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Bureau of Land Management: FY2020 Appropriations

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 246 million acres of grasslands, forests, high mountains, arctic tundra, deserts, and other public land, nearly all in the western United States. Under its multiple-use mission, BLM manages lands for diverse purposes, including livestock grazing, recreation, and preservation. Also, the agency administers onshore federal energy and mineral resources covering more than 700 million acres of federal subsurface mineral estate, and supervises mineral operations on about 60 million acres of Indian trust lands.

At issue for Congress is determining the amount of funding to provide for BLM programs and activities for FY2020, the terms and conditions of such funding, and whether to enact related Trump Administration proposals.

For FY2020, the Administration requested \$1,187.4 million in discretionary appropriations for BLM, a \$158.8 million (11.8%) decrease from the FY2019 enacted level of \$1,346.2 million. On June 25, 2019, the House passed H.R. 3055 with \$1,411.8 million for BLM (in Division C). This would be \$65.6 million (4.9%) more than the FY2019 enacted level and \$224.4 million (18.9%) more than the FY2020 request. (See **Table 1**.) In earlier action, the House Committee on Appropriations reported H.R. 3052 (H.Rept. 116-100) with FY2020 funding for BLM.

BLM discretionary appropriations generally are provided in Title I of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations laws. Mandatory (permanent) appropriations also are provided to BLM under various statutes within the jurisdiction of authorizing committees. For FY2020, BLM estimated its mandatory appropriations at \$201.3 million. This would be a decrease from the \$241.2 million estimated for FY2019, in large part due to an anticipated reduction in receipts from sale of BLM land in Nevada.

Appropriations Accounts

BLM discretionary appropriations are provided through several accounts. The Administration’s FY2020 request for these accounts is shown in **Figure 1**. **Table 1** contains account-level funding for the Administration’s FY2020 request and the FY2020 House-passed bill, as compared with FY2019 enacted amounts.

Management of Lands and Resources. The largest account—Management of Lands and Resources—comprised 89% of the request. This account funds an array of BLM programs, including energy and minerals, rangelands, wild horses and burros, wildlife and fisheries, threatened and endangered species, recreation, resource protection, law enforcement, resource management planning, and facility maintenance.

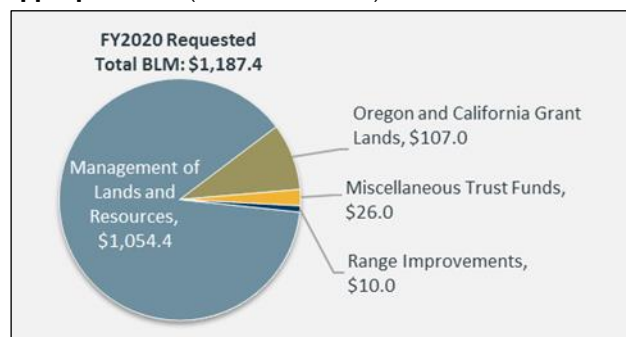
As compared with FY2019 enacted funding, the Administration’s FY2020 request contained lower funding for the account overall and for many of its programs,

including rangeland management, wildlife and aquatic habitat management, and resource management planning. However, the Administration requested increases for some programs, including management of coal and renewable energy as part of a domestic energy strategy.

H.R. 3055 included higher appropriations for this account than requested for FY2020 and enacted for FY2019. It would increase funding for many programs, such as management of wild horses and burros, wildlife and aquatic habitat, recreation, and the National Landscape Conservation System. The bill also would rescind \$14.0 million in unobligated prior year funds, and change the period of availability of most account funds from “no-year” (available until expended) to two-year.

Reorganization. For FY2019, Congress appropriated \$14.1 million for Department of the Interior (DOI) reorganization of five agencies, although the portion for BLM was not specified. The intent of the reorganization is to improve public service, communication, and efficiency. The FY2020 request for BLM included \$7.7 million to support DOI reorganization by achieving common regional boundaries of agencies, transferring some headquarters functions to the field, and integrating agencies’ business operations. The FY2020 House bill did not identify funding for BLM reorganization. The House Appropriations Committee was “not convinced of the efficacy of moving additional personnel out of the headquarters area when approximately 93 percent of Bureau employees are already working in the field,” and directed that “no additional relocations of headquarters staff take place.” (H.Rept. 116-100, p. 13).

Figure 1. BLM FY2020 Administration-Requested Appropriations (dollars in millions)



Source: Prepared by CRS with information from the House Appropriations Committee. Not shown are rescissions for the Land Acquisition account (-\$10.0 million) and \$0 for Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures due to a match by offsetting collections.

