



**Congressional
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

National Park Service Appropriations: Ten-Year Trends

-name redacted-

Specialist in Natural Resources Policy

Updated July 10, 2018

Congressional Research Service

7-....

www.crs.gov

R42757

Summary

The National Park Service (NPS) generally receives appropriations in the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This report examines trends in NPS appropriations over the past decade (FY2009-FY2018), as well as changes during the decade in the size of the National Park System, numbers of recreational visits to the parks, and NPS staffing levels.

NPS's appropriations fluctuated during the decade, mainly declining in the first part of the decade and then increasing during the second part. In the first and last years of the decade (FY2009 and FY2018), as well as in one intervening year (FY2013), appropriations totals were notably increased by supplemental funding. In FY2009, supplemental appropriations for economic stimulus affected NPS accounts for park operations, construction, and historic preservation; in FY2013 and FY2018, supplemental funding for hurricane recovery affected the accounts for construction and historic preservation. With the supplemental appropriations included, the total discretionary appropriation for FY2018 represented an increase (+5.6%) in nominal dollars over the FY2009 total but a decrease (-8.0%) in inflation-adjusted dollars. Excluding supplementals, NPS appropriations increased between FY2009 and FY2018 by 26.8% in nominal dollars and 10.5% in inflation-adjusted dollars.

During this period, NPS's discretionary appropriations were organized primarily in five accounts. A sixth account (Centennial Challenge) was funded only in certain years. Regular appropriations fluctuated over the decade for all the accounts, and the extent to which an account increased or decreased also was affected by supplemental appropriations. With supplementals included, two accounts received more funding in FY2018 than in FY2009 in real (inflation-adjusted) terms, including one account that funds federal land acquisition and outdoor recreation assistance to states and one that provides grants to states and tribes for historic preservation activities. Three other accounts received less funding in FY2018 than in FY2009 in inflation-adjusted dollars—including NPS's largest account, which funds basic park operations, as well as the account that funds construction and major repairs and the account for NPS assistance to nonfederal entities. Excluding supplementals, funding still grew in real terms for the land acquisition and historic preservation accounts, but it also grew for the operations and construction accounts, declining only for assistance to nonfederal entities. The operations and construction accounts are partially used to address NPS's deferred maintenance backlog, which has grown throughout the decade.

The funding changes took place in the context of relative stability in the size of the National Park System, which was about 85 million acres throughout the decade, with slight growth (+0.8%). The total consisted of roughly 80 million acres of federal land, with the remainder nonfederal. Although system acreage remained relatively stable, 26 new units were added to the system during the decade. NPS staffing levels hovered around 20,000 and were highest in the first part of the decade, stemming partly from the economic stimulus measures in FY2009. Visits to the parks increased over the decade, peaking at approximately 331 million visits in 2016.

Contents

NPS Discretionary Appropriations Totals	1
Individual NPS Accounts	2
Operation of the National Park System Account.....	5
Construction Account.....	6
National Recreation and Preservation Account.....	8
Historic Preservation Fund.....	9
Land Acquisition and State Assistance.....	10
Centennial Challenge	11
NPS Appropriations in Context	12
Size of the National Park System.....	12
Visits to the National Parks	14
National Park Service Staffing.....	15
Conclusion.....	16

Figures

Figure 1. NPS Discretionary Appropriations, FY2009-FY2018	1
Figure 2. NPS's FY2018 Discretionary Appropriations by Account	5
Figure 3. Appropriations for NPS's Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) Account, FY2009-FY2018	6
Figure 4. Appropriations for NPS's Construction Account, FY2009-FY2018	7
Figure 5. Appropriations for NPS's National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) Account, FY2009-FY2018	8
Figure 6. Appropriations for NPS's Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) Account, FY2009- FY2018.....	10
Figure 7. Appropriations for NPS's Land Acquisition and State Assistance (LASA) Account, FY2009-FY2018.....	11
Figure 8. Appropriations for NPS's Centennial Challenge Account, FY2009-FY2018.....	12
Figure 9. Size of the National Park System, FY2009-FY2018	13
Figure 10. Annual Recreational Visits to the National Park System, 2009-2018	15
Figure 11. NPS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff, FY2007-FY2016	16

Tables

Table 1. NPS Discretionary Appropriations, FY2009-FY2018.....	2
Table 2. NPS Appropriations by Account, FY2009-FY2018	4
Table 3. Size of the National Park System, FY2009-FY2018.....	14
Table 4. Annual Recreational Visits to the National Park System, 2009-2018	14
Table 5. NPS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff, FY2009-FY2018.....	15

Contacts

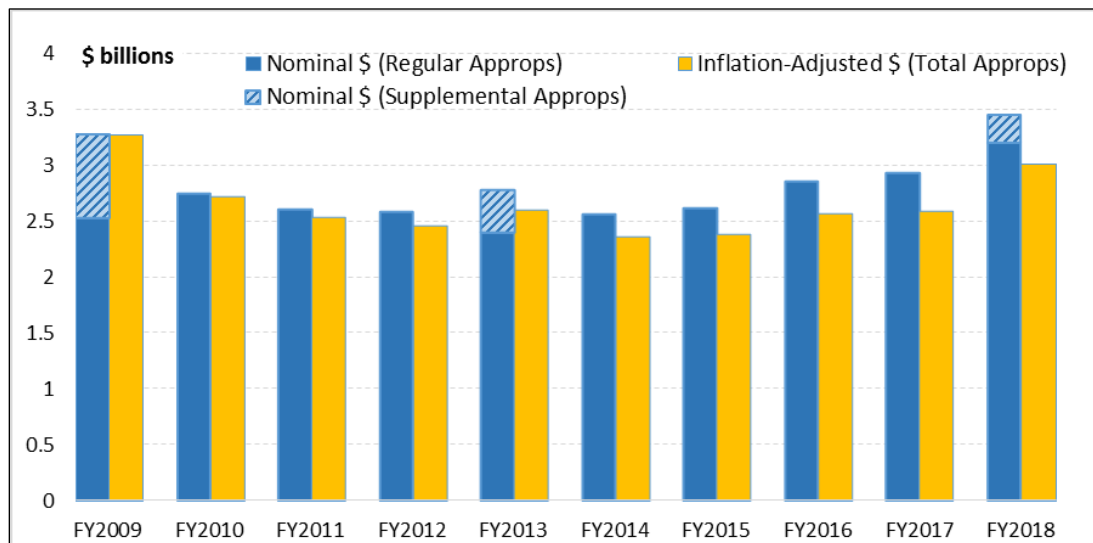
Author Contact Information 17

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which covers 85 million acres of land and consists of 417 diverse units valued for their natural, cultural, and recreational importance. NPS generally receives appropriations in the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This report examines trends in the agency’s discretionary appropriations over the past decade (FY2009-FY2018) and related issues and congressional actions. It also discusses changes in the size of the National Park System, numbers of recreational visits to the parks, and NPS staffing levels during that period.

NPS Discretionary Appropriations Totals

NPS’s discretionary appropriations fluctuated during the past decade (FY2009-FY2018). Appropriations in the decade’s first and last years were highest, partially owing to supplemental appropriations in both years. With the supplementals included, discretionary appropriations totaled \$3.276 billion in FY2009 and \$3.460 billion in FY2018. The FY2018 figure was 5.6% higher than FY2009 in nominal dollars but 8.0% lower when adjusted for inflation (**Figure 1** and **Table 1**).¹ Excluding supplementals, NPS’s FY2018 appropriations were 26.8% higher than FY2009 appropriations in nominal dollars and 10.5% higher in inflation-adjusted dollars. In either case, the main trend was decline in the first part of the decade and increase in the second part.

Figure 1. NPS Discretionary Appropriations, FY2009-FY2018
(\$ billions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2009 dollars)



Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

Notes: See footnote 1 for additional information on this figure.

