

## Miners Falls Viewing Platforms and Steps Replacement



The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing infrastructure repairs to the Miners Falls viewing platforms and staircases. Miners Falls is located off of Miners Castle Road, about 10 miles northeast of Munising, Michigan. The fast-flowing Miners River drops about 60 feet over a sandstone outcrop, creating the park's most powerful waterfall. The walk from the parking area to the waterfall is 0.6 miles down a gently-rolling path through the forest which leads to an upper and a lower overlook.

Miners Falls Trail is a gravel path through a deep woods environment which leads to two overlooks to Miners River and a waterfall that plunges approximately 60 feet over a cliff. The overlooks are the terminus of the trail. However, one of the overlooks has deteriorated overtime and no longer exists. The structures are constructed of treated timbers and lumber. The

staircase and lower overlook are situated on a steep slope, extending approximately midway down the valley hillslope. Historically, there is evidence that a previous staircase provided access to the bottom of the valley.

Due to age and location within a frequently damp forested area of limited sun exposure, the current structures are progressively deteriorating to a state of potential safety concern for the visiting public. Additionally, public demand for access to the river has created undesignated trails which are causing erosion and damage to the surrounding vegetation. The purpose of this project is to provide safe public access to the Miners River and base of Miners Falls, while reducing impacts to the natural environment and addressing public request for access to the river.

## We want to hear from you!

Please submit comments via the following:

### Electronically:

Submit your comments via the NPS's Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) website at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/minersfalls>

### By Mail or Hand-delivered:

Address your comments to: David Horne, Superintendent, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, PO Box 40, Munising, MI 49862





# Miners Falls Trail

- Miners Falls Trail, the associated overlooks, and staircase are highly trafficked by tens of thousands of park visitors, annually.
- The trail promotes visitor experiences including natural sounds, nature viewing, accessibility, and appreciation of natural erosion processes.
- Visitor behavior has created several unauthorized trail routes from the terminus of the trail down to the

valley floor and river. These unauthorized user-developed trails have created a negative impact on the stability of the vegetated hillslope, erosion issues, as well as created a safety risk to the visitors.

- Due to the steep and remote nature of this location, the ability for park responders to provide aid or rescue to the bottom of the valley in an emergency situation is difficult and creates further risk to safety for both visitors and responders.



View from lower platform



View from upper platform



Undesignated trail leading to valley floor



Damage to the stability of the hillslope from undesignated use



# Development of Alternative Concepts

This project will evaluate a no action and two action alternatives. The NPS proposes the following alternatives for the replacement and potential expansion of the stair structure and platforms:

