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# **National Park Service: FY2016 Appropriations and Recent Trends**

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## Summary

The National Park Service (NPS) receives appropriations in the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. For FY2016, the Obama Administration requested \$3.048 billion in discretionary appropriations for NPS, an increase of \$433.1 million (16.6%) over the enacted FY2015 amount of \$2.615 billion. In addition to the discretionary funding, the Administration also proposed \$1.160 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS, more than twice the FY2015 level of \$505.8 million (+129.3%). Some of the mandatory appropriations would require changes in authorizing law. The discretionary and mandatory requests bring the Administration's total request for NPS for FY2016 to \$4.208 billion, an increase of \$1.087 billion (or 34.8%) over the FY2015 total of \$3.121 billion. NPS has stated that much of the increased funding would be used to address the agency's growing backlog of deferred maintenance, in connection with its upcoming centennial anniversary in 2016.

This report discusses NPS's FY2016 appropriations and also examines trends in the agency's discretionary appropriations over the past decade (FY2006-FY2015). NPS appropriations rose and fell during that time. Overall, the enacted discretionary appropriation for FY2015 showed an increase of 15.9% in nominal dollars but a decrease of 0.2% in inflation-adjusted dollars compared to a decade earlier (FY2006).

For most of this time, the NPS discretionary appropriation included five accounts. The largest by far is the Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) account, which supports the activities, programs, and services that form the day-to-day operations of the park system. The majority of ONPS funds are provided directly to managers of individual park units. This account grew over the decade by 8.9% in inflation-adjusted dollars. Another account, for federal and state land acquisition funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund, grew by 81.4% in inflation-adjusted dollars. The other three accounts showed declines over the decade ranging from 8.0% to 62.1% in inflation-adjusted dollars. A sixth account, the Centennial Challenge account, was funded only in certain years.

The funding changes took place in the context of relative stability in the size of the National Park System, which grew slightly (+0.2%) from 84.3 million to 84.5 million acres over the past 10 years. NPS staffing levels fluctuated around 20,000 and grew overall. Visits to the parks also increased over the decade, peaking at approximately 293 million in 2014.

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The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which covers 84.5 million acres of land and consists of 407 diverse units valued for their natural, cultural, and recreational importance. NPS receives appropriations in the annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This report discusses NPS appropriations for FY2016 and examines trends in the agency's discretionary appropriations over the past decade (FY2006-FY2015). It also discusses changes in the size of the National Park System, numbers of recreation visits to the parks, and NPS staffing levels during that period.

## FY2016 Appropriations for NPS

For FY2016, the Obama Administration requested \$3.048 billion in discretionary appropriations for NPS, an increase of \$433.1 million, or 16.6%, over the enacted FY2015 amount of \$2.615 billion (**Table 1**).<sup>1</sup> In addition to the discretionary funding, the Administration also proposed \$1.160 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS, more than twice the FY2015 level of \$505.8 million (+129.3%; see text box below). Some of the mandatory appropriations would require changes in authorizing law. The discretionary and mandatory requests bring the Administration's total request for NPS for FY2016 to \$4.208 billion, an increase of \$1.087 billion (or 34.8%) over the FY2015 total of \$3.121 billion. NPS has stated that much of the increased funding would be used to address the agency's growing backlog of deferred maintenance, in connection with its upcoming centennial anniversary in 2016.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1. Discretionary Appropriations for the National Park Service:  
FY2016 Request vs. FY2015 Enacted**  
(\$ in millions)

Account	FY2015 Enacted	FY2016 Request	Change from FY2015	
			\$	%
Operation of the National Park System	2,275.8	2,515.1	+239.4	+10.5%
Resource Stewardship	317.2	351.2	+34.0	+10.7%
Visitor Services	243.0	276.9	+33.9	+14.0%
Park Protection	348.8	359.0	+10.2	+2.9%
Facility Operations & Maintenance	697.3	848.9	+151.6	+21.7%
Park Support	489.4	498.4	+8.9	+1.8%
External Administrative Costs	180.0	180.6	+0.6	+0.3%
National Recreation and Preservation	63.1	54.2	-8.9	-14.1%
Heritage Partnership Programs	20.3	10.0	-10.3	-50.7%
Other	42.8	44.2	+1.4	+3.3%
Historic Preservation Fund	56.4	89.9	+33.5	+59.3%

<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, *Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2016*, p. Overview-4, <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY-2016-Greenbook.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> For more on NPS's deferred maintenance backlog, estimated for FY2014 at a mid-range figure of \$11.5 billion, see CRS Report R43997, *Deferred Maintenance of Federal Land Management Agencies: FY2005-FY2014 Estimates*, by Carol Hardy Vincent.

Account	FY2015 Enacted	FY2016 Request	Change from FY2015	
			\$	%
Construction	138.3	251.0	+112.6	+81.5%
Land and Water Conservation Fund <sup>a</sup>	-28.0	-30.0	-2.0	-7.1%
Land Acquisition and State Assistance	99.0	117.5	+18.5	+18.7%
Assistance to States	48.1	53.2	+5.0	+10.6%
NPS Acquisition	50.8	64.3	+13.5	+26.6%
Centennial Challenge	10.0	50.0	+40.0	+400.0%
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>2,614.6</b>	<b>3,047.7</b>	<b>+433.1</b>	<b>+16.6%</b>

**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for the National Park Service.

a. Figures reflect a rescission of contract authority.

### Mandatory Appropriations in NPS's FY2016 Budget Request

Most of the National Park Service's funding comes from discretionary appropriations, which are controlled by annual appropriations acts. 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. Some mandatory receipts, such as recreation fees, are targeted for use at the park units where they were collected, while others, such as concession fees, are used for system-wide programs.

In its FY2016 budget request, NPS seeks changes in law that would significantly increase the mandatory spending available to the agency. In particular, NPS asks Congress to establish:

- a mandatory Centennial Challenge matching-grant fund to spur partner donations for park improvement projects, with \$100 million per year for three years;
- a Second Century Infrastructure Investment fund to address deferred maintenance needs, with \$300 million per year for three years;
- a Public Lands Centennial Fund, under which multiple land management agencies would compete for funding to address conservation and infrastructure project needs, with \$100 million per year for three years; and
- permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), with mandatory spending of \$106.7 million for NPS in FY2015, along with a further \$25 million for Urban Park Rehabilitation and Recovery Grants.

Along with existing programs, these new proposals bring NPS's proposed mandatory appropriations for FY2016 to \$1.160 billion, more than twice the level of recent years. Much of the request aims to address the growing backlog of deferred maintenance in the 407 units of the National Park System, estimated at \$9.31 billion to \$13.70 billion for FY2014, with a mid-range figure of \$11.50 billion. In its budget request, NPS states that the requested mandatory and discretionary funding, taken together, would allow the agency to make "targeted, measurable, and quantifiable upgrades to all 6,735 of its highest priority non-transportation assets and restore and maintain them in good condition."

