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St. Croix National Scenic Riverway News Release

Release Date: January 25, 2022

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Fairy Falls Day Use Area Site Planning Process Update

Public shares ideas for visitor use and park management of the site

ST. CROIX FALLS, Wisconsin: St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is currently exploring opportunities for improving safety, protecting the natural environment, and enhancing visitor experiences at the Fairy Falls Day Use Area, located near Stillwater, Minnesota.

Fairy Falls Day Use Area is a 54-acre natural area located in Stillwater Township. Deep ravines and steep bluffs surround Silver Creek as it passes through a marsh on its way to the St. Croix River. The area has a long history of human use and its ecological diversity provides habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Fairy Falls Day Use Area is currently closed to the public due to lack of safe visitor access and deteriorating social trails along steep slopes.

In October and November 2021, Riverway staff invited public comments to gather input and ideas for the future of Fairy Falls Day Use Area. Over 40 comments from members of the public and partners were submitted during a month-long public comment period, and over 30 individuals attended two virtual open houses held on October 19 and October 21, 2021. "The Riverway extends its appreciation to the public for their enthusiastic participation in this process and their thoughtful input on the future of this significant site," said Terri Hogan, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway interim superintendent.

Commenters noted a variety of issues and opportunities at Fairy Falls Day Use Area and summaries of these are provided below.

Park management suggestions: Commenters shared possible solutions for the parking situation, including trailhead and parking lot locations, connection opportunities, and parking management solutions such as permits. Other comments about management included provision of basic

amenities such as trash cans, restroom facilities, and benches or picnic areas. Commenters also noted opportunities for natural and cultural resource interpretation and education, such as signage about plants, wildlife, and historic resources at the site.

Visitor use and experience suggestions: Many comments included suggestions for improved visitor access, better maps and signage on the trails, and dedicated viewing areas for Fairy Falls. Others requested allowing or supporting different or additional recreational uses such as mountain biking, archery-only hunting, and ice climbing. Some commenters suggested a volunteer corps for stewarding trails and picking up trash, and several commenters offered to participate. Several comments noted the opportunity to better connect the Fairy Falls Day Use Area with the rest of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, both in terms of on-the-ground links but also interpretation and educational connections.

The fall 2021 public outreach and comment period was the first step in the Fairy Falls Day Use Area planning process. These comments and ideas will be used as park staff prepare a range of possible future alternatives for the site. Riverway staff will continue to engage the public during the process, and they will assess compliance needs under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental regulations.

Any project updates throughout the process can be found at the "Planning for Fairy Falls" link at <https://www.nps.gov/sacn> or by calling the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Headquarters at 715-483-2274.

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*The **St. Croix National Scenic Riverway**, a unit of the National Park System, was established by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968. It is one of a group of eight rivers in the country which first received this recognition. For over 200 miles, the St. Croix and its tributary, the Namekagon, flow through some of the most scenic and least developed country in the Upper Midwest.*