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National Park Service: FY2020 Appropriations

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which includes 419 units valued for their natural, cultural, and recreational importance and covers 85 million acres of land (81 million federally owned acres and 4 million nonfederal acres). NPS typically receives funding in annual appropriations laws for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Issues for Congress include the aggregate level of NPS appropriations, funding to address the agency’s backlog of deferred maintenance, and funding for land acquisition, among others.

FY2020 Budget Request

The Trump Administration requested \$2.742 billion in discretionary appropriations for NPS for FY2020. The request is 15% less than the FY2019 NPS appropriation of \$3.223 billion enacted in P.L. 116-6, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, FY2019. The FY2020 request includes reductions for all NPS accounts as compared with FY2019. The Administration also estimates \$0.733 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS for FY2020, a decrease of 4% from estimated NPS mandatory funding for FY2019. NPS’s mandatory appropriations come from entrance and recreation fees, concessioner fees, donations, and other sources, and are used for a variety of specified purposes, including deferred maintenance.

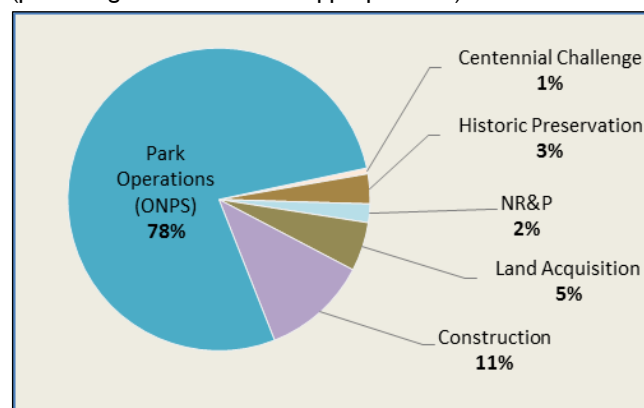
NPS’s Appropriations Accounts

NPS has six discretionary appropriations accounts (**Figure 1** and **Table 1**). The high majority of NPS discretionary 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 administrative costs.

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.

Figure 1. NPS Appropriations Accounts
(percentages reflect FY2019 appropriations)



Source: H.Rept. 116-9.

Notes: ONPS = Operation of the National Park System. NR&P = National Recreation and Preservation.

Funding for the Land Acquisition and State Assistance (LASA) account comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; 54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.), the primary funding source for the federal land management agencies to acquire lands. For more information on the LWCF, see CRS Report RL33531, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*. 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.

Table 1. NPS Discretionary Appropriations by Account (\$ in millions)

Account	FY2019 Enacted (P.L. 116-6)	FY2020 Request	% Change from FY2019
Operation of the National Park System	2,502.7	2,425.5	-3%
Construction	364.7	246.3	-33%
Land Acquisition and State Assistance	168.4	4.8 ^a	-97%
Historic Preservation Fund	102.7	32.7	-68%
National Recreation and Preservation	64.1	32.3	-50%
Centennial Challenge	20.0	0	-100%
Total	3,222.7	2,741.7	-15%

Source: H.Rept. 116-9; NPS FY2020 budget justification. Column totals may not sum precisely due to rounding.

a. Amount reflects a request of \$14.8 million in new budget authority offset by a \$10.0 million rescission of unobligated balances.

The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. §§300101 et seq.). The fund receives \$150 million annually from offshore energy revenues, but monies are available only to the extent appropriated in annual appropriations laws. NPS administers the funding through its HPF account. Funds are used to provide matching grants to state, local, tribal, and private entities to conserve cultural and historical assets and sites. Most of the appropriation goes to state and tribal historic preservation offices through formula grants, but Congress has also made some funding available for competitive grant programs, including FY2019 grant funding for underserved communities, for preserving sites associated with the Civil Rights movement, for historically black colleges and universities, for historic revitalization, and for the Save America's Treasures program to preserve nationally significant sites, structures, and artifacts.

The National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) account funds NPS programs that assist state, local, tribal, and private land managers with grants for outdoor recreation planning, natural and cultural resource preservation, and other activities. The largest single program funded through 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. The fund also is authorized to receive offsetting collections from the sale of senior passes under the Federal Lands Recreational Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §§6801-6814).

Issues in NPS Appropriations

Deferred Maintenance

NPS's backlog of deferred maintenance (DM), estimated at \$11.920 billion as of the end of FY2018, continues to be a significant issue in the appropriations process. Despite legislation and agency actions aimed at addressing the backlog, it has 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, and for FY2018 and FY2019 Congress also included a "general program increase" in the Construction account to address long-standing deferred maintenance and major construction needs. For FY2019, P.L. 116-6 provided a combined \$410.1 million for these three budget items. The FY2020 Administration request for the two budget subactivities was \$284.6 million, and no general increase was requested. 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*; and CRS In Focus IF10987, *Legislative Proposals for a National Park Service Deferred Maintenance Fund*.

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 noted that the majority of funds are used to acquire nonfederal inholdings within existing park units. They contend that such acquisitions help to complete valued parks and may facilitate maintenance efforts.

Congress provided \$44.4 million for NPS land acquisition in FY2019. For FY2020, 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.

NPS Assistance to Nonfederal Sites and Programs

Some Members, along with the Trump and Obama Administrations, have questioned whether some NPS assistance to nonfederal sites and programs should be reduced 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 FY2020, 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). The Administration requested \$0.4 million for heritage area administrative support, but no grant funding for FY2020, noting that national heritage areas are not park units. The budget justification encouraged heritage area managers to seek sustainable funding from local and private beneficiaries. Earlier, for FY2019, the Administration had requested no administrative or grant funding for heritage areas, but Congress provided \$20.3 million.

For More Information

For additional information on NPS appropriations, see CRS Report R42757, *National Park Service Appropriations: Ten-Year Trends*.

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