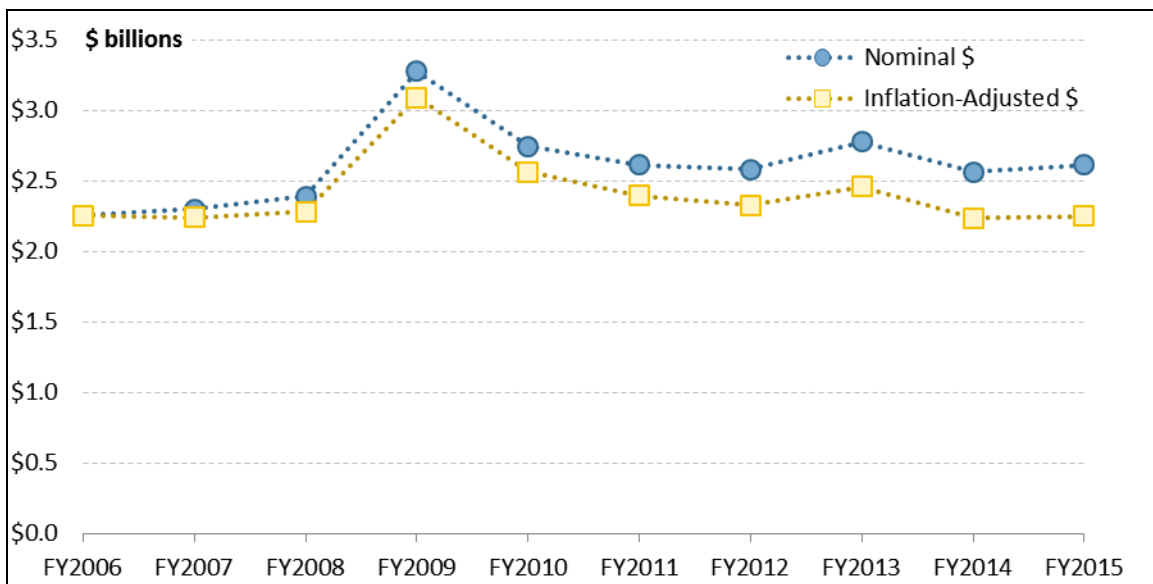
New mandatory spending would be subject to certain budget enforcement requirements, including the potential need to offset such spending. These requirements represent a hurdle for NPS's mandatory proposals. The 113<sup>th</sup> Congress did not act on similar mandatory funding legislation requested by NPS for FY2015.

**Source:** NPS, *Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2016*, <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY-2016-Greenbook.pdf>.

## Trends in NPS Discretionary Appropriations

The sections below examine trends over the past decade (FY2006-FY2015) in NPS discretionary appropriations. The agency's discretionary appropriations increased over the decade by 15.9% in actual (nominal) dollars, growing from \$2.256 billion in FY2006 to \$2.615 billion in FY2015. However, when dollar values are adjusted for inflation, appropriations declined slightly (by 0.2%) over the decade (see **Figure 1** and **Table 2**).<sup>3</sup> A spike in appropriations occurred in FY2009, when economic stimulus measures were enacted in P.L. 111-5, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Appropriations also rose in FY2013, reflecting supplemental funding for response to Hurricane Sandy, which heavily damaged parks on the East Coast.

**Figure 1. NPS Appropriations, FY2006-FY2015**  
(\$ billions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2006 dollars)



**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

**Notes:** These figures exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. They generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. However, the FY2006 figure does not reflect any supplementals. Figures for FY2013 reflect the President's March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2006 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—1940–2019," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

<sup>3</sup> Changes in appropriations over time may be measured in actual dollars (also known as "nominal" or "current" dollars) or in dollar amounts that are adjusted for inflation (known as "real," "constant," or "inflation-adjusted" dollars). The latter measure is useful for gauging the relative impact of appropriations over the long term. For example, although the \$2.615 billion of discretionary appropriations for NPS in FY2015 was higher in *nominal* dollars than the \$2.256 billion appropriated in FY2006, the FY2015 figure bought only the amount of goods and services that \$2.251 billion would have purchased in FY2006. In this sense, the FY2015 appropriation represented a decline in NPS spending power compared with FY2006. Several different indexes measure inflation and allow for calculations of inflation-adjusted dollar amounts. This report uses 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—1940–2019," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>. For more information on measuring inflation, see CRS Report RL30344, *Inflation: Causes, Costs, and Current Status*, by Marc Labonte.

**Table 2. NPS Discretionary Appropriations, FY2006-FY2015**  
(\$ billions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2006 dollars)

	Appropriation in Nominal \$	Appropriation in Inflation-Adjusted 2006 \$	% Change Since Previous Year	
			Nominal	Inflation-Adjusted
FY2006	2.256	2.256	—	—
FY2007	2.300	2.239	+2.0%	-0.7%
FY2008	2.390	2.280	+3.9%	+1.8%
FY2009	3.276	3.088	+37.0%	+35.4%
FY2010	2.744	2.565	-16.2%	-17.0%
FY2011	2.611	2.394	-4.8%	-6.7%
FY2012	2.580	2.324	-1.2%	-2.9%
FY2013	2.775	2.458	+7.6%	+5.7%
FY2014	2.562	2.235	-7.7%	-9.1%
FY2015	2.615	2.251	+2.1%	+0.7%
<b>Total change</b>	<b>+0.359</b>	<b>-0.005</b>	<b>+15.9%</b>	<b>-0.2%</b>

**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

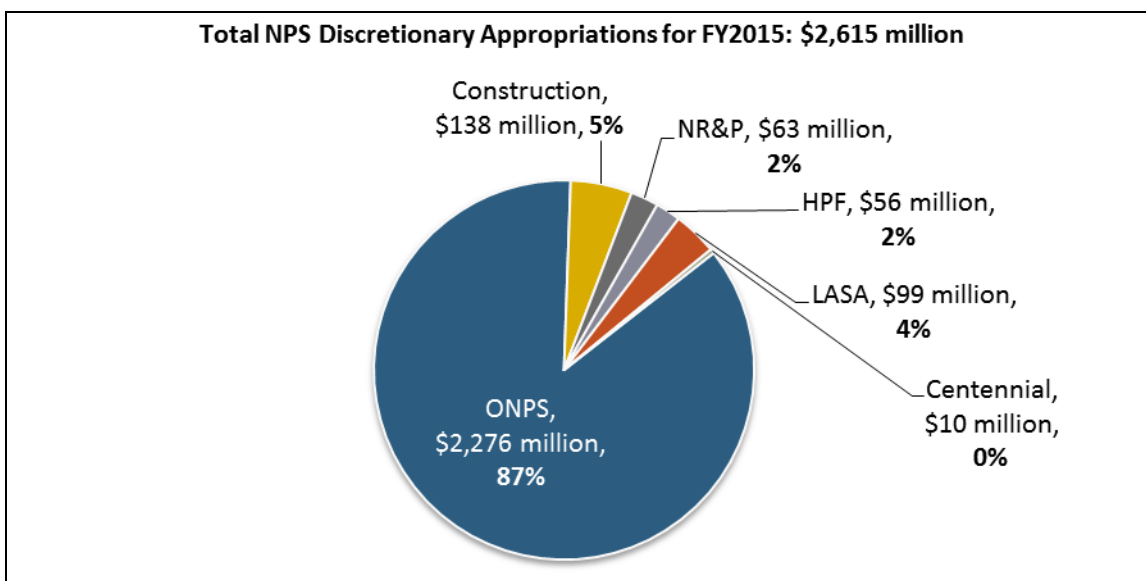
**Notes:** These figures exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. They generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. However, the FY2006 figure does not reflect any supplementals. Figures for FY2013 reflect the President's March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2006 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—1940–2019," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

For most of the decade, NPS appropriations were spread across 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).<sup>4</sup> By far the largest share of NPS's discretionary appropriations—87.0% in FY2015—went to the ONPS account, which covers basic park operations (see **Table 1** and **Figure 2**). Also, in general, this account grew to represent a larger share of total NPS appropriations over the course of the decade, while the share represented by most of the other accounts declined (**Table 3**).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 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 Carol Hardy Vincent.

