSOPRHP often work closely on projects within the Niagara River Corridor parks due to the overlap of commerce between facilities in the city and on NYSOPRHP property. Existing maps mark points of interest within the park, like Cave of the Winds and Maid of the Mist, and attractions outside of NYSOPRHP limits, such as the Third Street Entertainment District and the Niagara Falls Convention Center. The Discovery Niagara Shuttle takes patrons around Niagara Falls State Park and into the city to explore different attractions and amenities in the area. Updating signage to assist park users in finding these locations not only benefits NYSOPRHP, but also the surrounding city and tourism area.

The Aquarium of Niagara is located toward the north end of Niagara Falls State Park proper where the south end of Gorgeview begins. This attraction is a popular destination for visitors on the Niagara Scenic Trolley which solely runs throughout Niagara Falls State Park. The aquarium recently acquired the vacant Discovery Center building, located on NYSOPRHP property and adjacent to the aquarium. This facility will now expand the aquarium and its offerings to the public. Improved wayfinding signage will outline this recent development and assist with directing more visitors to the aquarium and its new Great Lakes 360 expansion.

The Niagara River Greenway is essential to this project due to the Shoreline Trail and how it connects numerous parks within the Niagara River Corridor. The Shoreline Trail is essential to include on wayfinding signage and maps to improve the wayfinding experience. New Shoreline Trail signs will be added where appropriate and each will comply with the Wayfinding Standards and Signage Maintenance Manual provided by the Niagara River Greenway. All content and locations will be reviewed and approved by the Niagara River Greenway before construction drawings are finalized.

- 5. Describe and document the environmental setting and existing conditions at the proposed project site. If you are not the owner of the property include a letter(s) or resolution(s) evidencing support for the project by the owner. Provide photographs, conceptual plans and drawings that show the site as it presently exists and how the site will change with the addition of the proposed project. Describe how your project will comply with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). The existence of wetlands, significant upland and aquatic habitats, and plant or animal species that are classified as rare, threatened, or endangered should be noted. Explain how such natural resources will be protected and/or enhanced. Cite any relevant project-related studies.**

The Niagara River Corridor is best known for Niagara Falls State Park and the variety of attractions and points of interest which bring in millions of visitors to the park each year. Some of the most notable points of interest available include views of the American Rapids, American Falls, Bridal Veil Falls, and Horseshoe Falls, Cave of the Winds, Maid of the Mist boat tours, Goat Island, and the Prospect Point Observation Tower.

The attractions mentioned wouldn't be possible without the Niagara Falls itself, which is why NYSOPRHP continues to protect and consider impacts to the environment through consultation with NYSOPRHP Environmental Stewardship staff, Environmental Analysts, and staff from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). All projects are reviewed through SEQR to determine the level of impact it could have on environment.

The stretch of land from Niagara Falls State Park to Devil's Hole State Park contains a significant natural community called calcareous cliff. This significant community is found on vertical cliffs of limestone or dolomite. These cliffs have minimal amounts of soil and vegetation is usually sparse. Plant species found in this habitat rely on the microclimate conditions, which can range from shady and moist to sun-exposed and dry. This community type is vulnerable to disappearing in New York State due to threats like mineral extraction, recreational overuse, and invasive species. It also provides habitat to numerous protected species which require this unique set of conditions to survive.

The NYSOPRHP Environmental Analyst for the Niagara Region will review this project before it is advertised and constructed to determine the level of impact it will have on these important features mentioned. The wayfinding signage project is expected to have minimal impact on the environment, but the project has not been reviewed yet since signage locations will be finalized in Phase 3. It is expected that some signs will be removed, and some will replace existing signage, limiting disturbance in new locations. Other signs will be relocated to new, more favorable locations, likely in pre-disturbed soil. SHPO will be notified about the project once draft construction drawings are available and will be able to provide feedback before SEQR is completed by the OPRHP Environmental Analyst. This will all take place before the project is advertised.

- 6. **Please attach the proposed project timeline, identify any relevant milestones, and provide an estimated date for project completion/opening. If funded, it is expected that the project sponsor or point of contact will notify the Commission of the project opening date as it nears completion. (Note: This addition to the application was made September 2018.)**

Project Schedule	
100% Construction Drawings	September 2024 – August 2025
Advertisement	September 2025
Construction	April 2026
Substantial Completion	*September 2026

*Depending on total project costs and available construction funding, the project may be implemented in phases.

