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# National Park Service: FY2017 Appropriations and Ten-Year Trends

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## Summary

The National Park Service (NPS) receives annual appropriations in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. For FY2017, the Obama Administration requested \$3.101 billion in discretionary appropriations for NPS, an increase of 8.8% over the enacted FY2016 amount. In addition to the discretionary funding, the Obama Administration proposed \$1.238 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS, a growth of 135.6% over NPS mandatory funding in FY2016. Parts of the mandatory request would require changes in authorizing law. The discretionary and mandatory requests brought the Obama Administration's total request for NPS for FY2017 to \$4.339 billion, a requested increase of 28.5% over the FY2016 total.

NPS stated that much of the increased funding would be used to address the agency's backlog of deferred maintenance, in connection with NPS's 2016 centennial anniversary and its expected future infrastructure needs. The agency's maintenance backlog was estimated at \$11.927 billion for FY2015. The backlog has grown as NPS assets—many constructed in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century—age and deteriorate and needed maintenance and repairs are not performed. NPS's maintenance and repair needs are of concern to the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress both within and outside of the annual appropriations process, as Congress considers the NPS backlog in the context of addressing the nation's infrastructure investments more broadly.

The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress did not enact full-year Interior appropriations for FY2017. Continuing funds were provided through April 28, 2017, by two continuing resolutions (CRs; P.L. 114-223 and P.L. 114-254). The CRs generally provide funding at the FY2016 level, minus an across-the-board reduction of less than 1%. Earlier, on July 14, 2016, the House had passed H.R. 5538, the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017. The House bill recommended discretionary appropriations of \$2.930 billion for NPS, an increase of \$78.8 million (2.8%) over the FY2016 enacted amount but \$171.4 million less than the Obama Administration's request. On June 16, 2016, the Senate Appropriations Committee reported its version of the bill, S. 3068. The Senate committee bill recommended \$2.914 billion in discretionary funds for NPS, an increase of \$62.7 million (2.2%) over the FY2016 appropriation and \$187.5 million less than the Obama Administration's NPS request.

This report discusses NPS's FY2017 appropriations and examines trends in the agency's discretionary appropriations over the past decade (FY2007-FY2016). Although NPS appropriations fluctuated during that time period, the overall trend was a growth in real terms. The enacted discretionary appropriation for FY2016 represented an increase of 24.0% in nominal dollars and 7.5% in inflation-adjusted dollars compared with a decade earlier (FY2007).

For most of this time, NPS's discretionary appropriations were organized in five accounts. Two accounts grew over the decade, including the agency's largest account, which funds basic park operations, and an account that funds both federal land acquisition and outdoor recreation assistance to states. Three other accounts, including the account that funds construction and major repairs, showed declines over the decade. A sixth 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 (by 0.4%) from 84.3 million to 84.7 million acres over the past 10 years. The agency's staffing levels fluctuated around 20,000 and grew overall. Visits to the parks increased over the decade, peaking at approximately 331 million visits in 2016.

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The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which covers 84.7 million acres of land and consists of 417 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 FY2017 and examines trends in the agency's discretionary appropriations over the past decade (FY2007-FY2016). 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.

## FY2017 Appropriations for NPS

For FY2017, the Obama Administration requested \$3.101 billion in discretionary appropriations for NPS, an increase of \$250.2 million (8.8%) over the enacted FY2016 amount of \$2.851 billion (see **Table 1**).<sup>1</sup> In addition to the discretionary funding, the Administration proposed \$1.238 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS, a growth of 135.6% over NPS mandatory funding in FY2016 (\$525.4 million; see text box below). Parts of the mandatory request would require changes in authorizing law. The discretionary and mandatory requests brought the Administration's total request for NPS for FY2017 to \$4.339 billion, a proposed increase of \$962.5 million (or 28.5%) over the FY2016 total of \$3.376 billion.

NPS stated that much of the increased funding would be used to address the agency's backlog of deferred maintenance, in connection with NPS's 2016 centennial anniversary and its expected future infrastructure needs.<sup>2</sup> The agency's maintenance backlog was estimated at \$11.927 billion for FY2015 (the most recent NPS estimate available).<sup>3</sup> The backlog has grown as NPS assets—many constructed in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century—age and deteriorate and needed maintenance and repairs are not performed. NPS's maintenance and repair needs are of concern to the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress both within and outside the annual appropriations process, as Congress considers the NPS backlog in the context of addressing the nation's infrastructure investments more broadly.

The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress did not enact full-year Interior appropriations for FY2017. Continuing funds were provided through April 28, 2017, under two continuing resolutions (CRs; P.L. 114-223 and P.L. 114-254). The CRs generally provide funding at the FY2016 level, minus an across-the-board reduction of less than 1%. The 115<sup>th</sup> Congress is faced with addressing NPS appropriations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Earlier, on July 14, 2016, the House had passed H.R. 5538, the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017. The House bill recommended discretionary appropriations of \$2.930 billion for NPS, an increase of \$78.8 million (2.8%) over the FY2016 enacted amount but \$171.4 million less than the Obama Administration's request. On June 16, 2016, the Senate Appropriations Committee reported its version of the bill, S. 3068. The Senate committee bill recommended discretionary appropriations of \$2.914 billion for NPS, an increase of \$62.7 million (2.2%) over the FY2016 appropriation and \$187.5 million less than the Obama Administration's request.

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service (NPS), *Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2017*, p. Overview-4, at <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY17-NPS-Greenbook-for-website.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> For more on NPS's deferred maintenance backlog, see the text box entitled "NPS Infrastructure: Funding for Deferred Maintenance."

<sup>3</sup> National Park Service, "Planning, Design, and Construction Management: NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports," at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/defermain.htm>.