<sup>5</sup> See section on "Operation of the National Park System" for further discussion. Among the other four accounts, only the Land Acquisition and State Assistance account had a higher share of total appropriations in FY2015 than in FY2006.



**Figure 2. NPS's FY2015 Discretionary Appropriations by Account**

**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. These data exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. The figure for the total appropriation reflects a rescission of \$28 million in LWCF contract authority, which is not shown in the chart.

**Notes:** ONPS = Operation of the National Park Service; NR&P = National Recreation and Preservation; HPF = Historic Preservation Fund; LASA = Land Acquisition and State Assistance.

In addition to these five accounts, during three years of the past decade (FY2008, FY2010, and FY2015), Congress appropriated funds for a sixth account, the Centennial Challenge account.<sup>6</sup> The account consists of a matching-grant program to spur partner donations for park improvements in anticipation of the National Park System's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. The program received \$24.6 million in FY2008, \$5.0 million in FY2010 (as well as \$10.0 million in carryover balances from NPS's recreational fee program), and \$10.0 million in FY2015. For FY2016, NPS has requested \$50.0 million in discretionary appropriations for the Centennial Challenge account. In addition to discretionary funding, both the George W. Bush and Obama Administrations sought additional mandatory appropriations of up to \$100 million annually for this account. However, Congress has not established the mandatory fund. The Administration has again requested mandatory funding for FY2016 (see text box above).

Several additional accounts existed for a limited time during the past decade and were either defunded or folded into other accounts. In the discussions below, calculations are adjusted to reflect the separation or merger of accounts.<sup>7</sup> Below the account level, funding for some individual programs, projects, or activities also shifted between accounts during the 10-year period. This report may not reflect some of the smaller such realignments that occurred throughout the decade.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The account was titled "Centennial Challenge" in FY2015 and FY2008, but it was called "Park Partnership Project Grants" in FY2010.

<sup>7</sup> See the discussions below for specific examples.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in FY2007, funding for three museums moved from the National Recreation and Preservation account to the ONPS account, while funding for the Harpers Ferry Center moved from the ONPS account to the Construction account.

**Table 3. NPS Appropriations by Account, FY2006-FY2015**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2006 dollars)

	<b>ONPS</b>	<b>Construction</b>	<b>NR&amp;P</b>	<b>HPF</b>	<b>LASA</b>	<b>Total<sup>a</sup></b>
FY2006	1,798.628	313.858	59.082	67.246	46.954	<b>2,255.768</b>
FY2007	1,848.421	297.482	59.295	60.737	64.024	<b>2,299.959</b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>1,799.748</i>	<i>289.649</i>	<i>57.734</i>	<i>59.138</i>	<i>62.338</i>	<b>2,239.396</b>
FY2008	1,970.581	218.522	67.413	70.385	68.977	<b>2,390.488<sup>b</sup></b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>1,879.867</i>	<i>208.463</i>	<i>64.310</i>	<i>67.145</i>	<i>65.802</i>	<b>2,280.444</b>
FY2009	2,277.755	821.521	58.384	83.984	64.190	<b>3,275.834</b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>2,147.695</i>	<i>774.612</i>	<i>55.050</i>	<i>79.189</i>	<i>60.525</i>	<b>3,088.784</b>
FY2010	2,261.559	232.969	68.436	79.500	126.266	<b>2,743.730<sup>c</sup></b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>2,114.032</i>	<i>217.772</i>	<i>63.972</i>	<i>74.314</i>	<i>118.029</i>	<b>2,564.750</b>
FY2011	2,250.050	184.646	57.245	54.391	94.810	<b>2,611.142</b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>2,062.983</i>	<i>169.295</i>	<i>52.485</i>	<i>49.869</i>	<i>86.928</i>	<b>2,394.055</b>
FY2012	2,236.568	155.366	59.879	55.910	101.897	<b>2,579.620</b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>2,015.348</i>	<i>139.999</i>	<i>53.956</i>	<i>50.380</i>	<i>91.818</i>	<b>2,324.468</b>
FY2013 <sup>d</sup>	2,097.261	453.885	56.747	100.486	96.567	<b>2,774.946</b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>1,857.512</i>	<i>401.999</i>	<i>50.260</i>	<i>88.999</i>	<i>85.528</i>	<b>2,457.727</b>
FY2014	2,236.753	137.461	60.795	56.410	98.100	<b>2,561.519</b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>1,951.364</i>	<i>119.922</i>	<i>53.038</i>	<i>49.213</i>	<i>85.583</i>	<b>2,234.693</b>
FY2015	2,275.773	138.339	63.117	56.410	98.960	<b>2,614.599<sup>e</sup></b>
<i>Inflation-adjusted</i>	<i>1,958.943</i>	<i>119.080</i>	<i>54.330</i>	<i>48.557</i>	<i>85.183</i>	<b>2,250.598</b>

**Source:** 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.

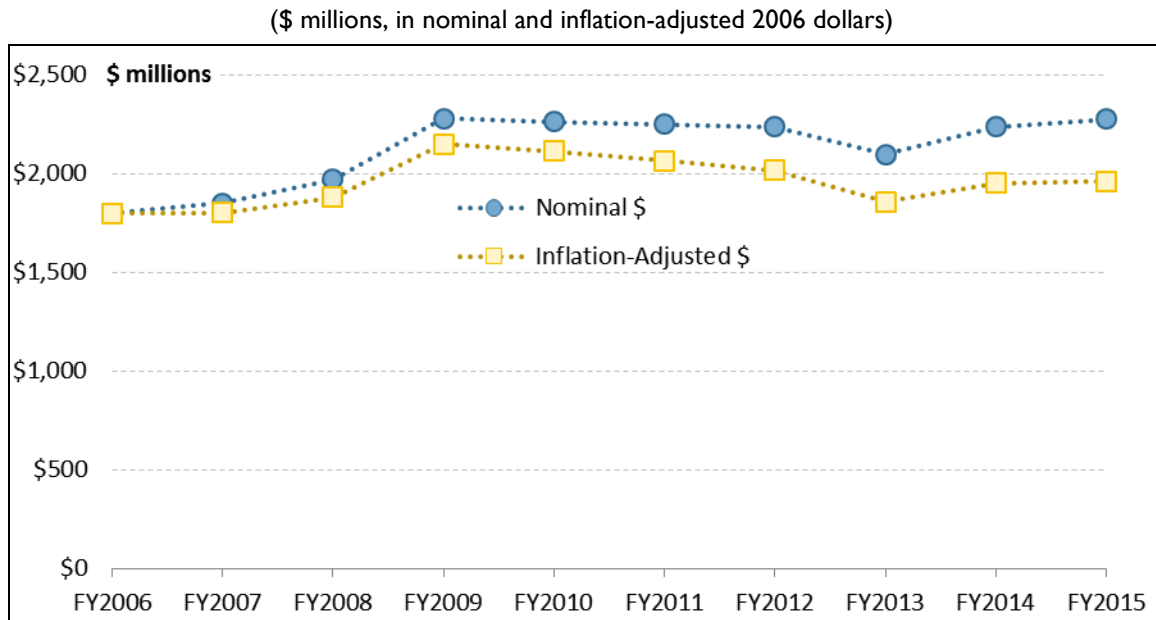
These figures exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. They generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. However, the FY2006 figure does not reflect any supplementals. Figures for FY2013 reflect the President's March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2006 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—1940–2019," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