¹ The figures and tables in this report generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act); FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy; and FY2018 funds in response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Amounts for FY2013 also reflect the President’s March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. The data exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2009 dollars) use the GDP Chained Price Index from the White House Office of Management and Budget, *Historical Tables*, Table 10.1, “Gross Domestic Product and Deflators Used in the Historical Tables—1940-2023,” at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

Table I. NPS Discretionary Appropriations, FY2009-FY2018
(\$ billions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2009 dollars)

	Appropriation in Nominal \$	Appropriation in Inflation-Adjusted 2009 \$	% Change Since Previous Year	
			Nominal	Inflation-Adjusted
FY2009	3.276 ^a	3.276	—	—
FY2010	2.744	2.720	-16.2%	-17.0%
FY2011	2.611	2.537	-4.8%	-6.7%
FY2012	2.580	2.461	-1.2%	-3.0%
FY2013	2.775 ^b	2.604	+7.6%	+5.8%
FY2014	2.562	2.360	-7.7%	-9.4%
FY2015	2.616	2.382	+2.1%	+0.9%
FY2016	2.852	2.567	+9.0%	+7.8%
FY2017	2.932	2.595	+2.8%	+1.1%
FY2018	3.460 ^c	3.014	+9.2%	+7.5%
Total Change	+0.184	-0.261	+5.6%	-8.0%

Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. Percentage calculations by CRS.

Notes: Data include supplemental appropriations. See footnote 1 for additional information on this table.

- a. The FY2009 total of \$3.276 billion includes regular appropriations of \$2.526 billion and supplemental appropriations of \$0.750 billion.
- b. The FY2013 total of \$2.775 billion includes regular appropriations of \$2.398 billion and supplemental appropriations of \$0.377 billion.
- c. The FY2018 total of \$3.460 billion includes regular appropriations of \$3.202 billion and supplemental appropriations of \$0.258 billion.

The supplemental appropriations consisted of economic stimulus measures in FY2009 (P.L. 111-5, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and appropriations for hurricane recovery in FY2013 (P.L. 113-2) and FY2018 (P.L. 115-123). These funds were provided outside of regular appropriations laws and were not subject to discretionary spending caps.

Individual NPS Accounts

During the decade, NPS's appropriations were primarily organized in five accounts that cover basic park operations (Operation of the National Park System, or ONPS, account); construction and repair of infrastructure (Construction account); assistance to state, local, tribal, and private land managers (National Recreation and Preservation account); grants to states and localities for historic preservation (Historic Preservation Fund); and land acquisition by both NPS and the states (Land Acquisition and State Assistance account).² By far the largest share of NPS's

² The Land Acquisition and State Assistance account constitutes NPS's portion of appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The LWCF is the principal source of funding used by four federal land management agencies—NPS, the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service—for land acquisition for outdoor recreation. In addition, the LWCF provides grants to states for outdoor recreation purposes. These grants are administered through NPS. For more information on the LWCF, see CRS Report RL33531, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*, by (name redacted).

discretionary appropriations—72% in FY2018³—went to the ONPS account, which covers basic park operations (**Figure 2** and **Table 2**). In addition to these five accounts, during five years of the past decade (FY2010 and FY2015-FY2018), Congress appropriated funds for a sixth account, the Centennial Challenge account.⁴ The account provides the federal share of matching grants for “signature” park projects and programs, primarily aimed at addressing the agency’s substantial backlog of deferred maintenance on its infrastructure.⁵

Mandatory Appropriations in the National Park Service’s Budget

Most of NPS’s funding comes from discretionary appropriations, which are controlled by annual appropriations laws. However, NPS also receives mandatory appropriations under laws enacted by the authorizing committees, which allow the agency to spend money without further action by Congress. NPS’s mandatory appropriations include recreation fees, concession franchise fees, receipts from leasing, and direct cash donations, among others. Altogether, for FY2018, NPS estimated mandatory funding of \$0.708 billion, whereas the agency’s discretionary appropriations for FY2018 were \$3.460 billion (including supplemental funding). Based on the NPS estimates, mandatory appropriations would constitute approximately 17% of NPS’s total FY2018 budget.

In its FY2019 budget request, the Trump Administration included a legislative proposal to increase NPS’s mandatory appropriations through the establishment of a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund, to be used for repairs and improvements in national parks, national wildlife refuges, and schools administered by the Bureau of Indian Education. One primary goal of the fund would be to address NPS’s backlog of deferred maintenance, estimated at \$11.6 billion for FY2017. The Administration’s proposal was introduced in modified form in the 115th Congress as H.R. 5210 and S. 2509, the National Park Restoration Act. Under the bills, mandatory funding would go entirely to NPS (rather than to other bureaus in the Department of the Interior) for “priority deferred maintenance needs that support critical infrastructure and visitor services.” The proposals would fund infrastructure needs from any onshore or offshore energy development revenues that the federal government receives above certain named thresholds over the next decade. Because future energy revenues are unknown, it is uncertain how much money, if any, would be generated for NPS. The House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on H.R. 5210 on March 20, 2018. Other bills also have been introduced in the 115th Congress to provide mandatory funding from energy revenues for NPS deferred maintenance, including H.R. 2584, S. 751, and S. 3172. H.R. 2584, which also has received a House hearing, would deposit specified amounts from onshore and offshore mineral revenues each year through FY2047 for NPS deferred maintenance, in increasing amounts up to \$500 million.

The Obama Administration also sought changes in law that would significantly increase the mandatory spending available to NPS, again with a primary goal of addressing NPS’s deferred maintenance backlog. Obama Administration budget requests proposed to more than double the agency’s mandatory appropriations through various funds targeted to infrastructure and maintenance, and they also sought permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, for land acquisition by NPS and other agencies.

New mandatory spending would be subject to certain budget enforcement requirements, including the potential need to offset such spending. These requirements represent a hurdle for the above-described mandatory proposals. In the 114th Congress, H.R. 3556 and S. 2257 would have implemented many of the Obama Administration’s requested changes, but neither bill was enacted. The 114th Congress did enact P.L. 114-289, which established the NPS Centennial Challenge Fund and an NPS Endowment. The law provided for a price increase for senior passes to the parks, with portions of the additional revenues directed to the Centennial Challenge Fund and the Endowment. This funding was provided as offsetting collections to annual appropriations. Deferred maintenance projects are a prioritized use of the funds.

³ Excluding the FY2018 hurricane supplemental, the percentage was even higher (77%).

⁴ The account was titled *Centennial Challenge* in FY2015-FY2018, but it was called *Park Partnership Project Grants* in FY2010.

⁵ The backlog is estimated at \$11.6 billion for FY2017. For more information, see CRS Report R44924, *The National Park Service’s Maintenance Backlog: Frequently Asked Questions*, by (name redacted). “Signature” projects and programs are to be identified by the Interior Secretary and must “help prepare the national parks for another century of conservation, preservation, and visitor enjoyment” (P.L. 114-289).

Table 2. NPS Appropriations by Account, FY2009-FY2018

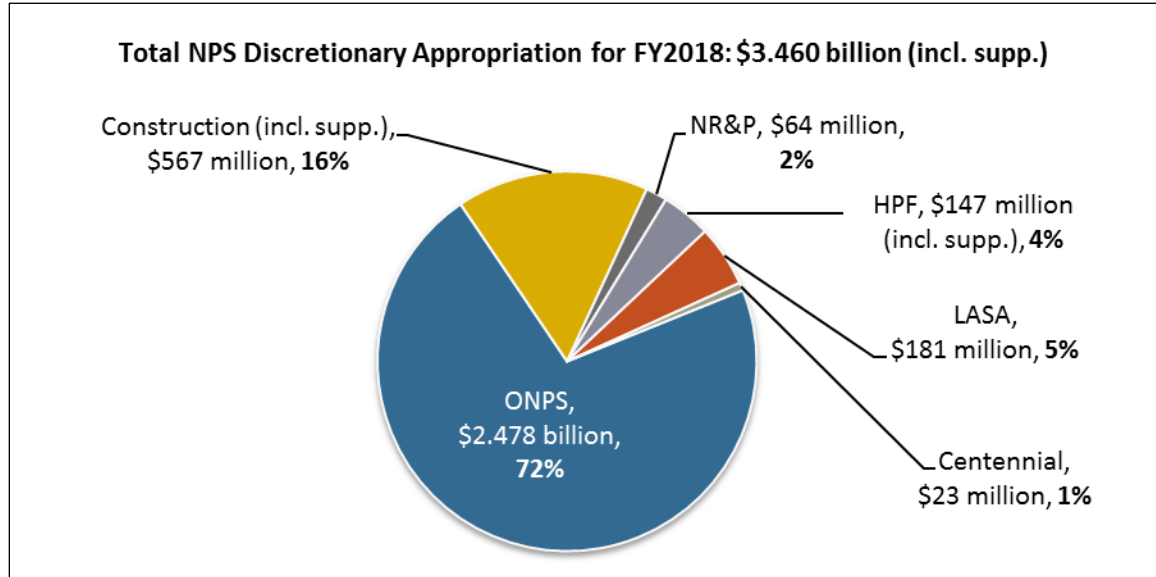
(\$ millions, in nominal dollars and inflation-adjusted 2009 dollars)