## No-Action Alternative: No Improvements

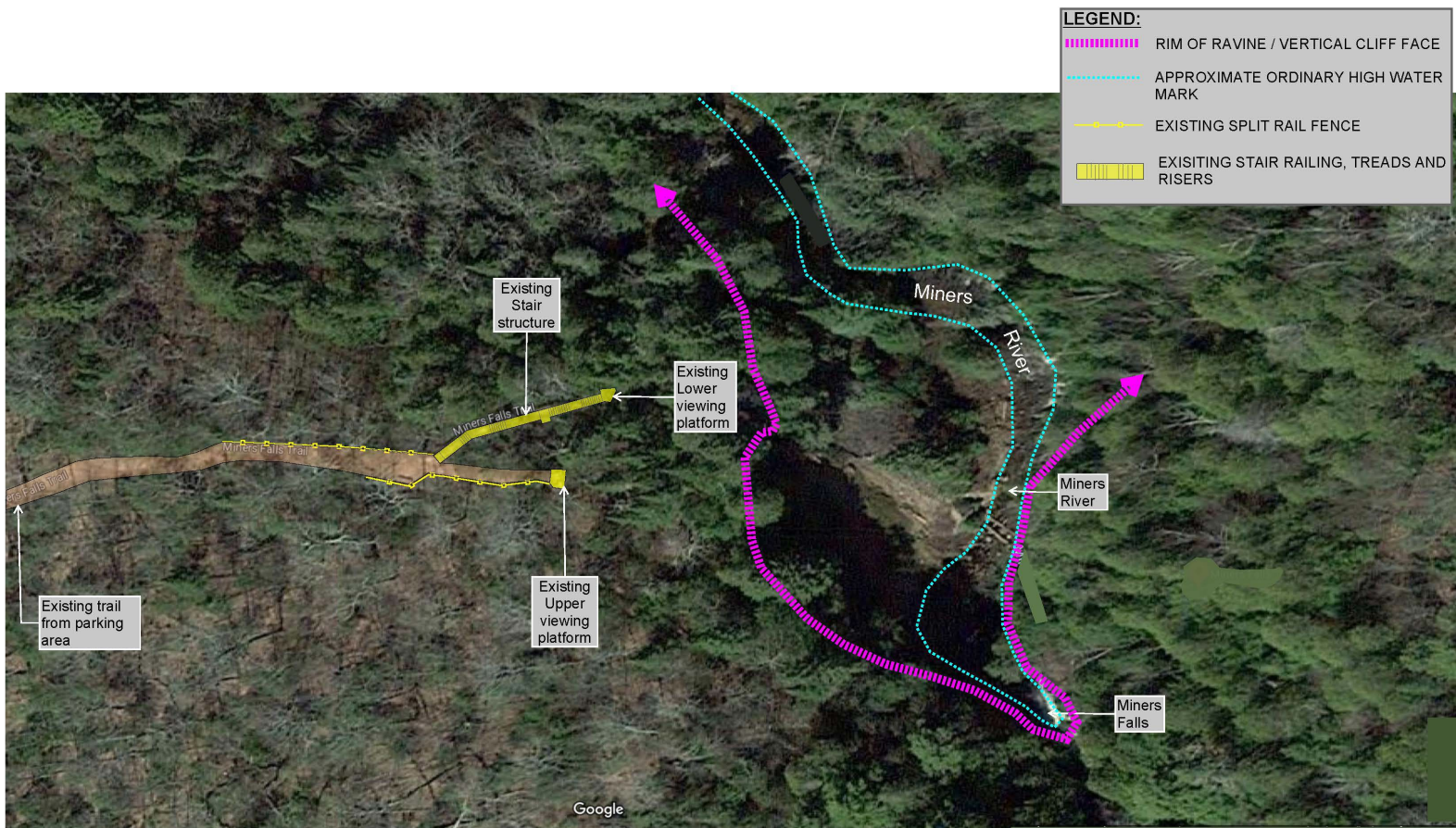
- Under the No-Action Alternative, the NPS would maintain the staircase and viewing platforms in their current conditions except for routine maintenance. No improvements would be made, and the structures would not be changed.
- Public use of the unofficial path would continue and exacerbate erosion, further damage native vegetation and prevent native vegetation from growing within the pathway.
- Due to safety concerns, the staircase and viewing platforms would be removed and the area would be closed.

## Action Alternative 1: Extend Steps and Construct Trail to Bottom of Ravine (Preferred Alternative)

- The existing infrastructure would be replaced and extended to an overlook deck further into the ravine past the existing deck structure. A new rustic-style trail to the valley floor extending from the overlook deck would be constructed to provide safe access to the river.
- By placing a rustic, stone stairway from the wood walkway to the river, shoreline erosion due to visitor foot traffic would be lessened.

## Action Alternative 2: Extend Steps to Bottom of Ravine

- The existing infrastructure would be replaced and extended to the bottom of the ravine. The stair structure would terminate at the valley floor.
- The trail to river is a safer entrance that will eliminate the hazards of the current staircase.
- A wooden staircase to the river would significantly decrease the impact of erosion. The placement of a wooden staircase in lieu of an off-trail footpath allows easier access to the river.