- Totals reflect annual rescissions for LWCF contract authority of \$30.0 million for FY2005-FY2013 and \$28.0 million for FY2014. 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.
- The total for FY2008 includes an appropriation of \$24.61 million for the Centennial Challenge fund, which is not otherwise reflected in this table.
- The total for FY2010 includes an appropriation of \$5.0 million for Park Partnership Project Grants (i.e., Centennial Challenge fund), which is not otherwise reflected in this table.
- Figures for FY2013 reflect the President's March 1, 2013, budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. They also reflect the supplemental appropriation in P.L. 113-2 for Hurricane Sandy response and recovery. The supplemental added \$329.815 million to the Construction account and \$47.489 million to the Historic Preservation account, after adjusting for sequestration.
- The total for FY2015 includes an appropriation of \$10.0 million for the Centennial Challenge fund, which is not otherwise reflected in this table.

## Operation of the National Park System Account

Appropriations for the largest NPS account, entitled Operation of the National Park System (ONPS), increased over the decade, rising from \$1.799 billion in FY2006 to \$2.275 billion in FY2015 (see **Table 3** and **Figure 3**). When adjusted for inflation, this represents a growth of 8.9%. The funding supports the activities, programs, and services that form the day-to-day operations of the National Park System. Funding for these park operations grew not only in dollar amount but also as a percentage of total NPS appropriations, increasing from 79.7% of total funding in FY2006 to 87.0% in FY2015.

**Figure 3. Appropriations for NPS's Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) Account, FY2006-FY2015**



**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

**Notes:** These figures exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. They generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. However, the FY2006 figure does not reflect any supplementals. Figures for FY2013 reflect the President's March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2006 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—1940–2019," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

For FY2006-FY2007, the U.S. Park Police account is included in the ONPS totals to facilitate comparison with subsequent years, in which the Park Police appropriation was merged into the ONPS appropriation.

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),<sup>9</sup> facility operations and maintenance, and park support,<sup>10</sup> as well

<sup>9</sup> Prior to FY2008, the U.S. Park Police—a uniformed law enforcement entity providing protection to park sites in the metropolitan areas of San Francisco, New York City, and Washington, DC—was funded under a separate U.S. Park Police account. In this report, ONPS appropriations totals for FY2006 and FY2007 include the Park Police account to (continued...)

as “external administrative costs” for services provided by outside entities.<sup>11</sup> Among these activities, the two showing the greatest percentage growth over the decade were park support, which grew by 41.6% in inflation-adjusted dollars, and external administrative costs, which grew by 20.5% in inflation-adjusted dollars but remained the smallest activity in terms of funding.<sup>12</sup>

## 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 for the account at the beginning of the decade (\$313.9 million in FY2006) were considerably higher than those at the end of the decade (\$138.3 million in FY2015; see **Figure 4** and **Table 3**). Adjusting dollar amounts for inflation, this represents a decline of 62.1%. Construction appropriations accordingly represent a smaller portion of total NPS appropriations in FY2015 (5.3%) than they did in FY2006 (13.9%). However, this overall decline was tempered by two spikes in funding for the Construction account—one in FY2009, resulting from emergency appropriations in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA; P.L. 111-5), and the other in FY2013, resulting from the Hurricane Sandy supplemental appropriation in P.L. 113-2.

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. Projects are prioritized based on their contribution to NPS “mission factors” and cost-benefit considerations.<sup>13</sup> Funding for the line-item activity mainly declined over the decade—although, as discussed above, this decline was mitigated by ARRA stimulus funds in FY2009 and by the Hurricane Sandy supplemental in FY2013. (The portion of funding directed to the “line-item” subactivity in particular is not readily available for either of these appropriations.) 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).

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(...continued)

provide consistency with subsequent years in which Park Police funding was merged into the ONPS account.

<sup>10</sup> The “park support” activity includes funding for administering, managing, and supporting the operations of park units.

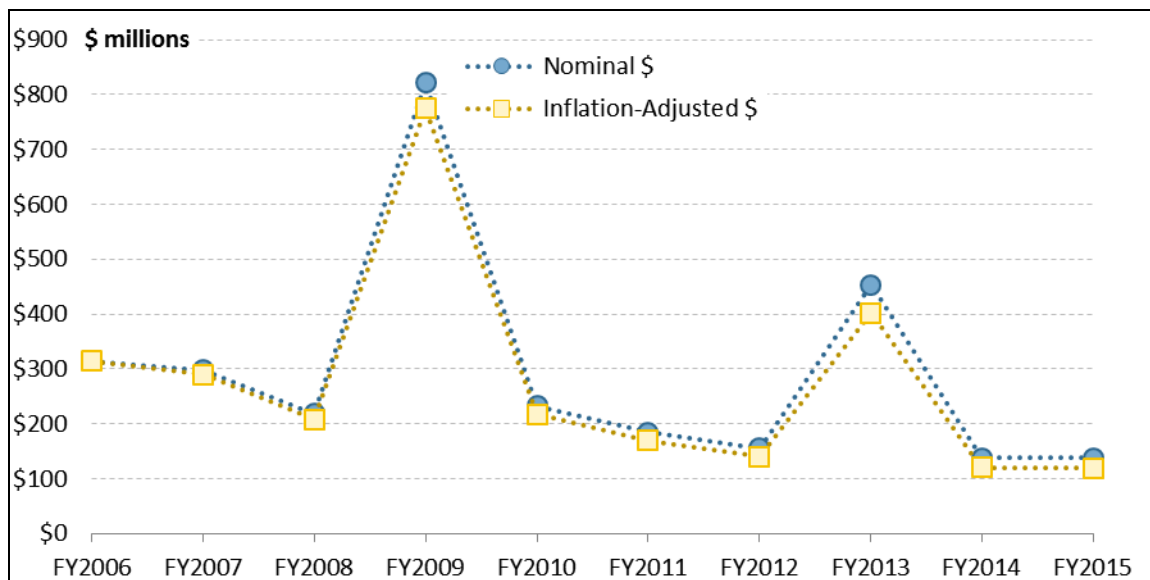
<sup>11</sup> These “external administrative costs” include employee compensation payments, unemployment compensation payments, centralized information technology costs, telecommunications, postage, space rental from the General Services Administration, and departmental program charges.