	ONPS	Construction	NR&P	HPF	LASA	CC	Total ^a
FY2009	2,277.755 ^b	821.521 ^b	58.384	83.984 ^b	64.190	—	3,275.834^b
FY2010	2,261.559	232.969	68.436	79.500	126.266	5.000 ^c	2,743.730
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,241.831</i>	<i>230.937</i>	<i>67.839</i>	<i>78.807</i>	<i>125.165</i>	<i>4.956</i>	2,719.796
FY2011	2,250.050	184.646	57.245	54.391	94.810	—	2,611.142
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,186.000</i>	<i>179.390</i>	<i>55.615</i>	<i>52.843</i>	<i>92.111</i>		2,536.813
FY2012	2,236.568	155.366	59.879	55.910	101.897	—	2,579.620
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,133.926</i>	<i>148.236</i>	<i>57.131</i>	<i>53.344</i>	<i>97.221</i>		2,461.235
FY2013	2,097.261	453.885 ^d	56.747	100.486 ^d	96.567	—	2,774.946^d
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>1,967.781</i>	<i>425.863</i>	<i>53.244</i>	<i>94.282</i>	<i>90.605</i>		2,603.627
FY2014	2,236.753	137.461	60.795	56.410	98.100	—	2,561.519
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,061.144</i>	<i>126.669</i>	<i>56.022</i>	<i>51.981</i>	<i>90.398</i>		2,360.412
FY2015	2,277.485	138.339	63.117	56.410	98.960	10.000	2,616.501
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,073.646</i>	<i>125.957</i>	<i>57.468</i>	<i>51.361</i>	<i>90.103</i>	<i>9.105</i>	2,382.319
FY2016	2,370.724	192.937	62.632	65.410	173.670	15.000	2,852.413
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,133.865</i>	<i>173.661</i>	<i>56.374</i>	<i>58.875</i>	<i>156.319</i>	<i>13.501</i>	2,567.428
FY2017	2,425.120	209.353	62.638	80.910	162.029	20.000	2,932.120
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,145.934</i>	<i>185.252</i>	<i>55.427</i>	<i>71.595</i>	<i>143.376</i>	<i>17.698</i>	2,594.567
FY2018	2,477.969	567.304	63.638	146.910	180.941	23.000	3,459.762^e
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,158.886</i>	<i>494.253</i>	<i>55.443</i>	<i>127.993</i>	<i>157.642</i>	<i>20.038</i>	3,014.255

Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

Notes: ONPS = Operation of the National Park System account; NR&P = National Recreation and Preservation account; HPF = Historic Preservation Fund account; LASA = Land Acquisition and State Assistance account; CC = Centennial Challenge account. Data include supplemental appropriations. See footnote 1 for additional information on this table.

- Totals reflect annual rescissions for LWCF contract authority of \$30.0 million for FY2005-FY2013 and \$28.0 million for FY2014-FY2017. Because these rescissions are not included in the amounts for individual accounts, the figures for the individual accounts do not add up to the totals shown. Congress did not enact the rescission in FY2018 appropriations.
- The FY2009 total of \$3.276 billion includes regular appropriations of \$2.526 billion and supplemental appropriations of \$750.0 million. Supplemental FY2009 appropriations for specific accounts were \$146.0 million for ONPS, \$589.0 million for Construction, and \$15.0 million for HPF.
- For FY2010, the Centennial Challenge account was titled Park Partnership Project Grants.
- The FY2013 total of \$2.775 billion includes regular appropriations of \$2.398 billion and supplemental appropriations of \$377.3 million (after sequestration). Supplemental FY2013 appropriations for specific accounts (after sequestration) were \$329.8 million for Construction and \$47.5 million for HPF. See NPS budget justification for FY2015, with FY2013 final appropriations totals, at <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY-2015-Greenbook-Linked.pdf>.
- The FY2018 total of \$3.460 billion includes regular appropriations of \$3.202 billion and supplemental appropriations of \$257.6 million. Supplemental FY2018 appropriations for specific accounts were \$207.6 million for Construction and \$50.0 million for HPF.

Figure 2. NPS's FY2018 Discretionary Appropriations by Account

Source: P.L. 115-123; and P.L. 115-141, Division G, Explanatory Statement, *Congressional Record*, March 22, 2018, pp. H2609-H2694.

Notes: ONPS = Operation of the National Park Service; NR&P = National Recreation and Preservation; HPF = Historic Preservation Fund; LASA = Land Acquisition and State Assistance. These data exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. The data reflect supplemental appropriations for hurricane recovery in P.L. 115-123, including \$207.6 million for the Construction account and \$50.0 million for the HPF account.

Operation of the National Park System Account

Appropriations for the largest NPS account, entitled Operation of the National Park System (ONPS), support the activities, programs, and services that form the day-to-day operations of the National Park System. Including supplemental appropriations for economic stimulus, ONPS funding was \$2.278 billion in FY2009 and increased in nominal dollars to \$2.478 billion in FY2018 (see **Table 2** and **Figure 3**). When adjusted for inflation, however, this represents a decrease of 5.2%. With supplemental appropriations excluded, the FY2009 funding was less (\$2.132 billion), and by this measure funding for the account increased over the decade in real terms, by 1.3% in inflation-adjusted dollars. As a percentage of total NPS appropriations, the ONPS share grew slightly over the decade if supplemental appropriations are counted, increasing from 69.5% of total funding in FY2009 to 71.6% in FY2018. Without supplementals, the ONPS share was 84% of total funding in FY2009 and 77% in FY2018, representing a decrease in share.

The majority of ONPS funds are provided directly to managers of individual park units. Activities covered under the account include visitor services, resource stewardship, park protection (including the U.S. Park Police), facility operations and maintenance, and park support,⁶ as well as “external administrative costs” for services provided by outside entities.⁷ Among these activities, funding for facility operations and maintenance, park support, and external

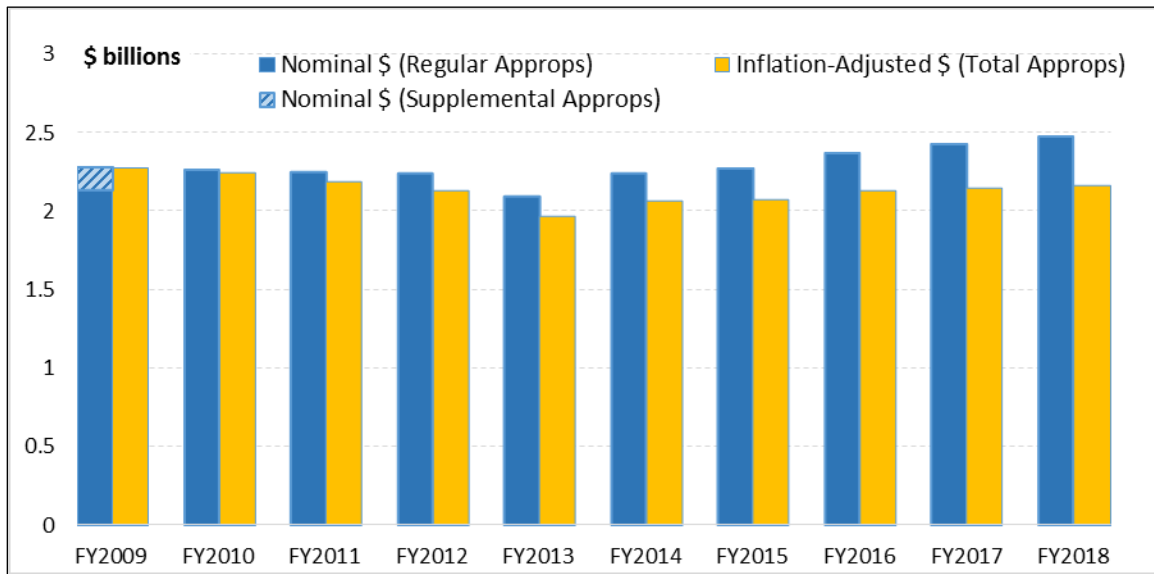
⁶ The *park support* activity includes administering, managing, and supporting the operations of park units.