**Table I. FY2017 Discretionary Appropriations for the National Park Service (NPS)**  
(\$ in millions)

Account	FY2016 Enacted	FY2017 Request	House- Passed FY2017 Bill (H.R. 5538)	Change from FY2016		Senate Committee FY2017 Bill (S. 3068)	Change from FY2016	
				\$	%		\$	%
Operation of the National Park System	2,369.6	2,524.4	2,437.5	+68.0	+2.9%	2,405.6	+36.0	+1.5%
Resource Stewardship	328.0 <sup>a</sup>	340.4	329.1	+1.0 <sup>a</sup>	+0.3%	328.1	+<0.1	+<0.1%
Visitor Services	251.3 <sup>a</sup>	276.2	258.5	+7.2 <sup>a</sup>	+2.9%	251.3	—	—
Park Protection	355.5 <sup>a</sup>	362.1	358.7	+3.1 <sup>a</sup>	+0.9%	355.5	—	—
Facility Operations & Maintenance	738.5 <sup>a</sup>	842.5	792.7	+54.2 <sup>a</sup>	+7.3%	763.5	+25.0	+3.4%
Park Support	515.6 <sup>a</sup>	522.5	518.0	+2.3 <sup>a</sup>	+0.4%	526.6	+11.0	+2.1%
External Administrative Costs	180.6	180.7	180.6	—	—	180.6	—	—
National Recreation and Preservation	62.6	54.4	62.6	—	—	62.6	+<0.1	+<0.1%
Heritage Partnership Programs	19.8	9.4	19.8	—	—	19.8	—	—
Other	42.8	44.9	42.8	—	—	42.8	+<0.1	+<0.1%
Historic Preservation Fund	65.4	87.4	83.4	+18.0	+27.5%	67.9	+2.5	+3.8%
Construction	192.9	252.0	215.7	+22.8	+11.8%	217.3	+24.3	+12.6%
Land and Water Conservation Fund <sup>b</sup>	-28.0	-30.0	-28.0	—	—	-28.0	—	—
Land Acquisition and State Assistance	173.7	178.2	128.8	-44.9	-25.9%	168.4	-5.2	-3.0%
Assistance to States	110.0	110.0	80.0	-30.0	-27.3%	110.0	-<0.1	-<0.1%
NPS Acquisition	63.7	68.2	48.8	-14.9	-23.4%	58.4	-5.3	-8.2%
Centennial Challenge	15.0	35.0	30.0	+15.0	+100.0%	20.0	+5.0	+33.3%
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>2,851.2</b>	<b>3,101.5</b>	<b>2,930.0</b>	<b>+78.8</b>	<b>+2.8%</b>	<b>2,913.9</b>	<b>+62.7</b>	<b>+2.2%</b>

**Sources:** House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for the National Park Service; U.S. Congress, House Appropriations Committee, *Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2017*, report to accompany H.R. 5538, 114<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., H.Rept. 114-632 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2016); U.S. Congress, Senate Appropriations Committee, *Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2017*, report to accompany S. 3068, 114<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., S.Rept. 114-281 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2016); P.L. 114-113, Division G, Explanatory Statement, *Congressional Record*, December 17, 2015, p. H10215.

**Notes:**

- Figures reflect a budget realignment by NPS of enacted FY2016 appropriations and may differ from amounts reported in the explanatory statement for P.L. 114-113 and in H.Rept. 114-632. For more information, see National Park Service (NPS), *Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2017*, p. SpecEx-1, at <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY17-NPS-Greenbook-for-website.pdf>.
- Figures reflect a rescission of contract authority.

### Mandatory Appropriations in NPS's FY2017 Budget Request

Most of the National Park Service's (NPS'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.

In its FY2017 NPS budget request, as in previous requests, the Obama Administration sought changes in law that would significantly increase the mandatory spending available to the agency. In particular, the Administration asked Congress to establish the following:

- 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;
- an NPS Second Century Fund, which would provide authority for NPS to collect additional camping and lodging fees and raise the price of senior citizen passes to fund projects and programs in support of the NPS mission; and
- permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), with mandatory spending of \$111.2 million for NPS in FY2017, along with a further \$30 million for Urban Park Rehabilitation and Recovery Grants.

Along with existing programs, these new proposals brought NPS's mandatory request for FY2017 to \$1.238 billion, more than twice the level of mandatory funding in recent years. Much of the request was to address the agency's backlog of deferred maintenance, estimated at \$11.927 billion for FY2015 (the most recent NPS estimate available). In its budget request, NPS stated that the requested mandatory and discretionary funding, taken together, would allow for meaningful reinvestment in NPS infrastructure, enabling the agency to "ensure that all of its highest priority non-transportation park assets are restored and maintained in good condition over ten years."

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

**Sources:** NPS, *Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2017*, at <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY17-NPS-Greenbook-for-website.pdf>; and P.L. 114-289, H.R. 3556 (114<sup>th</sup> Cong.), and S. 2257 (114<sup>th</sup> Cong.).

## Trends in NPS Discretionary Appropriations

The sections below examine trends over the past decade (FY2007-FY2016) in NPS discretionary appropriations. The agency's discretionary appropriations rose and fell over the decade. Overall, NPS discretionary appropriations grew from \$2.300 billion in FY2007 to \$2.851 billion in FY2016, an increase of 24.0% in actual (nominal) dollars and 7.5% in inflation-adjusted dollars (see **Table 2** and **Figure 1**).<sup>4</sup> A spike in appropriations occurred in FY2009, when economic

<sup>4</sup> Changes in appropriations over time may be measured in actual dollars (also called *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 NPS's discretionary appropriations of \$2.615 billion in FY2015 were 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—1940–2021," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>. For more information on measuring inflation, see CRS (continued...)

stimulus measures were enacted in P.L. 111-5, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The agency's appropriations also rose in FY2013, reflecting supplemental funding for response to Hurricane Sandy (which heavily damaged parks on the East Coast), and again in FY2016, in connection with the NPS centennial anniversary. Certain other years saw decreases in NPS appropriations.

**Table 2. NPS Discretionary Appropriations, FY2007-FY2016**

(\$ billions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2007 dollars)

	Appropriation in Nominal \$	Appropriation in Inflation-Adjusted 2007 \$	% Change Since Previous Year	
			Nominal	Inflation-Adjusted
FY2007	2.300	2.300	—	—
FY2008	2.390	2.342	+3.9%	+1.8%
FY2009	3.276	3.172	+37.0%	+35.5%
FY2010	2.744	2.634	-16.2%	-17.0%
FY2011	2.611	2.457	-4.8%	-6.7%
FY2012	2.580	2.383	-1.2%	-3.0%
FY2013	2.775	2.521	+7.6%	+5.8%
FY2014	2.562	2.288	-7.7%	-9.2%
FY2015	2.615	2.304	+2.1%	+0.7%
FY2016	2.851	2.473	+9.1%	+7.4%
<b>Total Change</b>	<b>+0.551</b>	<b>+0.173</b>	<b>+24.0%</b>	<b>+7.5%</b>

**Source:** Annual House Appropriations Committee detailed tables for NPS. Percentage calculations by CRS.

**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. 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 2007 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—1940-2021," 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>5</sup> By far the largest share of NPS's

(...continued)