<sup>12</sup> These calculations use funding amounts from annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. It is difficult to calculate exact percentage growth or decline for three of the activities—resource stewardship, visitor services, and park protection (including the U.S. Park Police)—because an account realignment in FY2010 significantly reorganized programs within these areas. However, these three activities combined show a slight growth (+0.4% in inflation-adjusted dollars) between FY2006 and FY2015. Funding for facility operations and maintenance also grew slightly (+1.2% in inflation-adjusted dollars) in this period.

<sup>13</sup> A fuller description of NPS’s two-tier priority system is in the agency’s FY2016 budget justification, p. Const-8, at <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY-2016-Greenbook.pdf>.

**Figure 4. Appropriations for NPS's Construction Account, FY2006-FY2015**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2006 dollars)



**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for the National Park Service.

**Notes:** These figures exclude permanent budget authorities, and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. They generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. However, the FY2006 figure does not reflect any supplementals. Figures for FY2013 reflect the President's March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2006 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—1940–2019," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

### NPS Funding for Deferred Maintenance

Despite NPS's efforts to address deferred maintenance through improved inventory and asset management, the agency's maintenance backlog has continued to build over the past decade from an estimated mid-range figure of \$9.11 billion in FY2006 to an estimated mid-range figure of \$11.50 billion for FY2014 (in nominal dollars; FY2014 is the most recent year available). The bulk of NPS deferred maintenance—59% in FY2014—is in the category of roads, bridges, and trails.

Although NPS's 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 may also 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. Appropriations for line-item construction declined considerably over the decade (-75.3% in inflation-adjusted dollars), while facility operation and maintenance appropriations grew slightly (+1.2% in inflation-adjusted dollars).

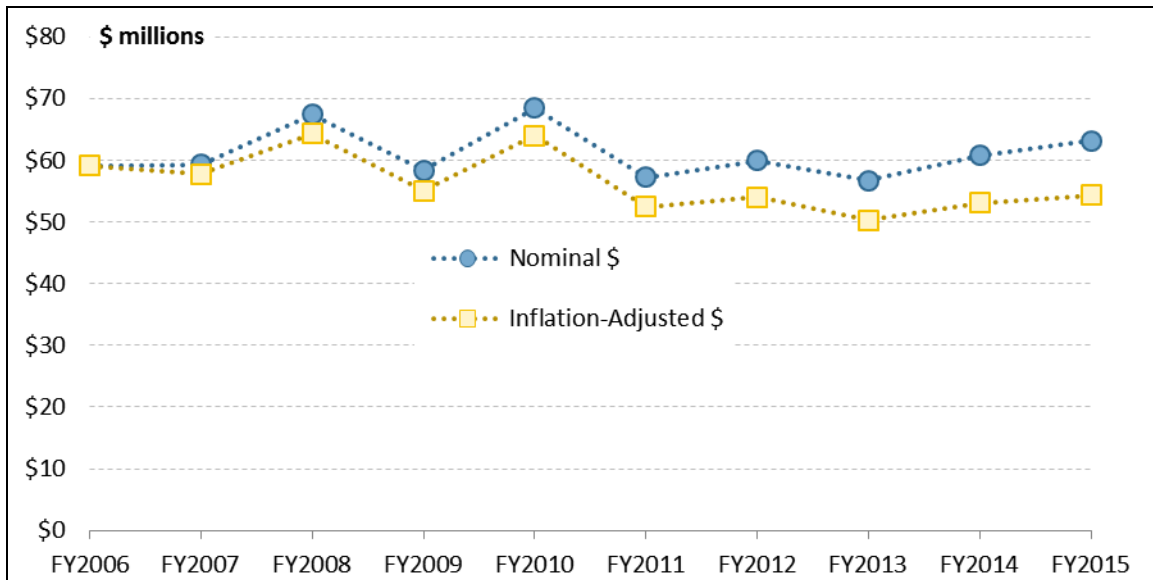
For more information on NPS deferred maintenance, see CRS Report R43997, *Deferred Maintenance of Federal Land Management Agencies: FY2005-FY2014 Estimates*, by Carol Hardy Vincent.

## 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 fluctuated over the decade and rose overall in nominal dollars, from \$59.1 million in FY2006 to \$63.1 million in FY2015.<sup>14</sup> Adjusted for inflation, however, the appropriation declined by 8.0% (Figure 5 and Table 3). The portion of total NPS funding used for the NR&P account also declined—from 2.6% in FY2006 to 2.4% in FY2015.

**Figure 5. Appropriations for NPS’s National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) Account, FY2006-FY2015**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2006 dollars)



**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

**Notes:** These figures exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. They generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. However, the FY2006 figure does not reflect any supplementals. Figures for FY2013 reflect the President’s March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2006 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—1940–2019,” at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>. For FY2006 and FY2007, appropriations for the Preserve America program are included in the NR&P totals, because this program was later funded in the NR&P account.

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 contained in the account.<sup>15</sup> Its appropriations grew over the

<sup>14</sup> To facilitate multi-year comparisons, the FY2006 and FY2007 totals for the NR&P account include appropriations for the Preserve America program, which was shifted to this account beginning in FY2008.

<sup>15</sup> National heritage areas are established by Congress but are not federally managed, and they are not part of the (continued...)

decade,<sup>16</sup> despite Administration budget requests in recent years to reduce the heritage area appropriation by roughly half. The number of heritage areas also increased during the decade from 26 to 49. The NR&P account has also included such programs as the American Battlefield Protection Program; the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; the National Natural Landmarks and National Historic Landmarks Programs; the National Register of Historic Places; and the 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) was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. §470). In accordance with the purposes of the act, the fund provides grants-in-aid to state and local governments and private entities for conserving cultural and historical assets and sites. Its grants are normally awarded on a 60% federal/40% state matching share basis.

Appropriations for the HPF account varied during the decade and declined overall—from \$67.2 million in FY2006<sup>17</sup> to \$56.4 million in FY2015, a drop of 27.8% in inflation-adjusted dollars (see **Figure 6** and **Table 3**). The account represented 3.0% of the total NPS appropriation in FY2006 and 2.2% in FY2015. HPF appropriations were highest in FY2013, as a result of the supplemental appropriation in response to Hurricane Sandy (P.L. 113-2), which added \$47.5 million (after sequestration) to the account’s regular FY2013 appropriation of \$53.0 million.

The largest activity in the account is funding for state historic preservation offices, which rose from \$35.7 million in FY2006 to \$46.9 million in FY2015. Adjusted for inflation, this represents a gain of 13.1%. Tribal grants also rose from \$3.9 million to \$9.0 million, a growth of 96.2% after adjusting for inflation. Although these activities grew, other changes contributed to declines in HPF funding during the decade. The Save America’s Treasures program, which helped to restore nationally significant historic structures and artifacts, was funded in varying amounts from FY2006 through FY2010, but appropriations for this program were eliminated in FY2011, contributing to a funding decline for the overall HPF account (**Figure 6**).<sup>18</sup> The account also contained appropriations for grants to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) until FY2007,<sup>19</sup> after which these institutions were encouraged to seek restoration grants through the Save America’s Treasures program.<sup>20</sup> For FY2016, NPS has requested that grants to HBCUs again be funded in the NR&P account.<sup>21</sup>

(...continued)

National Park System. For more on national heritage areas, see CRS Report RL33462, *Heritage Areas: Background, Proposals, and Current Issues*, by Carol Hardy Vincent and Laura B. Comay.