⁷ These *external administrative costs* include employee compensation payments, unemployment compensation payments, centralized information technology costs, telecommunications, postage, space rental from the General Services Administration, and departmental program charges.

administrative costs grew over the decade, whereas collective funding for the remaining activities—resource stewardship, visitor services, and park protection—declined.⁸ (These calculations do not reflect supplementals, because the supplemental funds were not assigned at the subaccount level.)

Figure 3. Appropriations for NPS's Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) Account, FY2009-FY2018

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2009 dollars)



Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

Notes: See footnote 1 for additional information on this figure.

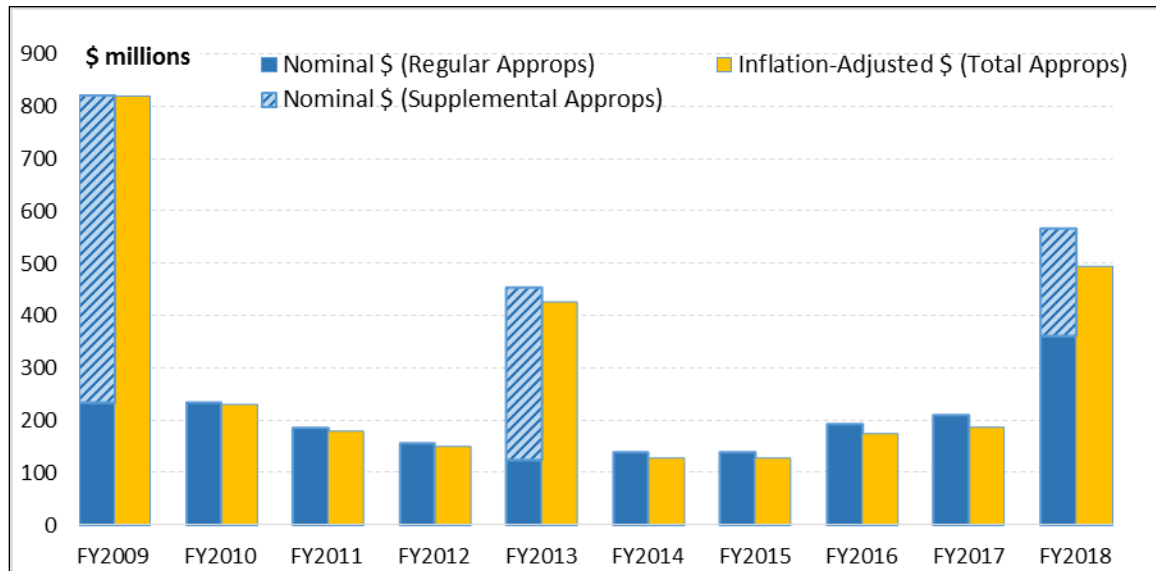
Construction Account

The second-largest NPS account, titled Construction, funds new construction projects as well as repairs and improvements to existing facilities, among other activities. Appropriations to the account for the first and last years of the decade (FY2009 and FY2018), along with the appropriation for FY2013, were considerably higher than construction appropriations in intervening years, in all three cases owing to supplemental appropriations related to economic stimulus (FY2009) or hurricane recovery (FY2013 and FY2018). With the supplementals included and adjusting for inflation, the FY2018 appropriation was 39.8% lower than the FY2009 appropriation (see **Figure 4** and **Table 2**). Construction appropriations accordingly represented a smaller portion of total NPS appropriations in FY2018 (16.4%) than they did in FY2009 (25.0%). Excluding supplementals, funding for the account grew over the decade by 34.8% in inflation-

⁸ These calculations use funding amounts from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. It is difficult to calculate *individual* percentage growth or decline for the resource stewardship, visitor services, and park protection activities, because an account realignment in FY2010 significantly reorganized programs within these areas. However, funding for these three activities *combined* shows a decrease (-5.7% in inflation-adjusted dollars) between FY2009 and FY2018. Funding for facility operations and maintenance grew (+4.3% in inflation-adjusted dollars) during the period, as did funding for park support (+9.8%) and external administrative costs (+5.6%). As mentioned, these calculations do not include supplemental funding, because the FY2009 supplemental was not assigned to particular activities within the account and the other supplementals did not go to the ONPS account.

adjusted dollars, and Construction's share of total funding also rose (from 9.2% in FY2009 to 11.2% in FY2018).

Figure 4. Appropriations for NPS's Construction Account, FY2009-FY2018
(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2009 dollars)



Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

Notes: See footnote 1 for additional information on this figure.

NPS Infrastructure: Funding for Deferred Maintenance

NPS's substantial backlog of deferred maintenance—infrastructure maintenance and repairs that were not performed as scheduled or as needed—has been an ongoing concern for Congress. The 115th Congress is considering NPS's infrastructure needs both within and outside the annual appropriations process.

Despite the agency's efforts to reduce deferred maintenance through improved inventory and asset management, the NPS maintenance backlog has grown, as agency assets—many constructed in the early to mid-20th century—age and deteriorate, and needed maintenance and repairs are not performed. The backlog grew over the past decade from an estimated mid-range figure of \$10.17 billion in FY2009 to an estimated \$11.61 billion (in nominal dollars) in FY2017, the most recent year for which NPS estimates are available. The bulk of NPS deferred maintenance—51% in FY2017—is in transportation assets such as roads, bridges, and tunnels.

Although discretionary appropriations provide a significant portion of the agency's funding to address deferred maintenance, such funding also comes from other sources. For example, road and bridge improvements are largely funded by allocations from the Department of Transportation. Funding to address deferred maintenance also may come through mandatory appropriations, such as fee collections. Within NPS's discretionary appropriations, two subaccounts provide the primary funding to address deferred maintenance: the *line-item construction and maintenance* activity within the Construction account and the *facility operation and maintenance* activity within the Operation of the National Park Service account.

For more information on NPS deferred maintenance, see CRS Report R44924, *The National Park Service's Maintenance Backlog: Frequently Asked Questions*, by (name redacted) and CRS Report R43997, *Deferred Maintenance of Federal Land Management Agencies: FY2007-FY2016 Estimates and Issues*, by (name redacted).