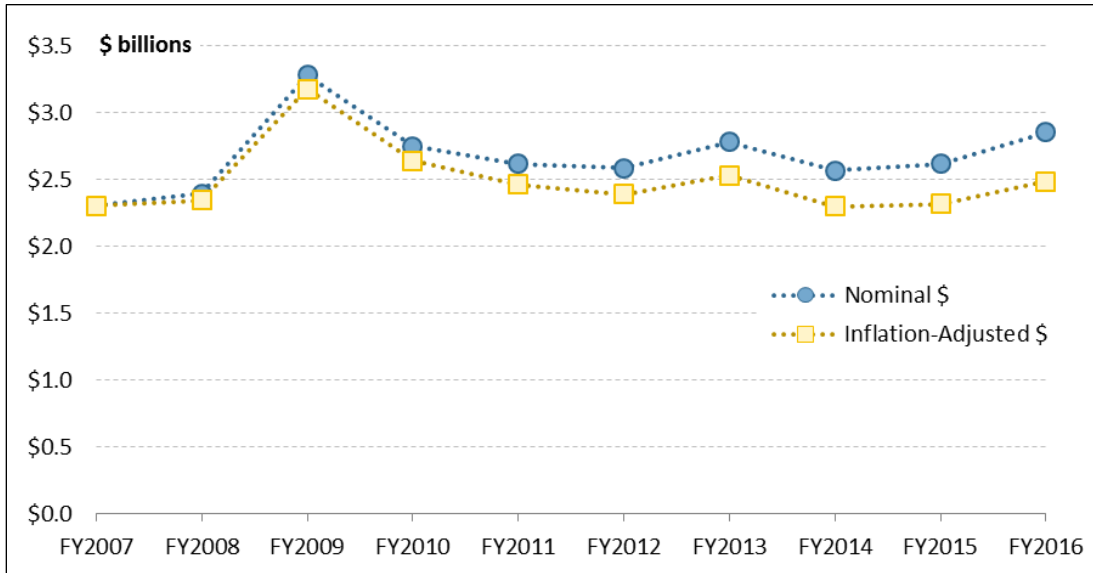
Report RL30344, *Inflation: Causes, Costs, and Current Status*, by (name redacted)

<sup>5</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 (name redacted).



discretionary appropriations—83.1% in FY2016—went to the ONPS account, which covers basic park operations (see **Table 1** and **Figure 2**).

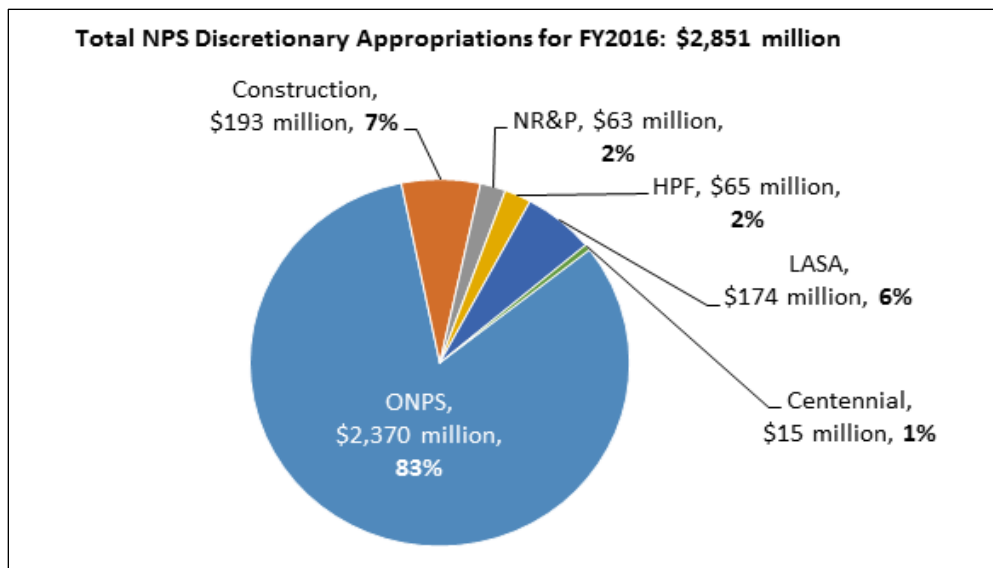
**Figure 1. NPS Appropriations, FY2007-FY2016**  
(\$ billions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2007 dollars)



**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, 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. 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 2007 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—1940-2021,” at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

**Figure 2. NPS’s FY2016 Discretionary Appropriations by Account**



**Source:** P.L. 114-113, Division G, Explanatory Statement, *Congressional Record*, December 17, 2015, p. H10215.

**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 total appropriation reflects a rescission of \$28 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) contract authority, which is not shown in the chart.

**Table 3. NPS Appropriations by Account, FY2007-FY2016**  
(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2007 dollars)

	ONPS	Construction	NR&P	HPF	LASA	CC	Total <sup>a</sup>
FY2007	1,848.421	297.482	59.295	60.737	64.024	—	<b>2,299.959</b>
FY2008	1,970.581	218.522	67.413	70.385	68.977	24.610	<b>2,390.488</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>1,930.707</i>	<i>214.079</i>	<i>66.042</i>	<i>68.954</i>	<i>67.574</i>	<i>24.110</i>	<b>2,341.880</b>
FY2009	2,277.755	821.521	58.384	83.984	64.190	—	<b>3,275.834</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,205.778</i>	<i>795.561</i>	<i>56.539</i>	<i>81.330</i>	<i>62.162</i>		<b>3,172.318</b>
FY2010	2,261.559	232.969	68.436	79.500	126.266	5.000 <sup>b</sup>	<b>2,743.730</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,171.204</i>	<i>223.639</i>	<i>65.695</i>	<i>76.316</i>	<i>121.209</i>	<i>4.800</i>	<b>2,633.850</b>
FY2011	2,250.050	184.646	57.245	54.391	94.810	—	<b>2,611.142</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,118.775</i>	<i>173.721</i>	<i>53.858</i>	<i>51.173</i>	<i>89.200</i>		<b>2,456.650</b>
FY2012	2,236.568	155.366	59.879	55.910	101.897	—	<b>2,579.620</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,069.851</i>	<i>143.552</i>	<i>55.326</i>	<i>51.658</i>	<i>94.149</i>		<b>2,383.460</b>
FY2013	2,097.261	453.885	56.747	100.486	96.567	—	<b>2,774.946</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>1,907.747</i>	<i>412.290</i>	<i>51.547</i>	<i>91.277</i>	<i>87.717</i>		<b>2,520.643</b>
FY2014	2,236.753	137.461	60.795	56.410	98.100	—	<b>2,561.519</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,004.137</i>	<i>122.768</i>	<i>54.297</i>	<i>50.380</i>	<i>87.614</i>		<b>2,287.720</b>
FY2015	2,275.773	138.339	63.117	56.410	98.960	10.000	<b>2,614.599</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,011.921</i>	<i>121.899</i>	<i>55.616</i>	<i>49.707</i>	<i>87.200</i>	<i>8.812</i>	<b>2,303.892</b>
FY2016	2,369.596	192.937	62.632	65.410	173.670	15.000	<b>2,851.245</b>
<i>Inflation-Adjusted</i>	<i>2,062.111</i>	<i>167.360</i>	<i>54.329</i>	<i>56.739</i>	<i>150.647</i>	<i>13.011</i>	<b>2,473.258</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; CC = Centennial Challenge 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. 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 2007 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—1940-2021," 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-FY2016. 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.
- For FY2010, the Centennial Challenge account was titled Park Partnership Project Grants.