Appendix A: Project Area Maps



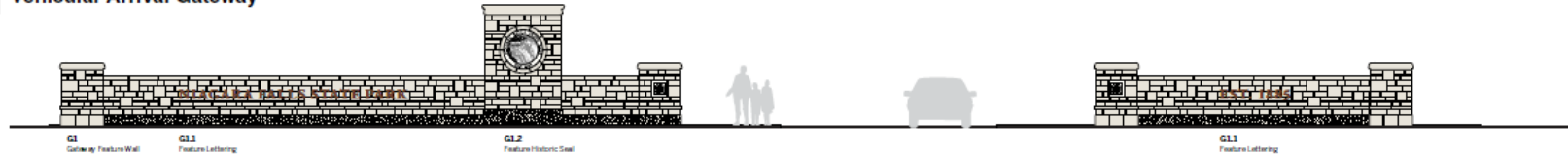
Figure 1 is the Niagara Gorge State Parks map found on the NYSOPRHP website. It includes many points of interest and trails, including the Shoreline Trail marked in teal. This trail connects Niagara Falls State Park to Devils Hole State Park and beyond.

Appendix B: Excerpts from Phase 1 and 2 – Wayfinding & Park Identity

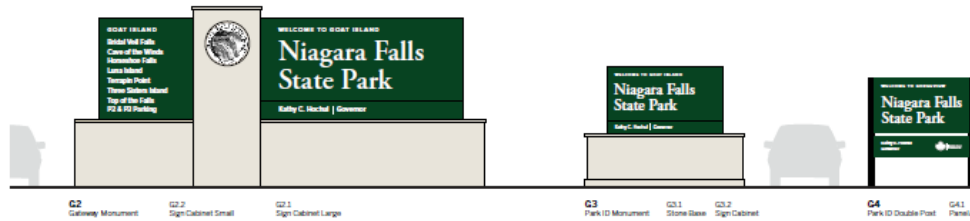
2.2 Sign System Overview

50% DRAFT

Vehicular Arrival Gateway



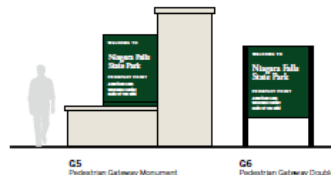
Vehicular Arrival Gateway



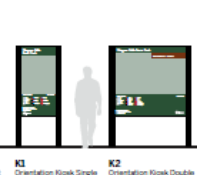
Vehicular Wayfinding + Parking ID



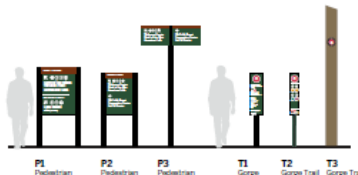
Pedestrian Arrival Gateway



Orientation



Wayfinding



Place ID



Regulation



Education

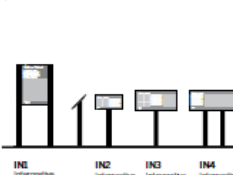


Figure 2 provides an overview of sign styles in the NYSOPRHP Wayfinding Signage Guidelines. New wayfinding signage will comply with these standards.

Appendix B: Excerpts from Phase 1 and 2 – Wayfinding & Park Identity

Wayfinding Plan

GORGEVIEW 1 - EXISTING

The Gorgeview trail system is unique in its rustic character which is a delightful contrast with the more formally developed areas of the park. As such signage should be kept minimal and focus telling park visitors about the trail system, the lengths and difficulty of the trails and history of the Great Gorge rail line which once ran along the lower shores of the Niagara River.

The Shoreline Trail runs north-south through the Gorgeview area and will likely have increased usage with the near term completion of the Robert Moses Parkway de-mapping.

Key sighttypes include:

- Kiosk with Map
- Trail Signs
- Regulatory
- Interpretative

LEGEND

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| ● Building Mounted [12] | ● Recommended Removal [0] |
| ● Interpretive [5] | ● Trail Sign Direction [7] |
| ● Pedestrian [13] | ● Gateway Entry [4] |
| ● Shoreline Trail [3] | ● Other [1] |
| ● Finger Boards [1] | ● Regulatory [4] |
| ● Orientation Map [4] | ● Vehicular Direction [2] |



Figure 3 is an example of the signage study completed in Phase 1 of the project. All signs throughout the Niagara Gorge parks were inventoried, categorized, and mapped like the image shown above.

Appendix B: Excerpts from Phase 1 and 2 – Wayfinding & Park Identity

3.2.2 Logotype(s) and Relationships

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Partners

Niagara Falls State Park has a unique partnership with the Aquarium of Niagara in that the two campuses share land and have destinations that are intertwined. In some instances their logotypes will be applied side by side to indicate an equal relationship.

Associates

Associates are entities that serve many destinations, of which Niagara Falls State Park is one. The Niagara River Greenway's Shoreline Trail and Niagara Falls National Heritage Area's Shuttle service provides important connections that contribute significantly to the visitors ability to move through and experience the park. Delaware North provides concessions within the park and their Niagara Falls website is an important supplement to marketing efforts.

