



## National Park Service: FY2019 Appropriations

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which covers 85 million acres and includes 417 units valued for their natural, cultural, and recreational importance. NPS typically receives funding in annual appropriations laws for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Issues for Congress may include the aggregate level of NPS appropriations, funding to address the agency’s backlog of deferred maintenance, and funding for land acquisition, among others.

### FY2019 Status

The Trump Administration requested \$2.730 billion in discretionary appropriations for NPS for FY2019. The total included an updated amount in an addendum to the budget request for NPS’s Operation of the National Park System account, reflecting an increase over the agency’s originally prepared budget materials in light of Congress’s increase to FY2019 spending caps in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-123), enacted on February 9, 2018.

The FY2019 request was 15% less than the FY2018 NPS appropriation of \$3.202 billion enacted in P.L. 115-141, the FY2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act (which also reflected spending cap increases in the Bipartisan Budget Act). The FY2019 request included reductions for all NPS accounts compared with FY2018. (The FY2018 total of \$3.202 billion does not include \$257.6 million provided in P.L. 115-123 as supplemental funding in response to the fall 2017 hurricanes, which is designated as emergency spending outside of discretionary spending limits.) The Administration also estimated \$0.789 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS for FY2019, an increase of 11.5% over estimated NPS mandatory funding for FY2018.

On May 15, 2018, the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee marked up a draft Interior appropriations bill. The full committee has not reported the bill to date. The draft bill (and accompanying draft report) proposed a

**Table I. NPS Discretionary Appropriations by Account (\$ in millions)**

Account	FY2018 Enacted <sup>a</sup>	FY2019 Request	% Change from FY2018	House Comm. Draft	% Change from FY2018
Operation of the National Park System	2,478.0	2,425.1	-2.1%	2,527.8	+2.0%
Construction	359.7	241.3	-32.9%	369.3	+2.7%
Land Acquisition and State Assistance	180.9	-1.2 <sup>b</sup>	-100.6%	172.4	-4.7%
National Recreation and Preservation	63.6	32.2	-49.4%	63.6	—
Historic Preservation Fund	96.9	32.7	-66.3%	91.9	-5.2%
Centennial Challenge	23.0	0	-100.0%	30.0	+30.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,202.2<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>2,730.1</b>	<b>-14.7%<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>3,255.0</b>	<b>+1.7%</b>

**Source:** House Appropriations Committee detailed spending tables. Column totals may not sum precisely due to rounding.

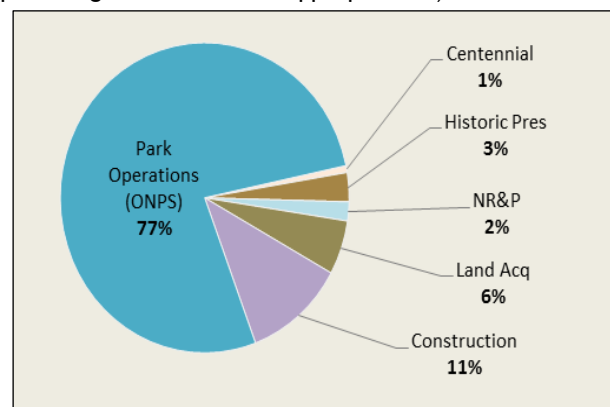
a. FY2018 figures do not reflect supplemental appropriations of \$257.6 million in P.L. 115-123 to address hurricane damage (designated as emergency spending not subject to discretionary spending limits).

total of \$3.255 billion for NPS, which is 2% more than the regular appropriation for FY2018 and 20% more than the Administration’s FY2019 request.

### NPS’s Appropriations Accounts

NPS has six appropriations accounts (**Figure 1** and **Table 1**). The high majority of NPS appropriations typically have gone to the Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) account to support the day-to-day activities, programs, and services of the park system. These include resource stewardship, visitor services, park protection, facility operations and maintenance, and support and administrative costs.

**Figure 1. NPS Appropriations Accounts** (percentages reflect FY2018 appropriations)



**Source:** P.L. 115-141.

**Notes:** NR&P = National Recreation and Preservation. FY2018 data do not reflect supplemental (emergency-designated) appropriations in P.L. 115-123 to address hurricane damage.