In addition to these five accounts, during four years of the past decade (FY2008, FY2010, FY2015, and FY2016), 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

<sup>6</sup> The account was titled *Centennial Challenge* in FY2008, FY2015, and FY2016, but it was called *Park Partnership* (continued...)

for park improvements related to 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), \$10.0 million in FY2015, and \$15.0 million in FY2016. Separately, in P.L. 114-289 of December 2016, Congress authorized the Centennial Challenge Fund to receive federal revenues from certain sales of National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes to seniors. The senior pass revenues are provided as offsetting collections.<sup>7</sup> As with the discretionary appropriations to the fund, the senior pass revenues are to be matched on at least a one-to-one basis by nonfederal donations. This report reflects discretionary appropriations for the Centennial Challenge account in **Table 3**, but because the appropriations have occurred only in certain years, trends over time for this account are not discussed in the following sections.

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>8</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>9</sup>

## 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 \$1.848 billion in FY2007 to \$2.370 billion in FY2016 (see **Table 3** and **Figure 3**). When adjusted for inflation, this represents a growth of 11.6%. 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 80.4% of total funding in FY2007 to 83.1% in FY2016.

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>10</sup> facility operations and maintenance, and park support,<sup>11</sup> as well as “external administrative costs” for services provided by outside entities.<sup>12</sup> Among these activities, the two showing the greatest percentage growth over the decade were park support,

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(...continued)

*Project Grants* in FY2010.

<sup>7</sup> 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) .

<sup>8</sup> See the discussions below for specific examples.

<sup>9</sup> For example, in FY2007, funding for three museums moved from the National Recreation and Preservation account to the Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) account, and funding for the Harpers Ferry Center moved from the ONPS account to the Construction account.

<sup>10</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—received funding under a separate U.S. Park Police account. In this report, ONPS appropriations totals for FY2007 include the Park Police account to provide consistency with subsequent years in which Park Police funding was merged into the ONPS account.

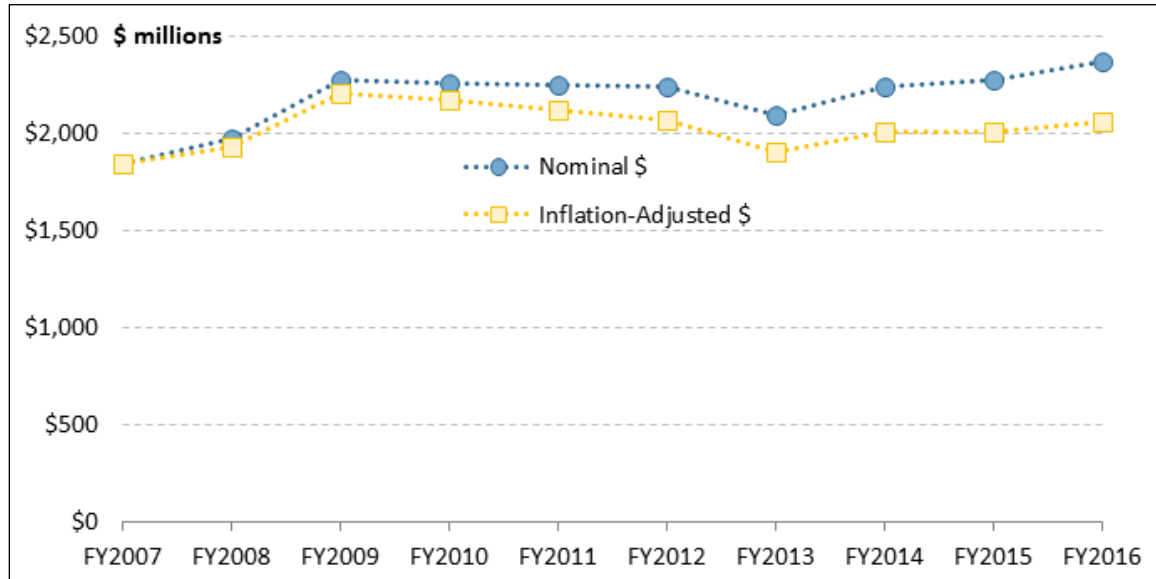
<sup>11</sup> The *park support* activity includes administering, managing, and supporting the operations of park units.

<sup>12</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.

which grew by 42.1% in inflation-adjusted dollars, and external administrative costs, which grew by 16.0% in inflation-adjusted dollars but remained the smallest activity in terms of funding.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 3. Appropriations for NPS's Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) Account, FY2007-FY2016**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2007 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 (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and FY2013 funds from P.L. 113-2 in response to Hurricane Sandy. 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 2007 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—1940-2021," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>. For 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.

## 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 (\$297.5 million in FY2007) were higher than those at the end of the decade (\$192.9 million in FY2016; see **Figure 4** and **Table 3**). Adjusting dollar amounts for inflation, this constitutes a decline of 43.7%. Construction appropriations accordingly represent a smaller portion of total NPS appropriations in FY2016 (6.8%) than they did in FY2007 (12.9%). However, this overall decline was tempered by two spikes in funding for

<sup>13</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 (+2.0% in inflation-adjusted dollars) between FY2007 and FY2016. Funding for facility operations and maintenance also grew (+6.4% in inflation-adjusted dollars) in this period.

the Construction account—one in FY2009, resulting from emergency appropriations in P.L. 111-5, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and the other in FY2013, resulting from the Hurricane Sandy supplemental appropriation in P.L. 113-2.

### **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 115<sup>th</sup> Congress is considering NPS's infrastructure needs both within and outside the annual appropriations process, in the context of addressing the nation's infrastructure investments more broadly.

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 \$9.61 billion in FY2007 to an estimated \$11.927 billion (in nominal dollars) in FY2015, the most recent year for which NPS estimates are available. The bulk of NPS deferred maintenance—52% in FY2015—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.

