



Updated November 25, 2019

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 (81 million acres of federal land and 4 million nonfederal). As an agency in the Department of the Interior, NPS receives funding in annual appropriations laws for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Issues for Congress include the total level of NPS appropriations, funding to address NPS’s backlog of deferred maintenance, and funding for land acquisition, among others.

FY2020 Appropriations

The Trump Administration requested \$2.742 billion in FY2020 discretionary appropriations for NPS. The request was 15% less than NPS’s FY2019 regular appropriation of \$3.223 billion, enacted in P.L. 116-6. (For FY2019, P.L. 116-20 also provided \$0.128 billion in supplemental funding for NPS to address hurricane and typhoon damage.) The request included reductions for all NPS accounts as compared with FY2019.

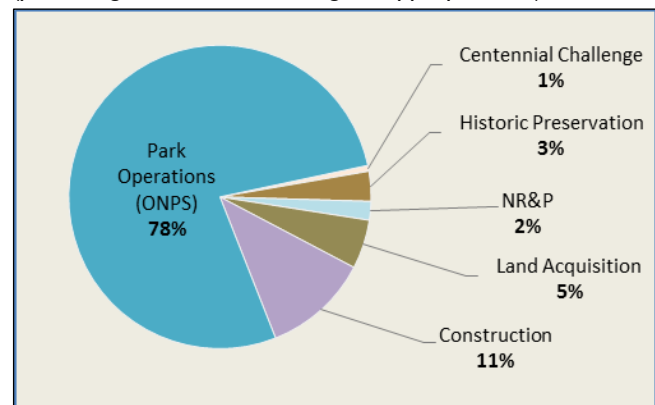
On June 25, 2019, the House passed H.R. 3055, an FY2020 consolidated appropriations bill with Interior funding. The House Committee on Appropriations had earlier reported a stand-alone Interior bill, H.R. 3052 (H.Rept. 116-100). The House would provide \$3.362 billion for NPS, 23% more than requested by the Administration and 4% more than the FY2019 regular appropriation. On October 31, 2019, the Senate passed its version of H.R. 3055, with \$3.356 billion for NPS. Earlier, the Senate Appropriations Committee had reported S. 2580 (S.Rept. 116-123). The Senate would provide 22% more than the request and 4% more than the FY2019 regular appropriation. The House and Senate bills include increases for all NPS accounts compared to the Administration’s request, as well as increases for most accounts compared to FY2019 regular appropriations in P.L. 116-6 (**Table 1**).

Because FY2020 appropriations were not enacted by the start of the fiscal year, two continuing resolutions, P.L. 116-59 and P.L. 116-69, have provided continuing appropriations at FY2019 levels through December 20, 2019, or until full-year FY2020 appropriations are enacted.

NPS’s Appropriations Accounts

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

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



Source: H.Rept. 116-9. Figure does not reflect FY2019 supplemental appropriations in P.L. 116-20.

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

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

Account	FY2019 Enacted (P.L. 116-6)	FY2020 Request	House-Passed H.R. 3055	% Change from FY2019	Senate-Passed H.R. 3055	% Change from FY2019
Operation of the Nat'l. Park System	2,502.7	2,425.5	2,647.0	+6%	2,564.6	+2%
Construction	364.7	246.3	319.7	-12%	392.2	+8%
Land Acquisition and State Assistance	168.4	4.8	208.4	+24%	197.6	+17%
Historic Preservation Fund	102.7	32.7	121.7	+19%	113.2	+10%
Nat'l. Recreation and Preservation	64.1	32.3	73.5	+15%	68.1	+6%
Centennial Challenge	20.0	0	20.0	—	20.0	—
LWCF Rescission of Contract Authority	—	—	-28.1	—	—	—
Total	3,222.7	2,741.7	3,362.1	+4%	3,355.6	+4%

Sources: H.Rept. 116-9; NPS FY2020 budget request; H.Rept. 116-100; S.Rept. 116-123. LWCF = Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Notes: Totals may not sum precisely due to rounding. Table does not reflect FY2019 supplemental appropriations of \$128.0 million in P.L. 116-20 (provided as emergency spending outside of discretionary spending limits).

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.

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

NPS administers historic preservation programs through its Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) account. Under the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. §300101), the fund receives \$150 million annually from offshore energy revenues, but monies are available only as provided in appropriations acts. Most of the funding goes to state and tribal historic preservation offices as formula grants to preserve cultural and historical assets and sites. Congress also has made available some funding for nationally competitive grant programs.

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 NPS assistance to national heritage areas.

The Centennial Challenge account supports the National Park Centennial Challenge Fund. Authorized by Congress in 2016 (54 U.S.C. §103501), the fund provides matching grants to spur partner donations for projects or programs that further the NPS mission and enhance the visitor experience. Deferred maintenance is 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).

In addition to discretionary appropriations, NPS receives mandatory appropriations from entrance and recreation fees, concessioner fees, donations, and other sources, which may be used for specified purposes such as maintenance and visitor services. NPS estimated mandatory appropriations of \$733.4 million for FY2020, a decrease of 4% from its estimated mandatory funding for FY2019.

Issues for Congress

Deferred Maintenance

NPS's backlog of deferred maintenance (DM), estimated at \$11.920 billion as of the end of FY2018, remains 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 other sources. Two appropriations subactivities ("Line-Item

Construction" in the Construction account and "Repair and Rehabilitation" in the ONPS account) are among the primary sources of funds for NPS DM, and for FY2019 NPS also allocated funds from a "General Program Increase" for the Construction account in P.L. 116-6. According to NPS, these three sources provided a combined \$395.3 million for FY2019. For FY2020, the House would provide \$363.3 million for the two budget subactivities with no general program increase and the Senate would provide \$423.8 million for the three sources combined. 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 more information, 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 remains 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 funds typically 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 House would provide \$68.4 million and the Senate would provide \$59.9 million. The Administration requested no new funding for NPS land acquisition projects in FY2020, in order to focus resources on 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 NPS assistance to nonfederal sites and programs should be reduced to focus funding on NPS's "core mission" of managing federal parks. Two NPS accounts (NR&P and HPF), along with part of the LASA account, fund such assistance. These monies combined represented less than 10% of total NPS funding in FY2019. For FY2020, the House and Senate would increase funding for all of these assistance accounts over FY2019. The Administration had proposed reductions for these programs and elimination of some types of assistance, including NPS grants to national heritage areas (which are nonfederally managed). The FY2020 budget

justification encouraged heritage area managers to seek sustainable funding from local and private beneficiaries.

Laura B. Comay, Specialist in Natural Resources

IF11178

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.