<sup>16</sup> In inflation-adjusted dollars, the FY2015 appropriation for heritage area partnerships was 31.5% higher than the FY2006 appropriation.

<sup>17</sup> The amount shown for FY2006 does not include appropriations for the Preserve America program. See footnote 14.

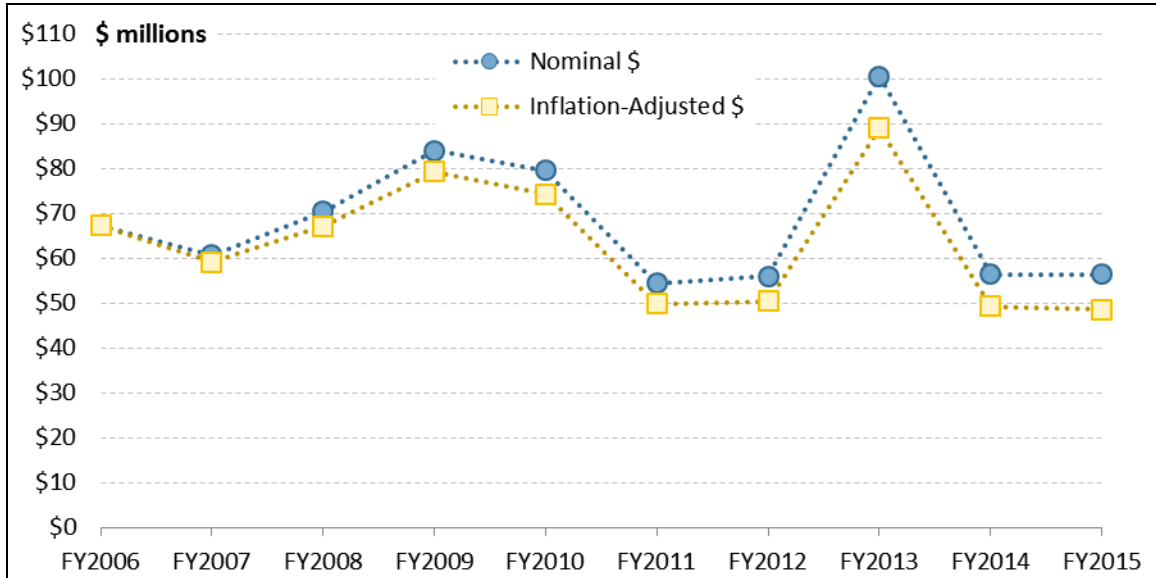
<sup>18</sup> Although the program has not been funded in recent years, it continues to administer existing grants.

<sup>19</sup> See NPS, *Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2008*, p. HPF-11, [http://home.nps.gov/applications/budgetweb/downloads/fy\\_2008\\_greenbook.pdf](http://home.nps.gov/applications/budgetweb/downloads/fy_2008_greenbook.pdf). As of FY2008, the HBCU program also had \$4.3 million in unobligated funding to continue to award to HBCUs, although new funds were not being appropriated.

<sup>20</sup> The HPF account also included appropriations for the Preserve America matching-grant program in FY2006 and FY2007, but in this report, its appropriations are counted in the NR&P account, where the program was later funded. **Figure 6** thus does not reflect any funding for this program. The program supported historic preservation efforts through heritage tourism, education, and historic preservation planning. It received funding only in FY2006-FY2008 and FY2010 but continues to administer existing grants. See <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica/> (continued...)

**Figure 6. Appropriations for NPS's Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) Account, FY2006-FY2015**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2006 dollars)



**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

**Note:** These figures exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. They generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. However, the FY2006 figure does not reflect any supplementals. Figures for FY2013 reflect the President's March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2006 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—1940–2019," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

The amounts for FY2006 and FY2007 do not include appropriations for the Preserve America program. These appropriations are instead counted with the NR&P account to facilitate comparisons with later years when the program was funded through that account.

## 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; 16 U.S.C. §§4601-4 et seq.). The LWCF is the primary funding source for the four major federal land management agencies—NPS, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service—to acquire lands.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the LWCF supports grants to states (and, through them, to localities) for outdoor recreation purposes, specifically to develop plans for outdoor recreation needs and to

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<sup>21</sup> The agency has requested \$2.5 million for grants to HBCUs for preservation of sites and stories relating to civil rights.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on the LWCF, see CRS Report RL33531, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*, by Carol Hardy Vincent. In addition to the state grants and federal land acquisition grants discussed here, in recent years, a portion of the LWCF has also been used to fund other programs.



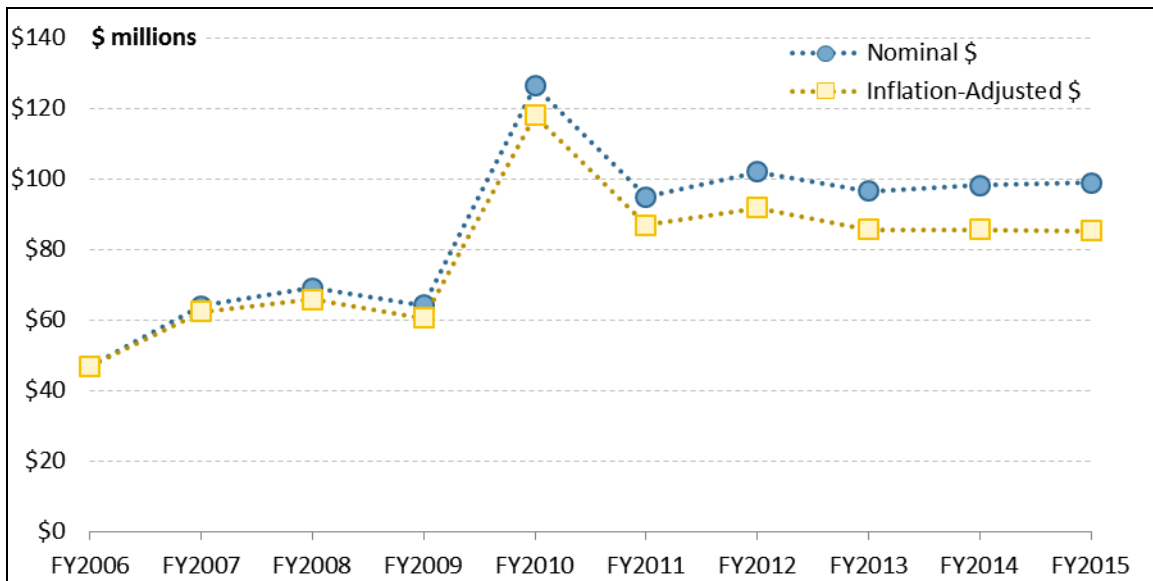
acquire and develop park areas. These 50/50 matching grants, administered by NPS, are allocated to states by formula. Overall, the LWCF is authorized at \$900 million annually, but at no point in the past decade was this “full funding” appropriated.

Appropriations for the LASA account—the NPS portion of the LWCF—varied over the course of the decade and rose overall (see **Figure 7** and **Table 3**). The appropriation rose from \$47.0 million in FY2006 to \$99.0 million in FY2015. Adjusted for inflation, this is a growth of 81.4%. The LASA account represented 2.1% of the total NPS appropriation in FY2006 and 3.8% in FY2015.