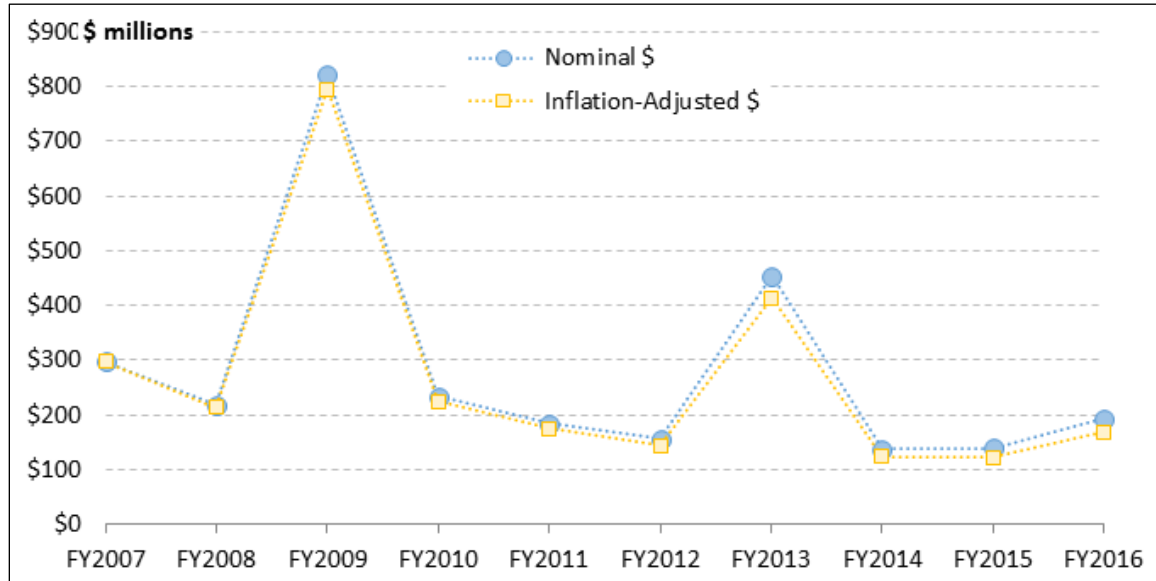
Within NPS's discretionary appropriations, two subaccounts provide the primary funding to address deferred maintenance: the *line-item construction and maintenance* activity within the Construction account and the *facility operation and maintenance* activity within the Operation of the National Park Service account. Appropriations for line-item construction declined over the decade (-44.2% in inflation-adjusted dollars), whereas facility operation and maintenance appropriations increased (+6.4% in inflation-adjusted dollars).

For more information on NPS deferred maintenance, see National Park Service, "Planning, Design, and Construction Management: NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports," at <http://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/defermain.htm>; NPS, *Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2017*, "Federal Lands Transportation Program," p. Const-79, at <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY17-NPS-Greenbook-for-website.pdf>; and CRS Report R43997, *Deferred Maintenance of Federal Land Management Agencies: FY2005-FY2014 Estimates*, 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. 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.<sup>14</sup> Funding for the line-item activity mainly declined over the decade, although it rose in FY2016. As discussed above, the overall decline was also mitigated by P.L. 111-5 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).

<sup>14</sup> A fuller description of NPS's two-tier priority system is in the agency's FY2017 budget justification, p. Const-8, at <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY17-NPS-Greenbook-for-website.pdf>.

**Figure 4. Appropriations for NPS's Construction Account, FY2007-FY2016**  
(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2007 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. 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 2007 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>.

## 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 \$59.3 million in FY2007 to \$62.6 million in FY2016.<sup>15</sup> Adjusted for inflation, however, the appropriation declined by 8.4% (**Figure 5** and **Table 3**). The portion of total NPS funding used for the NR&P account also declined—from 2.6% in FY2007 to 2.2% in FY2016.

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>16</sup> Its appropriations grew over the

<sup>15</sup> To facilitate multiyear comparisons, the FY2007 total for the National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) account includes appropriations for the Preserve America program, which was shifted to this account beginning in FY2008.

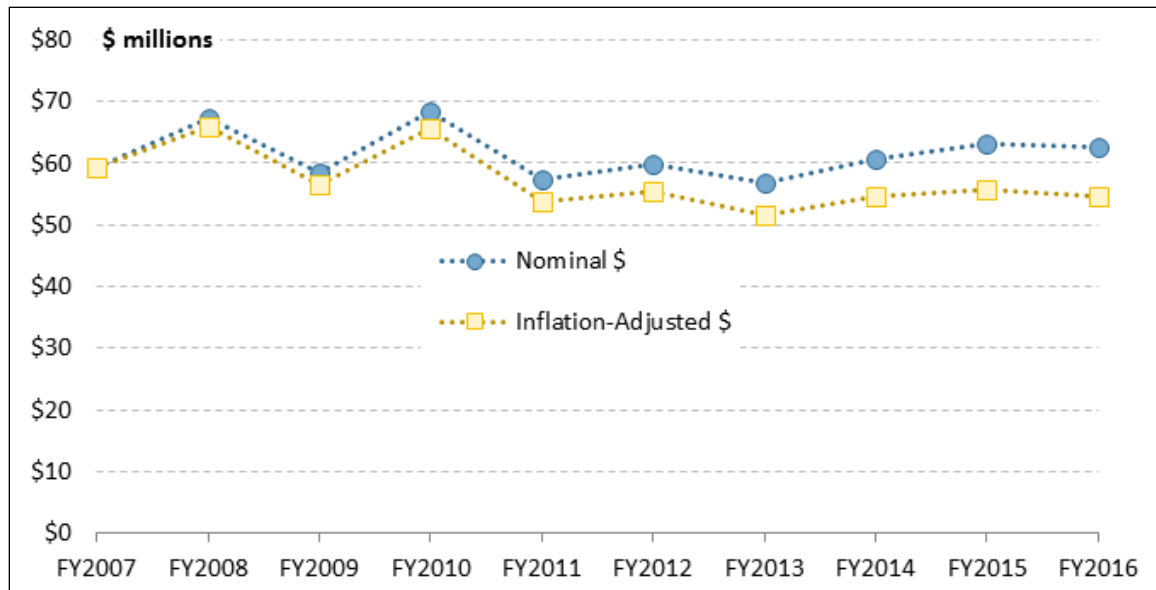
<sup>16</sup> National heritage areas are established by Congress but are not federally managed, and they are not part of the National Park System. For more on national heritage areas, see CRS Report RL33462, *Heritage Areas: Background, Proposals, and Current Issues*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).



decade,<sup>17</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 36 to 49. In addition, the NR&P account has 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.

**Figure 5. Appropriations for NPS's National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) Account, FY2007-FY2016**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2007 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. 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 2007 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—1940-2021," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>. For 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.

## Historic Preservation Fund

The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), established in 1976,<sup>18</sup> is administered by NPS through appropriations to the agency's HPF account. In accordance with the purposes of the National Historic Preservation Act (P.L. 89-665; 54 U.S.C. §§300101 et seq.), the fund provides grants-in-aid to state and local governments and private entities for conserving cultural and historical assets

<sup>17</sup> In inflation-adjusted dollars, the FY2016 appropriation for heritage area partnerships was 29.4% higher than the FY2007 appropriation.