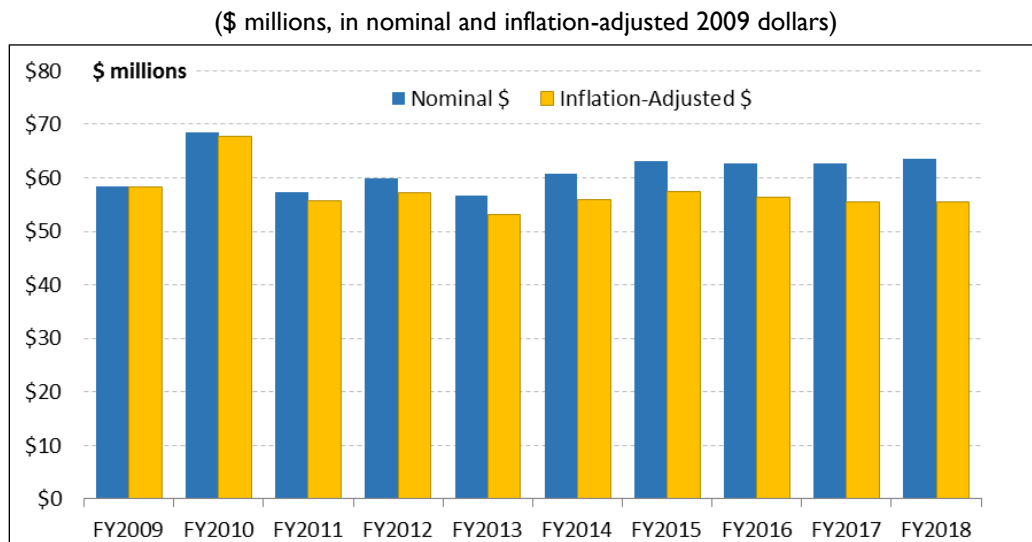
Among the specific activities funded in the Construction account, the largest is *line-item construction and maintenance*, which covers construction of new facilities and rehabilitation and

replacement of existing facilities.⁹ In recent years, NPS has planned no new facility construction, in order to prioritize deferred maintenance. Projects are prioritized based on their contribution to NPS mission factors and cost-benefit considerations.¹⁰ Other activities funded in the Construction account include emergency and unscheduled construction, repair and replacement of employee housing, dam safety, equipment replacement, construction planning and program management, development of general management plans for park units, and preparation of special studies of areas (for instance, to assess their potential for inclusion in the National Park System).

National Recreation and Preservation Account

The National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) account funds NPS programs that primarily assist state, local, tribal, and private land managers with outdoor recreation planning, natural and cultural resource preservation, environmental compliance, and other activities outside the National Park System. Appropriations for the account ranged from \$55 million to \$65 million throughout the decade. Comparing FY2018 with FY2009 shows a growth in nominal dollars, from \$58.4 million in FY2009 to \$63.6 million in FY2018. Adjusted for inflation, however, this represents a decline of 5.0% (Figure 5 and Table 2). The portion of total NPS funding used for the NR&P account (1.8%) was the same at the beginning and end of the decade. The NR&P account was not affected by supplemental funding during the decade.

Figure 5. Appropriations for NPS’s National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) Account, FY2009-FY2018



Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

Notes: See footnote 1 for additional information on this figure.

⁹ It is not possible to assess growth or decline in funding for the line-item construction activity (or other activities in the account) over the decade, because much of the FY2018 funding was given as a “general program increase,” without being assigned to a specific activity.

¹⁰ A fuller description of NPS’s two-tier priority system is in the agency’s FY2019 budget justification, p. Const-8, at <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY2019-NPS-Budget-Justification.pdf>.

A variety of natural, cultural, and recreational assistance programs are funded in the NR&P account. The Heritage Partnership Program, which provides NPS assistance to national heritage areas, is the largest single program in the account.¹¹ Its appropriations grew over the decade in both nominal and inflation-adjusted dollars,¹² despite budget requests from the Obama and Trump Administrations to significantly reduce it. The number of heritage areas also increased during the decade, from 39 to 49. The NR&P account also has included other programs that assist nonfederal entities, such as the American Battlefield Protection Program; Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; National Natural Landmarks and National Historic Landmarks Programs; National Register of Historic Places; and Preserve America Program. The account further covers international park affairs, environmental and compliance review, and grants administration.

Historic Preservation Fund

The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), established in 1976,¹³ is administered by NPS through appropriations to the agency's HPF account. In accordance with the purposes of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA; P.L. 89-665; 54 U.S.C. §§300101 et seq.), the fund primarily provides grants-in-aid to state and tribal historic preservation offices for conservation of cultural and historical assets and sites. Grants are typically awarded on a 60% federal–40% state matching share basis. The HPF is funded by revenues from oil and gas activities on the U.S. outer continental shelf. Funding was reauthorized through FY2023 in P.L. 114-289.¹⁴

Appropriations for the HPF account varied during the decade and were highest in FY2013 (\$100.4 million) and FY2018 (\$146.9 million), in both cases due to supplemental appropriations for hurricane recovery (see **Figure 6** and **Table 2**).¹⁵ This supplemental funding was primarily to assist recovering states and territories with compliance activities related to Section 106 of the NHPA. (Under Section 106, projects that receive federal funds or permits—such as many hurricane recovery projects—must be assessed for their potential effects on historic properties.) The account also received some supplemental funding as part of the economic stimulus package in FY2009. With supplementals included, the FY2018 appropriation was 52.4% higher in inflation-adjusted dollars than the FY2009 appropriation, and the account represented 2.6% of the total NPS appropriation in FY2009 and 4.2% in FY2018. With supplementals excluded, the FY2018 appropriation was 22.4% higher than in FY2009, and the account's share of total NPS appropriations was 2.7% in FY2009 and 3.0% in FY2018.

The largest activity in the account is funding for state historic preservation offices, which stayed relatively level (growth of +0.3%) in inflation-adjusted terms over the decade. (This does not include any supplemental funding, because none of the supplemental appropriations were assigned at the subaccount level.) Tribal grants rose by 42.9% after adjusting for inflation. At various points during the decade, the account also funded other grant programs, such as a competitive grant program for historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and the Save America's Treasures program to restore nationally significant historic structures and artifacts.

¹¹ National heritage areas are established by Congress but are not federally managed, and they are not part of the National Park System. For more on national heritage areas, see CRS Report RL33462, *Heritage Areas: Background, Proposals, and Current Issues*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

¹² In inflation-adjusted dollars, the FY2018 appropriation for heritage area partnerships was 12.7% higher than the FY2009 appropriation.

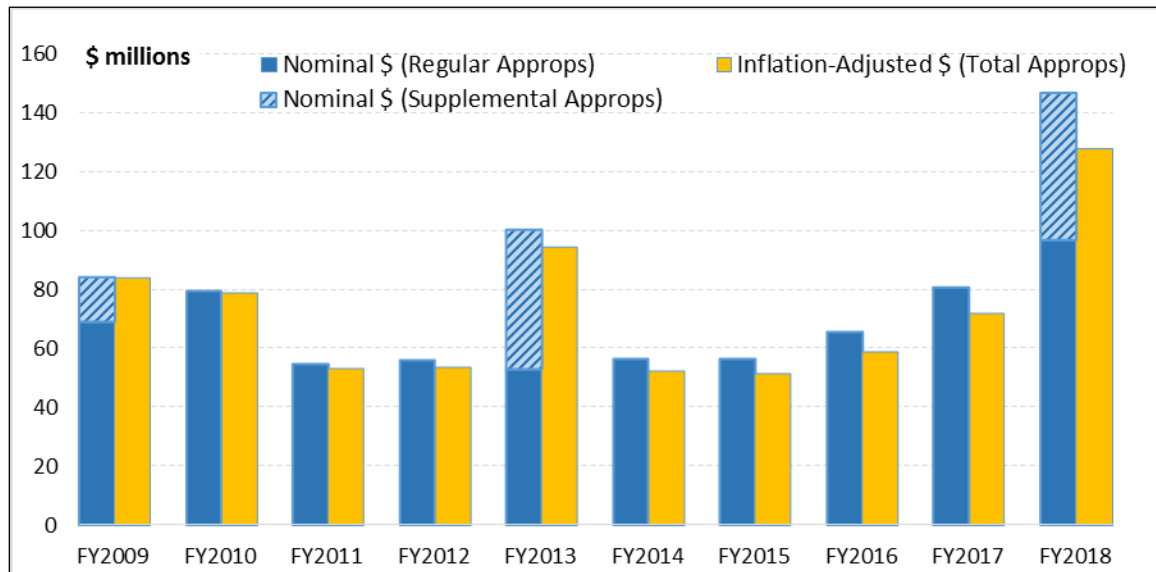
¹³ P.L. 94-422, amending P.L. 89-665; 54 U.S.C. §§300101 et seq.

¹⁴ The fund receives \$150 million annually from offshore oil and gas revenues, but the funding is available only to the extent appropriated by Congress.

¹⁵ P.L. 113-2 and P.L. 115-123.

Figure 6. Appropriations for NPS’s Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) Account, FY2009-FY2018

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2009 dollars)



Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

Notes: See footnote 1 for additional information on this figure.