Land Acquisition. BLM typically receives appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to acquire lands. To focus on maintaining current BLM lands, the Administration’s FY2020 request did not include funding

for particular acquisition projects or for acquisitions that generally facilitate access to BLM land for recreation. The overall account request was -\$10.0 million, reflecting a rescission of unobligated balances. H.R. 3055 contained \$33.8 million, including funds for recreational access generally and for “preliminary” individual acquisition projects, pending detailed project information from the Administration (H.Rept. 116-100, p. 16).

Oregon and California Grant Lands. Oregon and California (O&C) Grant Lands constituted 9% of the request for FY2020. This account funds management of more than 2 million acres of forested lands in western Oregon, primarily for sustained yield of timber production. For FY2020, the Administration would provide funding level with FY2019. The House bill would increase funding, but did not accept an Administration proposal to consolidate funding for activities within the account.

Range Improvements. The Range Improvements account funds rehabilitation, protection, and improvement of BLM rangelands. Of the Administration’s total request, 1% was for this purpose. The request and House-passed amount for FY2020 were \$10.0 million, equal to FY2019.

Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures. This account allows BLM to use monies paid to the agency for particular activities (e.g., processing rights-of-way). As is typically the case, the amounts proposed by the Administration and passed by the House for FY2020 were offset by collections, making them \$0. This was also the case for FY2019.

Miscellaneous Trust Funds. This account appropriates contributions made to BLM from individuals, businesses, user groups, and states. It comprised 2% of FY2020 requested funds. The request and House-passed amount were equal, and higher than the FY2019 level.

Legislative Proposals by the Administration

In the FY2020 request, the Trump Administration proposed extending or amending some authorities and enacting new ones. Some of these proposals are discussed below.

Deferred Maintenance. BLM estimates its deferred maintenance at \$955.3 million, mostly for roads, bridges, and trails. FY2019 appropriations for deferred maintenance

were \$75.0 million. For FY2020, the Administration proposed a reduction (\$53.8 million), while H.R. 3055 would increase funding (\$82.3 million). The Administration also proposed establishing a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund with \$6.5 billion over five years, of which 5% would be for BLM deferred maintenance (and the remainder for other agencies). H.R. 3055 did not include this change, although related legislation has been introduced.

Energy and Minerals. The FY2020 request proposed altering the distribution of revenues from geothermal leasing on federal lands—currently 50% to the states, 25% to the Treasury, and 25% to counties—to a distribution of 50% for states and 50% for the Treasury. According to the Administration, the change would foster consistency with other revenue sharing programs and increase the return to the general public. Some counties favor the status quo to reflect their energy investments and enhance funds for services. H.R. 3055 did not include this change.

Recreation. The authority in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §§6801 et seq.) that allows BLM (and other agencies) to charge, collect, and use fees for recreation on agency lands is set to expire on September 30, 2020. The Administration supported permanent authority through authorizing legislation, while also seeking a two-year extension (through September 30, 2022) in appropriations law. H.R. 3055 included an extension through September 30, 2021.

Wild Horses and Burros. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (16 U.S.C. §§1331 et seq.) provides BLM authority to destroy healthy, excess wild horses and burros and to sell without limitation excess animals meeting certain criteria. In practice, BLM generally sells animals with limits (e.g., a maximum per buyer). The FY2019 appropriations law (and recent earlier ones) barred the use of funds for the destruction of healthy, unadopted BLM wild horses and burros and for the sale of animals for processing into commercial products. In its FY2020 budget, the Administration proposed removing the funding ban and allowing sales without limitations to reduce the excess of wild horses. H.R. 3055 did not include the Administration proposal, and would continue the funding ban.

Table I. BLM Discretionary Appropriations by Account (dollars in millions)

Account	FY2019 Enacted	FY2020 Request	% Change from FY2019	House Passed H.R. 3055	% Change from FY2019
Management of Lands and Resources	\$1,178.7	\$1,054.4	-10.5%	\$1,229.8	4.3%
Land Acquisition	26.5	-10.0	-137.7%	33.8	27.5%
Oregon and California Grant Lands	107.0	107.0	0%	117.2	9.5%
Range Improvements	10.0	10.0	0%	10.0	0%
Service Charges, Deposits, & Forfeitures ^a	0	0	n/a	0	n/a
Miscellaneous Trust Funds	24.0	26.0	8.3%	26.0	8.3%
Total BLM	\$1,346.2	\$1,187.4	-11.8%	\$1,411.8^b	4.9%

Source: Prepared by CRS with information from the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.

Notes: N/A = not applicable.

- The amounts of \$0 for Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures are a result of an appropriation matched by offsetting fees.
- The FY2020 House-passed total reflects a -\$5.0 million rescission of prior year unobligated funds for Construction not shown.

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