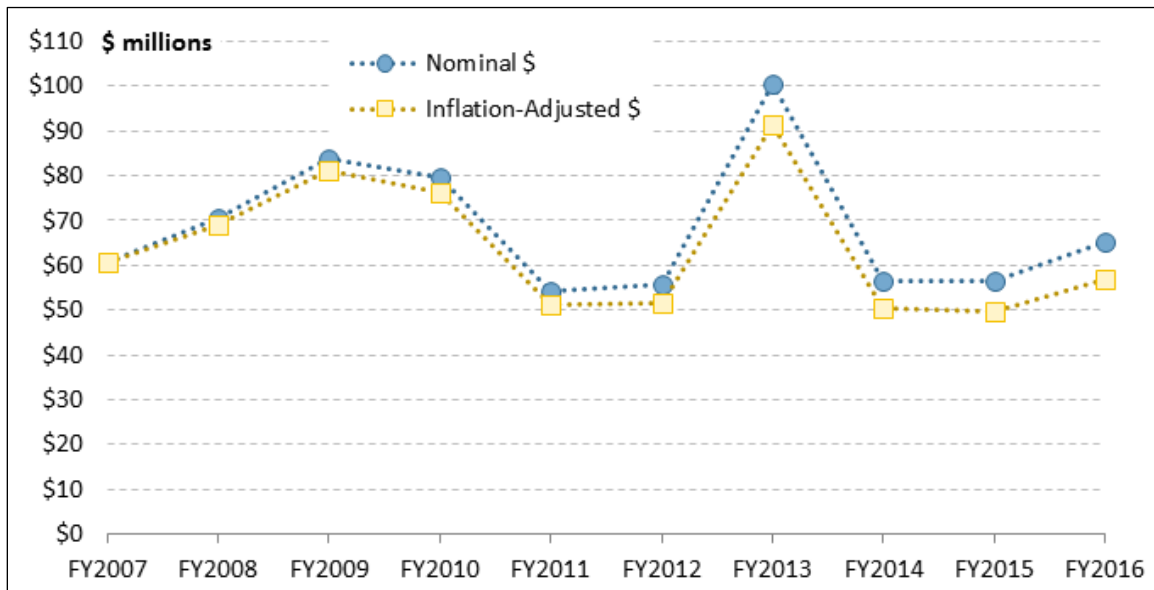
<sup>18</sup> The fund was established in an amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (P.L. 94-422, amending P.L. 89-665; 54 U.S.C. §§300101 et seq.).

and sites. Its grants are normally 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.

Appropriations for the HPF account varied during the decade and grew overall in nominal dollars—from \$60.7 million in FY2007<sup>19</sup> to \$65.4 million in FY2016. Adjusted for inflation, however, the appropriation declined by 6.6% (see **Figure 6** and **Table 3**). The account represented 2.6% of the total NPS appropriation in FY2007 and 2.3% in FY2016. 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.

**Figure 6. Appropriations for NPS’s Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) Account, FY2007-FY2016**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2007 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. 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 2007 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—1940-2021,” at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

The amount for FY2007 does 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.

The largest activity in the account is funding for state historic preservation offices, which rose from \$37.2 million in FY2007 to \$46.9 million in FY2016. Adjusted for inflation, this represents a gain of 9.4%. Tribal grants also rose from \$5.4 million to \$10.0 million, a growth of 59.0% after adjusting for inflation. Other program funding declined or ended during the decade. For example,

<sup>19</sup> The amount shown for FY2007 does not include appropriations for the Preserve America program. See footnote 15.



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 its appropriations were eliminated in FY2011, contributing to a funding decline in that year for the overall HPF account (**Figure 6**).<sup>20</sup> The account also contained appropriations for grants to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) until FY2007,<sup>21</sup> after which these institutions were encouraged to seek restoration grants through the Save America's Treasures program.<sup>22</sup> For FY2017, NPS requested that grants to HBCUs again be funded from the HPF account,<sup>23</sup> and both the Senate-reported and House-passed appropriations bills contain the requested funding.

## 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.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the LWCF supports grants to states (and, through states, to localities) for outdoor recreation purposes, specifically to develop plans for outdoor recreation needs and to acquire and develop park areas. These 50/50 matching grants, administered by NPS, are generally allocated to states by formula. In recent years, a portion of the funding (\$12.0 million for FY2016, out of a total of \$110.0 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 and state assistance portions of the LWCF—varied during the decade and rose overall (see **Figure 7** and **Table 3**). The appropriation rose from \$64.0 million in FY2007 to \$173.7 million in FY2016. Adjusted for inflation, this is a growth of 135.3%. The growth is partly attributable to a significant increase in appropriations for state land acquisition in FY2016 as compared with earlier years. Altogether, the LASA account represented 2.8% of the total NPS appropriation in FY2007 and 6.1% in FY2016.

Both parts of the account—the funds for NPS land acquisition and for assistance to states—fluctuated during the decade but grew overall. State assistance was less than \$30 million annually for FY2007-FY2009, rose to roughly \$40 million-\$50 million annually for FY2010-FY2015, and more than doubled to \$110 million for FY2016. For land acquisition by NPS, annual funding ranged between \$30 million and \$65 million, except in FY2010, when it rose to \$86 million.

<sup>20</sup> Although the Save America's Treasures program has not been funded in recent years, it continues to administer existing grants.

<sup>21</sup> See NPS, Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2008, p. HPF-11, at [http://home.nps.gov/applications/budgetweb/downloads/fy\\_2008\\_greenbook.pdf](http://home.nps.gov/applications/budgetweb/downloads/fy_2008_greenbook.pdf); S.Rept. 114-281; and H.Rept. 114-632. As of FY2008, the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) program also had \$4.3 million in unobligated funding to continue to award to HBCUs, although new funds were not being appropriated.