Land Acquisition and State Assistance

The Land Acquisition and State Assistance (LASA) account represents NPS’s share of appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; 54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.). The LWCF is the primary funding source for land acquisition for the four major federal land management agencies—NPS, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service.¹⁶ In addition, the LWCF supports grants to states (and, through states, to localities) for assistance with recreation planning, acquiring recreational lands and waters, and developing outdoor recreational facilities. These 50/50 matching grants, administered by NPS, generally are allocated to states by formula. In recent years, a portion of the funding (\$20.0 million for FY2018, out of a total of \$124.0 million for state assistance) also has been appropriated for a nationally competitive grant program. Overall, the LWCF is authorized at \$900 million annually, but at no point in the past decade was this “full funding” appropriated.

Appropriations for the LASA account—comprising the NPS federal and state assistance portions of the LWCF—varied during the decade and rose overall, with the highest amounts appropriated in the past three years (see **Figure 7** and **Table 2**). The appropriation rose from \$64.2 million in FY2009 to \$180.9 million in FY2018. (As with NR&P, supplemental appropriations did not affect the LASA account during the decade.) Adjusted for inflation, this is a growth of 145.6%. The growth is largely attributable to a significant increase in appropriations for state land acquisition

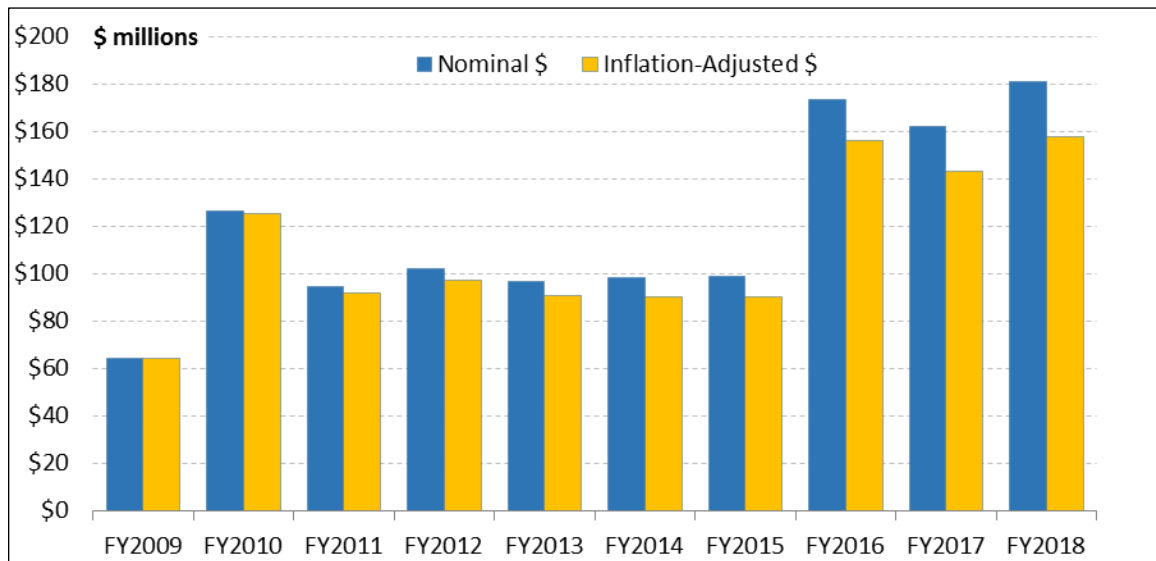
¹⁶ For more information on the LWCF, see CRS Report RL33531, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*, by (name redacted) ; and CRS In Focus IF10323, *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): Frequently Asked Questions Related to Provisions Scheduled to Expire on September 30, 2018*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted) . In addition to the state grants and federal land acquisition grants discussed here, a portion of the LWCF also has been used to fund other programs.

in recent years. Altogether, the LASA account represented 2.0% of the total NPS appropriation in FY2009 and 5.2% in FY2018.

Both parts of the account—the funds for NPS land acquisition and for assistance to states—grew over the decade, but growth in the NPS portion was smaller (+9.8% in inflation-adjusted dollars) than in the state portion (+468.6%). State assistance was less than \$20 million in FY2009, rose to roughly \$40 million-\$50 million annually for FY2010-FY2015, and more than doubled, reaching \$110 million-\$125 million, for FY2016-FY2018. For land acquisition by NPS, annual funding ranged between \$45 million and \$65 million, except in FY2010, when it rose to \$86 million.

Figure 7. Appropriations for NPS’s Land Acquisition and State Assistance (LASA) Account, FY2009-FY2018

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2009 dollars)



Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

Notes: See footnote 1 for additional information on this figure.

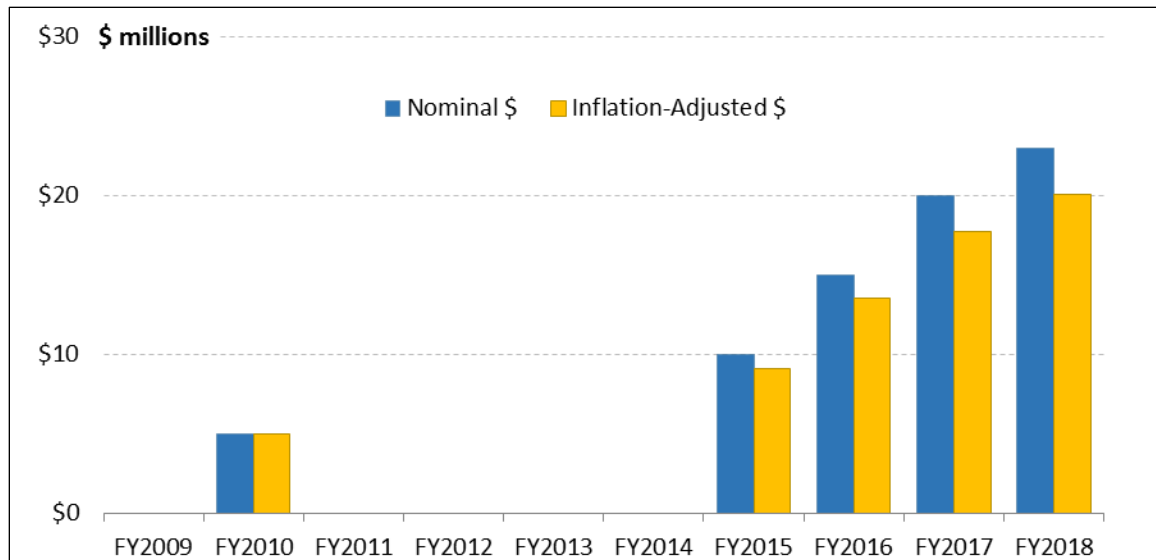
Centennial Challenge

The Centennial Challenge account was funded during certain years of the decade (FY2010 and FY2015-FY2018). The account consists of a matching-grant program to spur partner donations for park improvements, primarily aimed at addressing deferred maintenance. The name “Centennial Challenge” indicates the fund’s origin as a program to improve the parks in anticipation of NPS’s 2016 centennial anniversary and its second century of park management. Both the Bush and Obama Administrations had proposed discretionary and mandatory funding for the fund prior to its legislative establishment in December 2016 (P.L. 114-289), and Congress had provided discretionary appropriations in some years, starting in FY2008. P.L. 114-289 codified the Centennial Challenge Fund and authorized it to receive federal revenues from certain sales of National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes to seniors, in addition to discretionary

appropriations. The senior pass revenues are provided as offsetting collections.¹⁷ Revenues are to be matched on at least a one-to-one basis by nonfederal donations.

During the past decade, Congress appropriated \$5.0 million for the fund in 2010 and then did not make further appropriations until FY2015. Starting in that year, Congress appropriated increasing amounts, so that the FY2018 appropriation represented an increase of 120.1% over FY2015, and 304.3% over FY2010, in inflation-adjusted dollars. Still, the FY2018 appropriation, at \$23.0 million, remained smaller than that for any other NPS account.¹⁸

Figure 8. Appropriations for NPS’s Centennial Challenge Account, FY2009-FY2018
(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2009 dollars)



Sources: FY2009-FY2014 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. FY2015-FY2017 data are from NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2019. FY2018 data are from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

Notes: See footnote 1 for additional information on this figure.