- b. Amount reflects a request of \$8.8 million in new budget authority offset by a \$10.0 million cancellation of prior-year balances.

NPS's Construction account covers rehabilitation and replacement of existing facilities as well as new construction. In recent years, the agency has planned no new facility construction, in order to prioritize deferred maintenance. NPS prioritizes projects based on "mission factors" and cost-benefit considerations. The account also covers other construction activities and planning functions.

Funding for the Land Acquisition and State Assistance (LASA) account comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.), the primary funding source for the federal land management agencies to acquire lands. The account covers both NPS's own acquisitions—typically consisting of nonfederal "inholdings" inside the boundaries of national park units—and NPS grants to states for outdoor recreation needs.

The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. §§300101 et seq.). The account provides matching grants to state, local, tribal, and private entities to conserve cultural and historical assets and sites. The grants are administered by state and tribal historic preservation offices.

The National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) account funds NPS programs that assist state, local, tribal, and private land managers with outdoor recreation planning, resource preservation, and other activities. The largest single program in the account is for NPS assistance to national heritage areas.

The Centennial Challenge account contains appropriations for the National Park Centennial Challenge Fund. Authorized by Congress in 2016 (54 U.S.C. §§103501 et seq.), the fund is a matching-grant program to spur partner donations for projects or programs that further the NPS mission and enhance the visitor experience. Deferred maintenance projects are prioritized.

## Issues in NPS Appropriations

### Deferred Maintenance

NPS's backlog of deferred maintenance (DM), estimated for FY2017 at \$11.61 billion, continues to be a significant issue in the appropriations process. Despite agency efforts to address the backlog through improved asset management, the backlog increased over the past decade.

NPS funding to address DM comes from discretionary appropriations and from other sources. Two appropriations subactivities (one under Construction and the other under ONPS) are among the primary sources of funds for NPS DM. For these two subactivities combined, P.L. 115-141 provided \$409.5 million for FY2018. The Administration's FY2019 request was \$281.5 million, and the House committee draft proposed \$434.5 million. Portions of other NPS discretionary budget activities also are used for DM.

Additionally, allocations from the Highway Trust Fund support NPS road repair and improvements. Other sources, such as recreation fees, also may be used.

Congress has considered whether to increase discretionary funding for NPS DM, provide mandatory funding, and/or direct the agency to use existing funding differently. For additional information on funding and legislation related to NPS DM, see CRS Report R44924, *The National Park Service's Maintenance Backlog: Frequently Asked Questions*.

### Land Acquisition Funding

The extent to which NPS land acquisition funding should be increased, decreased, or redirected continues to be a focus for Congress. At a broad level, some in Congress object to further expansion of the federal estate, whereas others feel that more areas need federal protection. For NPS, some Members have suggested that agency funding to acquire new lands is misplaced when maintenance needs for existing lands in the system are not being met. Some also assert that recent acquisitions have lacked the national value of earlier iconic parks. Supporters of NPS land acquisition funding have stated that the majority of funds are used to acquire nonfederal inholdings within existing park units, and that such acquisitions help to complete valued parks and may facilitate maintenance efforts.

Congress provided \$56.9 million for NPS land acquisition in FY2018. For FY2019, the Trump Administration requested no funding for new NPS land acquisition projects. The Administration stated that the proposed elimination of project funding would allow NPS to focus resources on protection and management of existing lands and assets. The House committee draft proposed \$48.4 million for NPS land acquisition.

### NPS Assistance to Nonfederal Sites and Programs

Both Congress and recent presidential administrations have questioned whether some NPS assistance to nonfederal sites and programs should be reduced in light of agency budget constraints, in order to focus funding on the agency's "core mission" of managing federal parks. Two agency accounts (NR&P and HPF), along with some of the LASA account, fund NPS assistance to nonfederal entities. These monies combined represent less than 10% of the agency's total funding. For FY2019, the Trump Administration proposed reductions in many nonfederal assistance programs and elimination of some types of assistance, including NPS grants to national heritage areas (which are nonfederally managed). Congress provided \$20.3 million for heritage areas in FY2018, and the House committee draft proposed the same amount for FY2019.

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