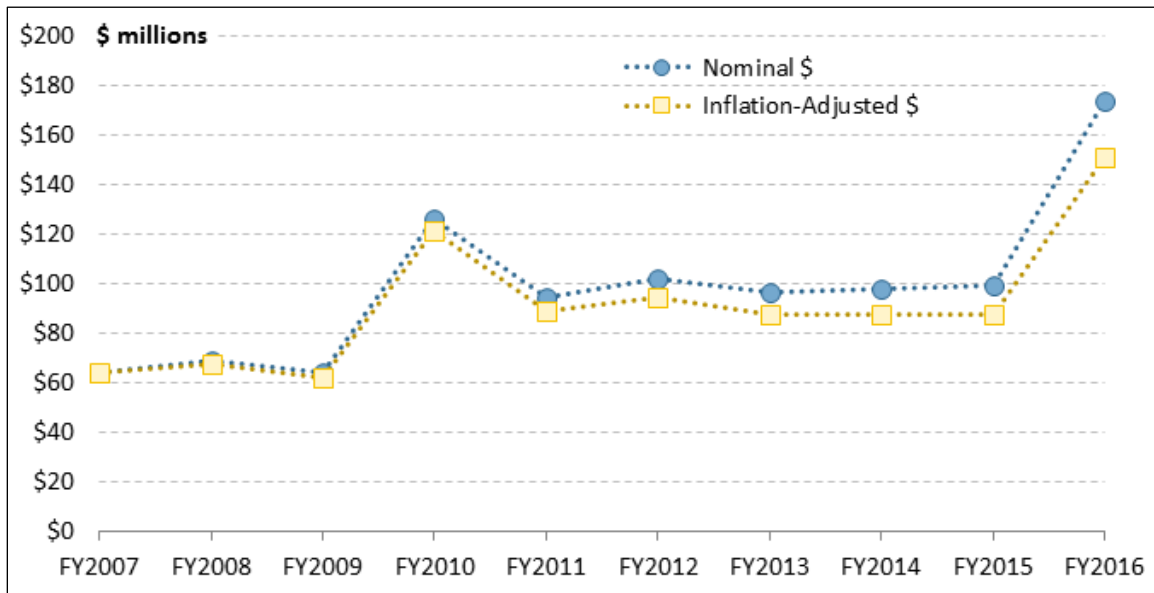
<sup>22</sup> The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) account also included appropriations for the Preserve America matching-grant program in FY2007, but in this report its appropriations are counted in the NR&P account, where the program was later funded. **Figure 6** thus does not reflect any funding for this program. The program supported historic preservation efforts through heritage tourism, education, and historic preservation planning. It received no funding after FY2010.

<sup>23</sup> The agency requested \$3.0 million for grants to HBCUs for preservation of sites and stories relating to civil rights and the African-American experience.

<sup>24</sup> For more information on the LWCF, see CRS Report RL33531, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*, by (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.

**Figure 7. Appropriations for NPS’s Land Acquisition and State Assistance (LASA) Account, FY2007-FY2016**

(\$ millions, in nominal and inflation-adjusted 2007 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. 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 2007 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—1940-2021,” at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals>.

## 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 National Park System has remained relatively stable, growing by 0.5%. 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.

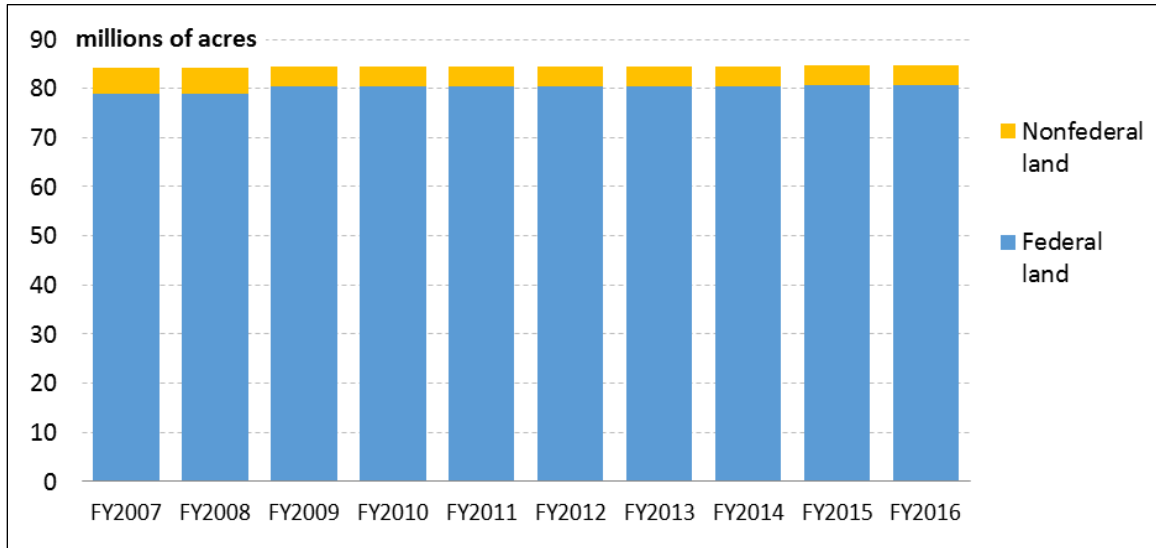
### Size of the National Park System

The size of the National Park System rose slightly over the decade, from 84.3 million acres to 84.7 million acres, a growth of 0.5%. (See **Figure 8** and **Table 4**) The percentage of National Park System lands owned by the federal government<sup>25</sup> grew from 93.5% in FY2007 to 95.3% in FY2016. 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

<sup>25</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.

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, FY2007-FY2016**  
(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*.

**Table 4. Size of the National Park System, FY2007-FY2016**

(in millions of acres)

	Federal Land	Nonfederal Land	Total Acreage
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	80.598	4.021	84.616
FY2016	80.629	4.019	84.736

**Source:** NPS, Land Resources Division, annual summaries of acreage, available on *NPS Stats* web page at <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>; and personal communication with NPS Lands Office, July 29, 2016.

**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, 23 new units were added to the system in the FY2007-FY2016 period.<sup>26</sup> Many of the added sites were relatively small in acreage, such as the Stonewall National Monument in New York (0.12 acres) and the 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 the Valles Caldera National Preserve (89,000 acres) and the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in Maine (87,563 acres). 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 2015 (307.2 million visits) and 2016 (331.0 million visits; see **Figure 9** and **Table 5**). Visits at the end of the decade were 20.1% higher than at the beginning. However, visitor numbers dipped in 2013, due

<sup>26</sup> These units are the 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), 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), and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument (ME). 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/news/upload/Recent-Changes-01-13-17.pdf>.

in part to Hurricane Sandy, which forced closures at East Coast park units,<sup>27</sup> and to the federal government shutdown of October 2013.<sup>28</sup>