NPS Appropriations in Context

Changes in NPS appropriations can be considered in the context of the National Park System’s size, the number of visits to the parks, and NPS staffing levels, among other factors. Over the past decade, the acreage of the National Park System remained relatively stable, growing by 0.8%, while 26 new units were added. Visitation peaked in 2016 and was generally higher in the second part of the decade than the first. Staffing levels fluctuated around 20,000 during the past 10 years.

Size of the National Park System

National Park System acreage grew slightly over the decade, from 84.4 million acres to 85.0 million acres, a growth of 0.8%. (See **Figure 9** and **Table 3**.) The percentage of National Park

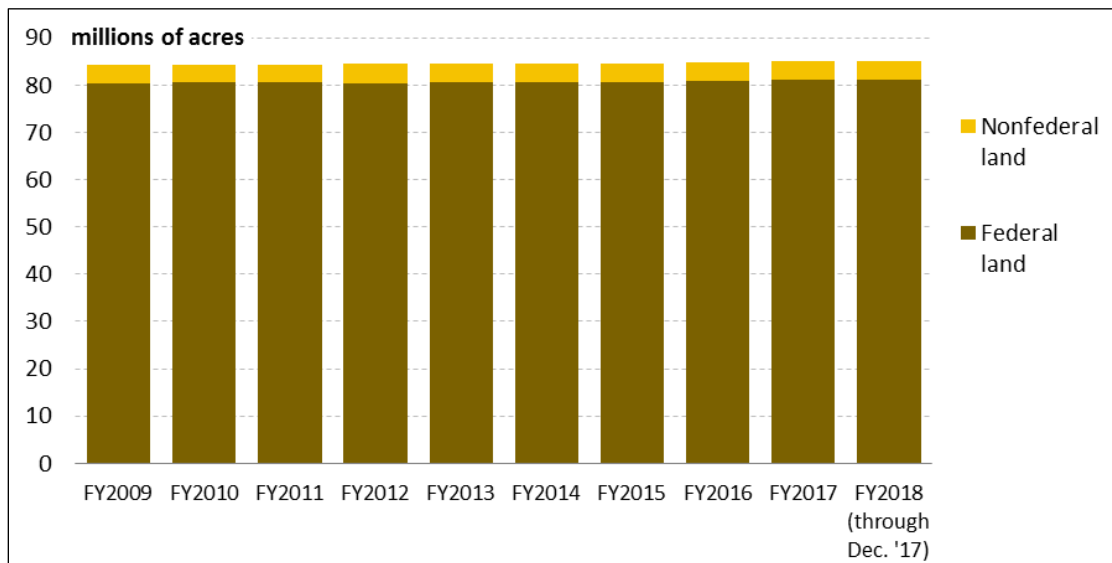
¹⁷ For a discussion of offsetting collections in the federal budget process, see CRS Report 98-721, *Introduction to the Federal Budget Process*, coordinated by (name redacted) .

¹⁸ No supplemental funding affected the Centennial Challenge account during the decade.

System lands owned by the federal government remained steady, at 95.3% of total system lands.¹⁹ The remainder—the nonfederal land in the system—includes lands within park boundaries that are owned by state or local governments and by private landowners.

Although the overall size of the National Park System did not change significantly, 26 units were added to the system in the FY2009-FY2018 period.²⁰ Many were relatively small in acreage, such as Stonewall National Monument in New York (0.12 acres) and Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument in Washington, DC (0.34 acres), which each consist of a single building. The largest units added to the system during the decade were Valles Caldera National Preserve (89,000 acres) and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in Maine (87,563 acres). Other acreage changes resulted from boundary adjustments in existing parks.

Figure 9. Size of the National Park System, FY2009-FY2018
(in millions of acres)



Sources: NPS Land Resources Division, annual summaries of acreage, available on *NPS Stats* web page at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>. FY2018 figures are as of December 31, 2017, the most recent data available.

Notes: Federal Land category includes *NPS Fee Acres*, *Less Than Fee Acres*, and *Other Federal Fee Acres*. Nonfederal Land category includes *Other Public Acres* and *Private Acres*.

¹⁹ Almost all of the system’s federally owned lands are directly administered by NPS. However, the federally owned portion of the system also includes some NPS “less than fee” acres (e.g., conservation easements or rights-of-way) and some lands managed by other federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Reclamation, the Forest Service, or the Fish and Wildlife Service. Taken together, these lands amount to about 1% of the federally owned portion of the system.

²⁰ These units are the Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial (CA), River Raisin National Battlefield Park (MI), President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site (AR), Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial (DC), Fort Monroe National Monument (VA), Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park (NJ), Cesar E. Chavez National Monument (CA), Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park (MD), First State National Historical Park (DE), Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument (OH), Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument (NV), World War I Memorial (DC), Valles Caldera National Preserve (NM), Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park (MA and RI), Pullman National Monument (IL), Honouliuli National Monument (HI), Waco Mammoth National Monument (TX), Manhattan Project National Historical Park (TN, NM, and WA), Castle Mountains National Monument (CA), Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument (DC), Stonewall National Monument (NY), Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument (ME), Harriet Tubman National Historical Park (NY), Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument (AL), Freedom Riders National Monument (AL), and Reconstruction Era National Monument (SC). A list of recent additions to the National Park System can be found at NPS, *Recent Changes in the National Park System*, at <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/recent-changes.htm>.

Table 3. Size of the National Park System, FY2009-FY2018
(in millions of acres)

	Federal Land	Nonfederal Land	Total Acreage
FY2009	80.438	3.938	84.375
FY2010	80.518	3.863	84.381
FY2011	80.485	3.900	84.385
FY2012	80.384	4.039	84.423
FY2013	80.473	4.007	84.479
FY2014	80.466	4.012	84.478
FY2015	80.598	4.021	84.616
FY2016	80.629	4.019	84.736
FY2017	81.008	4.031	85.039
FY2018 (through Dec. 2017)	81.008	4.032	85.040

Sources: NPS Land Resources Division, annual summaries of acreage, available on *NPS Stats* web page at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>. FY2018 figures are as of December 31, 2017, the most recent data available.

Notes: Federal Land category includes *NPS Fee Acres*, *Less Than Fee Acres*, and *Other Federal Fee Acres*. Nonfederal Land category includes *Other Public Acres* and *Private Acres*.

Visits to the National Parks

Numbers of recreational visits to the National Park System varied over the past 10 years but were generally higher toward the end of the decade. The highest numbers of visits were in 2016 (331.0 million visits) and 2017 (330.9 million visits; see **Figure 10** and **Table 4**). Visits at the end of the decade were 15.9% higher than at the beginning.²¹

Table 4. Annual Recreational Visits to the National Park System, 2009-2018
(total visits by calendar year)

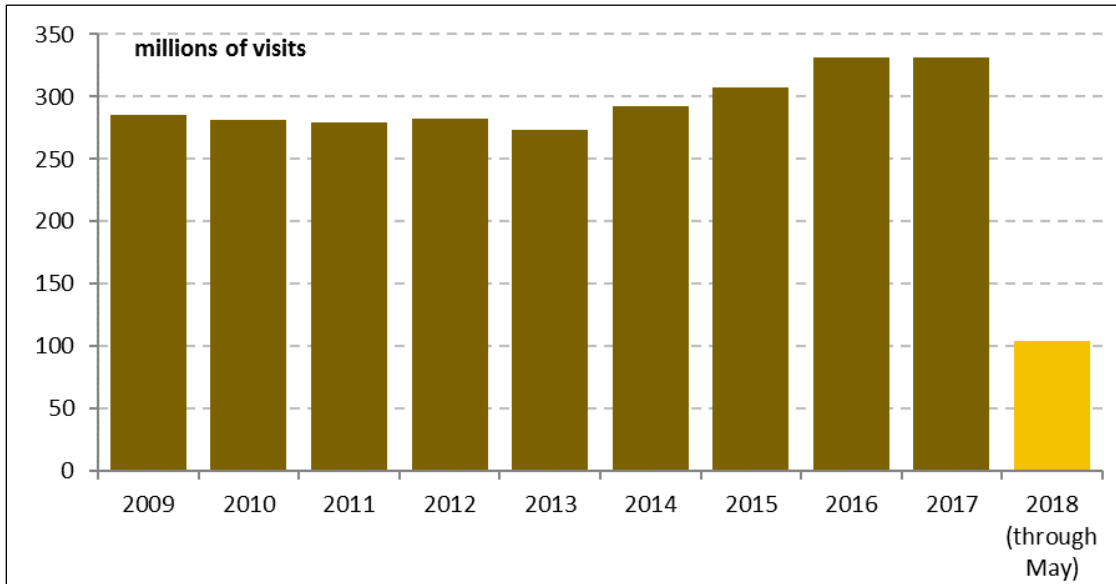
Year	Number of Visits (in millions)	Year	Number of Visits (in millions)
2009	285.6	2014	292.8
2010	281.3	2015	307.2
2011	278.9	2016	331.0
2012	282.8	2017	330.9
2013	273.6	2018 (thr. May)	104.4