Both parts of the account—the funding for NPS land acquisition and that for assistance to states—fluctuated during the decade but grew overall. State assistance was less than \$30 million annually for FY2006-FY2009 and then rose to roughly \$40 million to \$50 million annually for FY2010-FY2015. For land acquisition by NPS, annual funding hovered between \$30 million and \$60 million, except in FY2006, when funding was \$17 million,<sup>23</sup> and in FY2010, when it rose to \$86 million.

**Figure 7. Appropriations for NPS’s Land Acquisition and State Assistance (LASA) Account, FY2006-FY2015**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2006 dollars)



**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS.

**Notes:** These figures exclude permanent budget authorities and generally do not reflect scorekeeping adjustments. They generally reflect rescissions and supplemental appropriations to date, including FY2009 funds from P.L. 111-5 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. However, the FY2006 figure does not reflect any supplementals. Figures for FY2013 reflect the President’s March 2013 budget sequestration and an across-the-board rescission of 0.2%. Adjustments for inflation (shown in 2006 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—1940–2019,” at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

<sup>23</sup> This figure reflects two rescissions of prior-year balances, one of \$9.8 million and another of \$17.0 million.

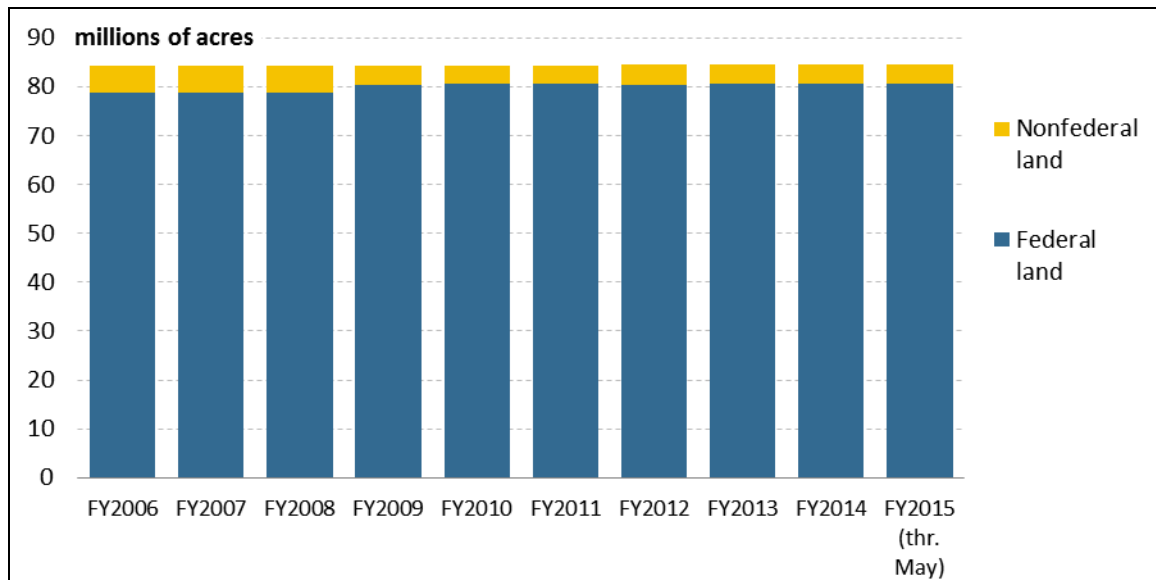
## NPS Appropriations in Context

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 size of the Park System has remained relatively stable, growing by 0.2%. Visitation peaked in 2009 and 2014, and was generally higher in the second part of the decade than the first. (However, in 2013 visitor numbers dropped, due partly to park closures after Hurricane Sandy and to the October 2013 government shutdown.) Staffing levels fluctuated around 20,000 during the past 10 years.

### Size of the National Park System

The size of the National Park System rose slightly over the decade from 84.3 million acres to 84.5 million acres, a growth of 0.2%. (See **Figure 8** and **Table 4**.) The percentage of Park System lands owned by the federal government<sup>24</sup> grew from 93.5% in FY2006 to 95.2% in FY2015 (through May). 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. Even when the overall size of the system remains stable, the federal share of park lands may increase if, for example, the federal government purchases “inholdings” within parks from nonfederal owners.

**Figure 8. Size of the National Park System, FY2006-FY2015**  
(in millions of acres)



**Source:** NPS Land Resources Division, annual summaries of acreage, available on *NPS Stats* Web page at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>.

**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.”

<sup>24</sup> 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.

**Table 4. Size of the National Park System, FY2006-FY2015**  
(in millions of acres)

	Federal Land	Nonfederal Land	Total Acreage
FY2006	78.806	5.505	84.312
FY2007	78.846	5.477	84.322
FY2008	78.855	5.476	84.331
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 (through May)	80.477	4.021	84.499

**Source:** NPS, Land Resources Division, annual summaries of acreage, available on *NPS Stats* web page at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>.

**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.”

Although the overall size of the National Park System did not change significantly, 22 new units were added to the system in the FY2006-FY2015 period.<sup>25</sup> Other acreage changes resulted from boundary adjustments in existing parks.

## 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 2009 (285.6 million visits) and 2014 (292.8 million visits; see **Figure 9** and **Table 5**). Visits at the end of the decade were 7.4% higher than at the beginning.<sup>26</sup> However, visitor numbers dipped in 2013, due in part to Hurricane Sandy, which forced closures at East Coast park units,<sup>27</sup> and to the government shutdown of October 2013.<sup>28</sup>

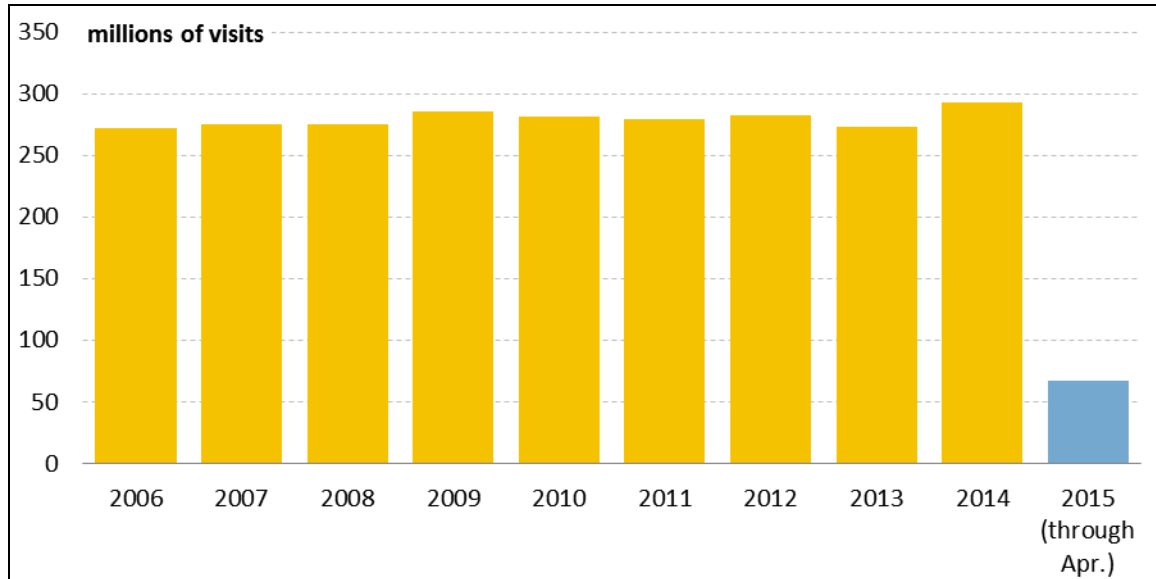
<sup>25</sup> These units are the Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site (DC), African Burial Ground National Monument (NY), Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site (CO), Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial (CA), River Raisin National Battlefield Park (MI), President William Jefferson 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), Manhattan Project National Historical Park (TN, NM, and WA), Harriet Tubman National Historical Park (NY), Coltsville National Historical Park (CT), Pullman National Monument (IL), and Honouliuli National Monument (HI). A list of recent additions to the National Park System can be found at NPS, *Recent Changes in the National Park System*, <http://www.nps.gov/news/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=296369>.