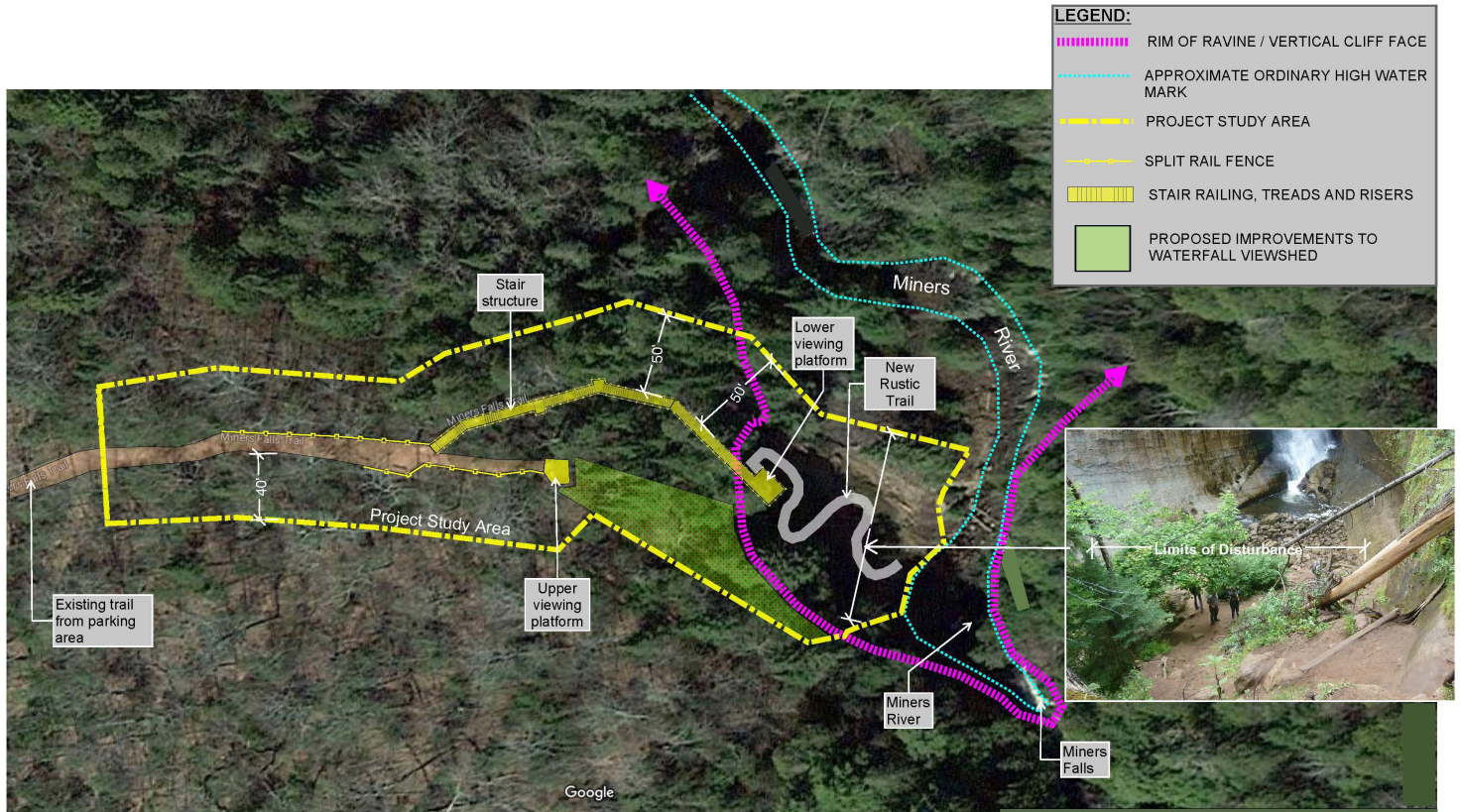


MINERS FALLS STEPS AND OVERLOOK

## No-Action Alternative



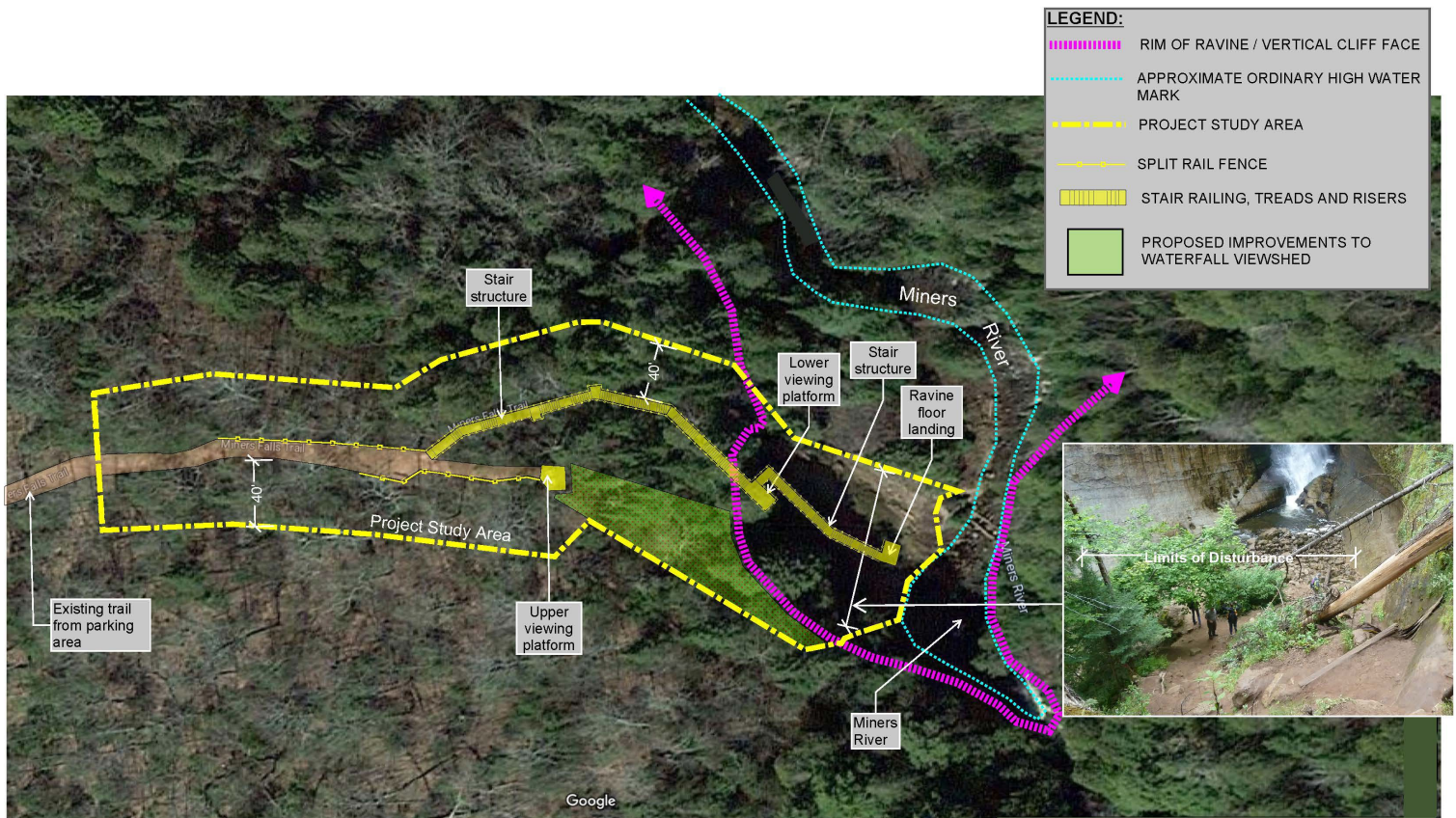
# Action Alternative Concepts



MINERS FALLS STEPS AND OVERLOOK

## Action Alternative 1 - Extend Steps and Construct Rustic Trail to Bottom of Ravine (Preferred Alternative)

NORTH  
NOT TO SCALE  
March 2024



MINERS FALLS STEPS AND OVERLOOK

## Action Alternative 2 - Extend Steps to Bottom of Ravine

NORTH  
NOT TO SCALE  
March 2024



## How to Comment

Public participation is an important element of the planning process and the National Environmental Policy (NEPA) review. We welcome your ideas, concerns, suggestions and potential topics for consideration. Please share your thoughts on the concepts no later than **August 9, 2024**.

You may provide your comments:

- **Via the project website** at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/minersfalls>, or
- **By writing to:** David Horne, Superintendent, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, PO Box 40, Munising, MI 49862

If you would like more information or have questions related to this project, please visit the project's website or contact the park by mail. Thank you for your interest in the Miners Falls Trail project!

Milestone	Targeted Schedule	Opportunities for Public Input
NPS conducts internal scoping	February – March 2024	N/A
NPS prepares draft plan and initiates environmental and NHPA compliance	February - June 2024	N/A
Public review of plan/ Environmental Assessment	July – August 2024	Review the plan/environmental assessment and provide your comments at <a href="https://parkplanning.nps.gov/minersfalls">https://parkplanning.nps.gov/minersfalls</a>
Decision document	August 2024	See final plan and decision document at <a href="https://parkplanning.nps.gov/minersfalls">https://parkplanning.nps.gov/minersfalls</a>