Neighbors

The neighbors we have studied and considered include the the City of Niagara Falls Tourism and ArtPark State Park. In both cases

Partner

Aquarium of Niagara



Associate

Shoreline Trail

Niagara River Greenway



Discover Niagara Shuttle

Niagara Falls National Heritage Area



Niagara Falls Experience

Delaware North



Neighbor

Destination Niagara USA



ArtPark State Park



Signage and Wayfinding Guidelines
July 24, 2024

Section 3
pg 5

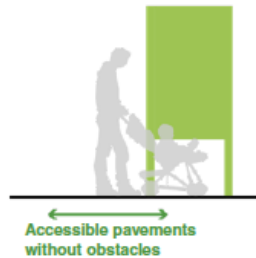
Figure 4 outlines the companies and organizations which are partnered, associated with, or neighbors to NYSOPRHP.

Appendix B: Excerpts from Phase 1 and 2 – Wayfinding & Park Identity

2.3.1 Sign Placement

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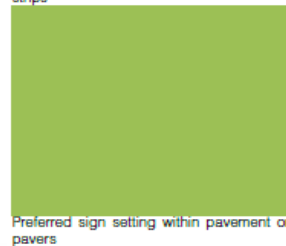
Accessibility



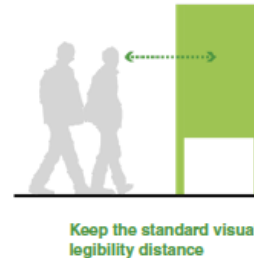
Equitable accessibility is essential, especially for directional signs and maps. It is important to ensure everyone, including wheelchair and stroller users, can access the information. Some existing signs are in poor condition, with muddy areas in front of them.

Considerations:

- Set sign height so that the content can be read between 35" and 42".
- Place signs in smooth pavement so the sign can be easily accessed from a wheel chair and from all sides.
- Ensure there is enough clearance between the sign and the peak pedestrian flow along any given path.



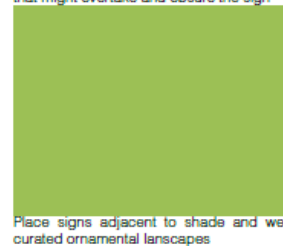
Legibility



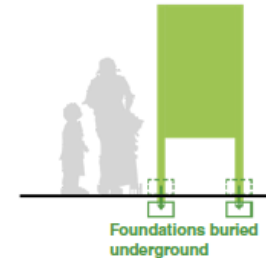
Legibility for all visitors is one of the most important elements of signs. Currently, some of the signs are too far from the pathway and not legible for visitors as the photo shows. Legibility can be improved not only by the design of the signs but also by their placement. Ensuring standard visual legibility distance is required to bring visitors close enough to the signs. Additionally, fences and plants should not be placed between the pathways and the signs to facilitate this.

Considerations:

- Place signs adjacent to, but not within ornamental plant beds.
- Place signs within shaded areas to avoid sign glare on sunny days as well as a pleasant setting.
- Ensure that the physical distance of the sign from the visitor allows for access to all of the sign.



Structure



The foundations of the signs should be buried underground and not visually unobtrusive and protected from damage. Currently, most of the foundations are exposed, as the photo indicates. It is important to bury them underground not only from a barrier-free perspective but also from an aesthetic perspective. This will significantly improve the aesthetics of the signs by making them simpler and more solid. A structure that allows the signs to be replaced without disturbing the underground foundation is recommended. Details need to be developed.

Considerations:

- Don't let sign foundations obstruct circulation. Place flush or below grade.
- Provide sleeves for any above grade components.



Figure 5 outlines key principals that the NYSOPRHP signage guidelines abide by.

Appendix B: Excerpts from Phase 1 and 2 – Wayfinding & Park Identity

Park Identity & Extents

A New Wayfinding System

An improved wayfinding system uniquely suited to Niagara Falls State Park and reflecting its sublime beauty will knit together the park in its entirety.

New maps and consistent messaging designed to communicate, while increasing awareness of and accessibility to the greater park extents, will inform visitors of the extensive assets throughout the Niagara Falls State park system.



Figure 6 shows a few examples of signs currently installed at Niagara Falls State Park, Gorgeview, and Whirlpool State Park. New signage will conform to updated NYSOPRHP signage guidelines and provide more standardization throughout the parks.

Appendix B: Excerpts from Phase 1 and 2 – Wayfinding & Park Identity

Mapping Information Analysis

EXISTING SIGNAGE MAPS - NFSP ORIENTATION KIOSKS - SINGLE SIDED



NFSP Orientation Kiosk:
Typical Single Panel, Single Sided



NFSP Orientation Kiosk: Typical Double Panel, Single Sided



NFSP Orientation Kiosk:
Single Panel, Single Sided



Figure 7 shows examples of existing single sided maps at Niagara Falls State Park. Updating signage to current NYSOPRHP standards will provide a sense of continuity and improve the overall wayfinding experience.