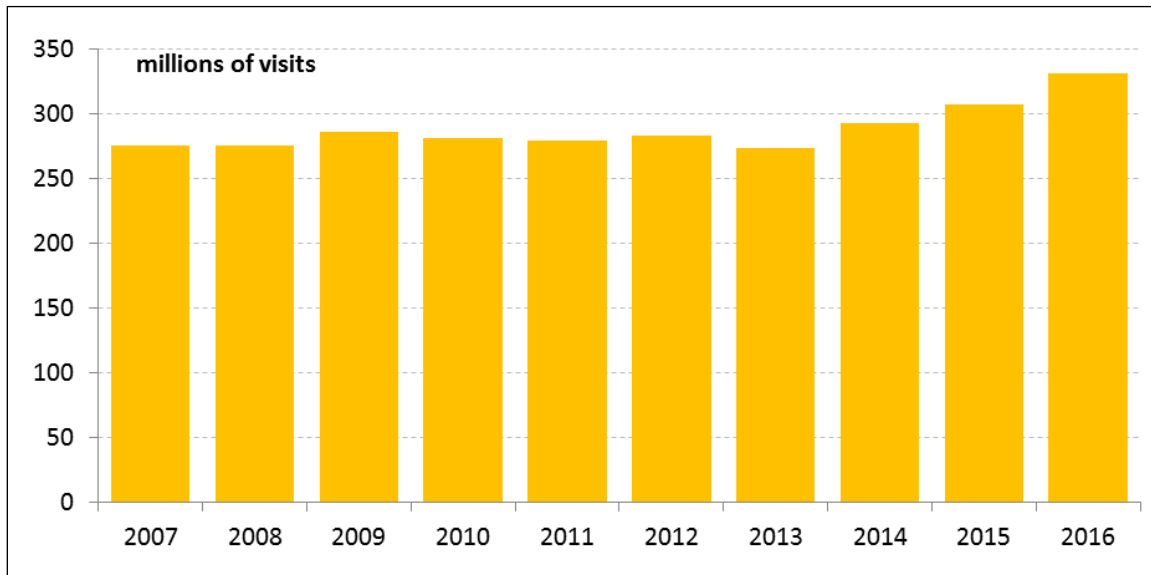
**Table 5. Annual Recreational Visits to the National Park System, 2007-2016**  
(total visits by calendar year)

Year	Number of Visits (in millions)	Year	Number of Visits (in millions)
2007	275.6	2012	282.8
2008	274.9	2013	273.6
2009	285.6	2014	292.8
2010	281.3	2015	307.2
2011	278.9	2016	331.0

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

**Notes:** The figure for 2016 shows visits through June 2016. For comparison with the previous year, visits through June 2015 were slightly lower at 137.1 million.

**Figure 9. Annual Recreational Visits to the National Park System, 2007-2016**  
(total visits in millions, by calendar year)



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

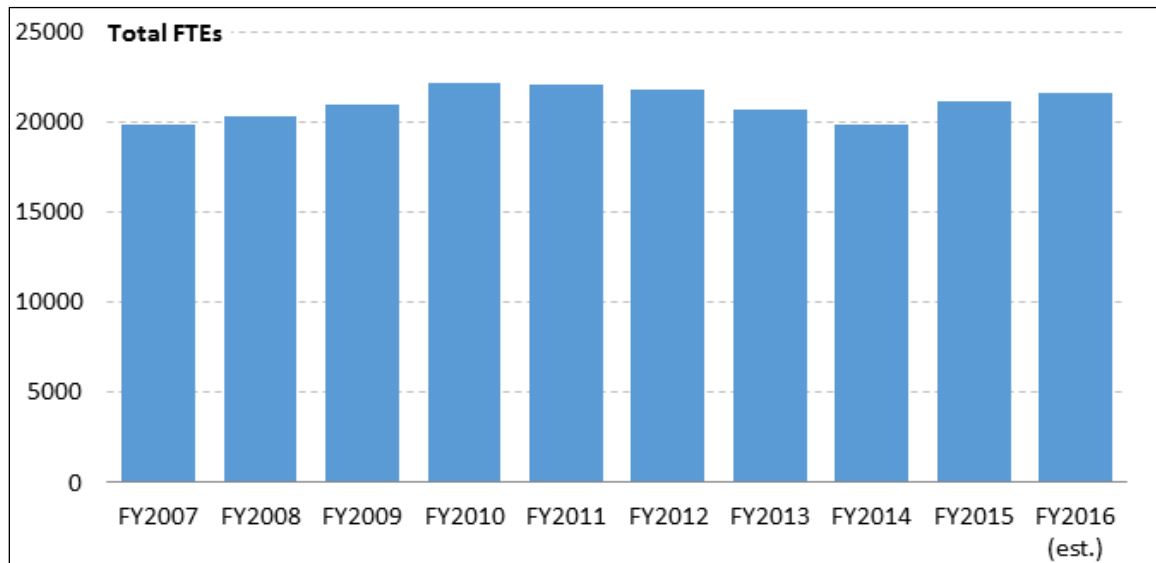
<sup>27</sup> The storm, which struck the East Coast in October 2012, closed nearly 70 park units, in some cases for months. These included heavily visited sites such as the Statue of Liberty, which remained closed through July 2013.

<sup>28</sup> In October 2013, the month of the government shutdown, visitation dropped by 6.4 million compared to the previous 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, at [http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/NPSVSE2013\\_final\\_nrss.pdf](http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/NPSVSE2013_final_nrss.pdf).

## 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 19,832 in FY2007 to an estimated 21,635 for FY2016, an increase of 9.1%.

**Figure 10. NPS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff, FY2007-FY2016**



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

**Table 6. NPS Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff, FY2007-FY2016**

Year	Number of FTEs	Year	Number of FTEs
FY2007	19,832	FY2012	21,830
FY2008	20,301	FY2013	20,720
FY2009	20,991	FY2014	19,894
FY2010	22,211	FY2015	21,164
FY2011	22,051	FY2016 (est.)	21,635

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

## Conclusion

For FY2017, the Obama Administration requested discretionary appropriations of \$3.101 billion for NPS, an 8.8% increase over enacted FY2016 appropriations. Much of the requested increase was to address deferred maintenance in the context of the agency's 2016 centennial anniversary and NPS's future infrastructure needs. The House passed H.R. 5538, containing appropriations of \$2.930 billion for NPS, an increase of 2.8% over FY2016. The Senate Appropriations Committee reported S. 3068, with \$2.914 billion (+2.2%) for NPS. The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress did not enact full-year

FY2017 Interior appropriations, and funding was provided by continuing resolutions at the FY2016 level (minus a reduction of less than 1%) through April 28, 2017.

NPS also requested a significant increase in its mandatory appropriations for FY2017, some of which would require changes in authorizing law. The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress did not enact laws to provide these requested mandatory appropriations, and P.L. 114-289 addressed NPS funding in other ways.

Over the past decade (FY2007-FY2016), NPS's discretionary appropriations rose by 24.0% in nominal dollars and 7.9% 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 proportion 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 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 \$11.927 billion for FY2015. Despite agency efforts to address the backlog through improved inventory and asset management, the backlog has grown as NPS assets age and deteriorate and needed maintenance and repairs are not performed. NPS's infrastructure needs are receiving attention in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, both within and outside the annual appropriations process, as Congress considers the NPS backlog in the context of addressing the nation's infrastructure investments more broadly.

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