Source: NPS, *NPS Stats*, at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>.

Notes: The figure for 2018 shows visits through May 2018. For comparison with the previous year, visits through May 2017 were higher at 110.3 million.

²¹ This compares 2017 visits with 2009 visits, since 2017 is the most recent year for which full information is available.

Figure 10. Annual Recreational Visits to the National Park System, 2009-2018
(total visits in millions, by calendar year)



Source: National Park Service, *NPS Stats*, at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>.

Notes: The figure for 2018 shows visits through May 2018 (104.4 million visits). For comparison with the previous year, visits through May 2017 totaled 110.3 million.

National Park Service Staffing

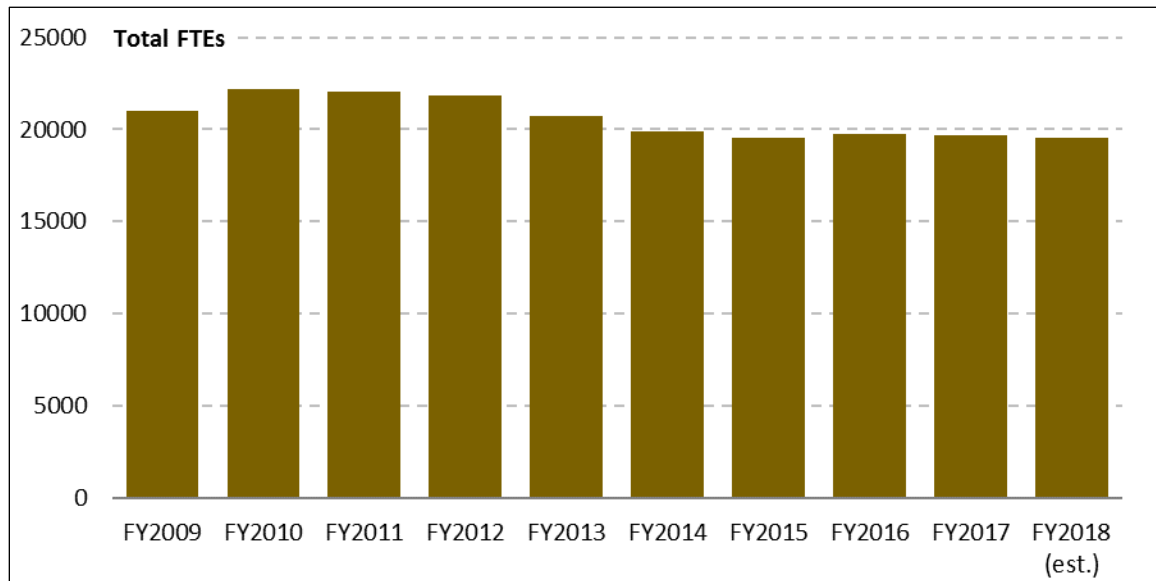
NPS's full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing levels were highest in the earlier part of the decade, starting with an FY2010 increase that followed economic stimulus measures in FY2009. Staffing ranged from a high of 22,211 in FY2010 to a low of 19,359 in FY2015 (**Figure 11** and **Table 5**). NPS's staffing estimate for FY2018 would appear to be the second-lowest, but it may not fully capture staffing numbers because it was based on an appropriations baseline derived from a continuing resolution, whereas the final NPS appropriation was higher.

Table 5. NPS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff, FY2009-FY2018

Year	Number of FTEs	Year	Number of FTEs
FY2009	20,991	FY2014	19,894
FY2010	22,211	FY2015	19,359
FY2011	22,051	FY2016	19,722
FY2012	21,830	FY2017	19,668
FY2013	20,720	FY2018 (est.)	19,520

Sources: FY2009-FY2015 numbers from U.S. Department of the Interior, "Department of the Interior FTE History: Full-Time Equivalent Staff Year (FTE) Actual of Bureaus and Offices," at https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/fte-_history_table-20161108.pdf. FY2016-FY2018 numbers from NPS budget justifications.

Note: NPS's FTE estimate for FY2018 was based on an appropriations baseline of \$2.924 billion derived from a continuing resolution, whereas the final NPS appropriation was \$3.202 billion, not including supplementals.

Figure 11. NPS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff, FY2007-FY2016

Sources: FY2009-FY2015 numbers from U.S. Department of the Interior, “Department of the Interior FTE History: Full-Time Equivalent Staff Year (FTE) Actual of Bureaus and Offices,” at https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/fte_history_table-20161108.pdf. FY2016-FY2018 numbers from NPS budget justifications.

Note: NPS’s FTE estimate for FY2018 was based on an appropriations baseline of \$2.924 billion derived from a continuing resolution, whereas the final NPS appropriation was \$3.202 billion, not including supplementals.

Conclusion

NPS’s appropriations fluctuated over the past decade, and supplemental appropriations notably increased the totals in FY2009, FY2013, and FY2018. Counting the supplementals, the total NPS discretionary appropriation for FY2018 was 5.6% higher than FY2009 in nominal dollars but 8.0% lower in inflation-adjusted dollars. Excluding supplementals, the FY2018 appropriation was higher than FY2009 in both nominal (+26.8%) and inflation-adjusted (+10.5%) dollars. The overall trend was one of decline in the first part of the decade and growth in the second part. The share of total appropriations represented by each individual account in the NPS portfolio also fluctuated, and overall changes in share vary depending on whether or not supplemental appropriations are counted.

The funding changes took place in the context of a park system of relatively stable size and a staffing level that hovered around 20,000. Although park acreage grew only slightly, 26 units were added to the system during the decade. Visits to the parks generally were higher in the second half of the decade than the first and peaked in 2016 at approximately 331 million visits.

A major funding issue for NPS is infrastructure reinvestment. The agency’s backlog of deferred maintenance and repairs for its infrastructure was estimated at \$11.61 billion for FY2017. Funding for both of the discretionary appropriations accounts that mainly address deferred maintenance (ONPS and Construction) decreased over the decade if supplementals are counted in the measurement but increased if supplementals are excluded. NPS’s infrastructure needs continue to receive attention in the 115th Congress, both within and outside the annual appropriations process.

Author Contact Information

(name redacted)
Specialist in Natural Resources Policy
/redacted/@crs.loc.gov-....

EveryCRSReport.com

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a federal legislative branch agency, housed inside the Library of Congress, charged with providing the United States Congress non-partisan advice on issues that may come before Congress.

EveryCRSReport.com republishes CRS reports that are available to all Congressional staff. The reports are not classified, and Members of Congress routinely make individual reports available to the public.

Prior to our republication, we redacted names, phone numbers and email addresses of analysts who produced the reports. We also added this page to the report. We have not intentionally made any other changes to any report published on EveryCRSReport.com.

CRS reports, as a work of the United States government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

Information in a CRS report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to members of Congress in connection with CRS' institutional role.

EveryCRSReport.com is not a government website and is not affiliated with CRS. We do not claim copyright on any CRS report we have republished.