<sup>26</sup> This compares the 2014 visitor total with that for 2006, since 2014 is the most recent year with complete data.

<sup>27</sup> The storm, which struck the East Coast in October 2012, closed nearly 70 park units, in some cases for months. These included heavily visited sites such as the Statue of Liberty, which remained closed through July 2013.

<sup>28</sup> In October 2013, the month of the government shutdown, visitation dropped by 6.4 million compared to the previous (continued...)

**Figure 9. Annual Recreational Visits to the National Park System, 2006-2015**  
(total visits in millions, by calendar year)



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

**Table 5. Annual Recreational Visits to the National Park System, 2006-2015**  
(total visits by calendar year)

Year	Number of Visits	Year	Number of Visits
2006	272,623,980	2011	278,939,216
2007	275,581,547	2012	282,765,682
2008	274,852,949	2013	273,630,895
2009	285,579,941	2014	292,800,082
2010	281,303,769	2015 (thr. Apr.)	66,676,150

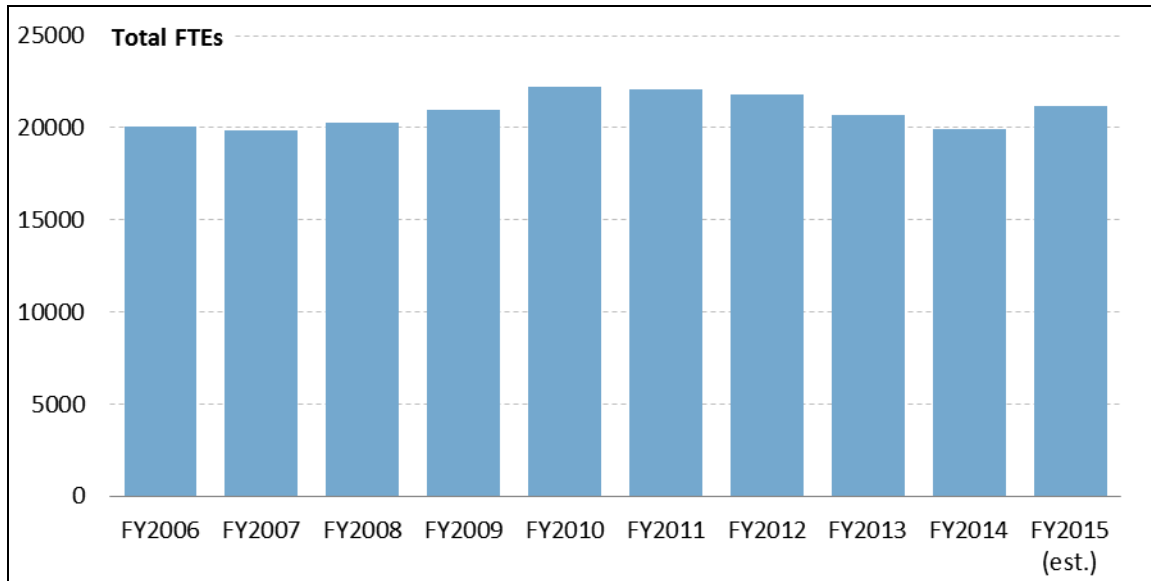
Source: NPS, *NPS Stats*, at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>. The figure for 2015 shows visits through April 2015. For comparison with the previous year, visits through April 2014 were slightly lower at 65,252,821.

## National Park Service Staffing

NPS's full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing level during the past decade ranged from a low of 19,832 in FY2007 to a high of 22,211 in FY2010 (**Figure 10** and **Table 6**). Measured across the decade, staff size grew from 20,056 in FY2006 to an estimated 21,164 in FY2015, an increase of 5.5%.

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October. The total decrease for 2013 compared to 2012 was 9.1 million. See NPS, *2013 National Park Visitor Spending Effects: Economic Contributions to Local Communities, States, and the Nation*, Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/EQD/NRR—2014/824, July 2014, pp. 2-3, [http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/NPSVSE2013\\_final\\_nrss.pdf](http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/NPSVSE2013_final_nrss.pdf).

**Figure 10. NPS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff, FY2006-FY2015**

**Source:** U.S. Department of the Interior, "Department of the Interior FTE History: Full-Time Equivalent Staff Year (FTE) Usage of Bureaus and Offices," March 5, 2014, [http://www.doi.gov/budget/upload/FTE-History\\_Table.pdf](http://www.doi.gov/budget/upload/FTE-History_Table.pdf).

**Table 6. NPS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff, FY2006-FY2015**

Year	Number of FTEs	Year	Number of FTEs
FY2006	20,056	FY2011	22,051
FY2007	19,832	FY2012	21,830
FY2008	20,301	FY2013	20,720
FY2009	20,991	FY2014	19,894
FY2010	22,211	FY2015 (est.)	21,164

**Source:** U.S. Department of the Interior, "Department of the Interior FTE History: Full-Time Equivalent Staff Year (FTE) Usage of Bureaus and Offices," [http://www.doi.gov/budget/upload/FTE-History\\_Table.pdf](http://www.doi.gov/budget/upload/FTE-History_Table.pdf).

## Conclusion

For FY2016, NPS has requested discretionary appropriations of \$3.048 billion, a 16.6% increase over enacted FY2015 appropriations. Much of the increase would be for activities associated with the agency's centennial anniversary in 2016, especially to address deferred maintenance in the context of the centennial. NPS has also requested a significant increase in its mandatory appropriations for FY2016, some of which would require changes in authorizing law. The 113<sup>th</sup> Congress did not act on a similar request for FY2015.

Over the past decade (FY2006-FY2015), NPS discretionary appropriations rose in nominal dollars but declined slightly (by 0.2%) in inflation-adjusted dollars. In general, the proportion of NPS funding devoted to basic park operations—the Operation of the National Park System account—increased over the decade, as did the portion for land acquisition, while funding for other areas in the NPS portfolio, including construction, declined.

The funding changes took place in the context of a park system of stable size, with a staffing level that hovered around 20,000. Visits to the parks were generally higher in the second half of the decade than the first and peaked in 2014 at approximately 293 million.

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