

Updated January 5, 2021

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: FY2021 Appropriations

Introduction

Congress generally funds the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS, an agency within the Department of the Interior [DOI]) in annual appropriations laws for the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Discretionary appropriations for FWS fund many of the essential functions related to the agency's mission, namely the conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. Discretionary funding covers activities such as resource management and conservation, construction projects, and payments and grants to states and other parties. FWS also receives mandatory appropriations, most of which are used to provide funding to states. The Administration's FY2021 request estimated \$1.468 billion in mandatory appropriations for FWS in FY2021. In FY2021, FWS also received mandatory funding for land acquisition and deferred maintenance purposes. This In Focus primarily covers the agency's discretionary appropriations.

In the 116th Congress, issues included the level of discretionary funding for FWS, its distribution across agency programs, and the Trump Administration's proposal to provide no funding for selected activities, among others. In FY2021 appropriations, Congress also considered requirements for mandatory spending for activities under the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-152).

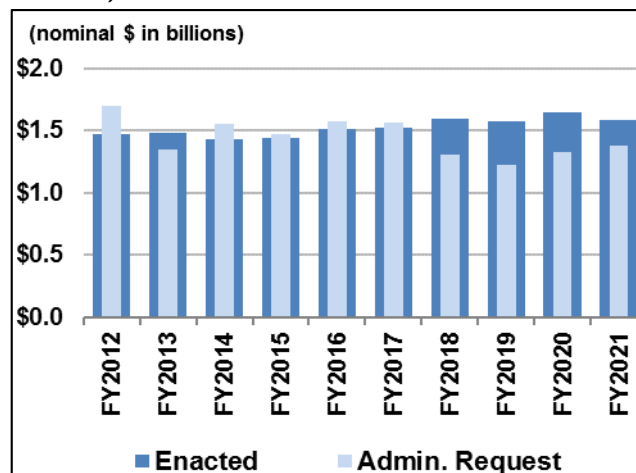
FWS Discretionary Appropriations

From FY2012 through FY2021, FWS received \$1.526 billion annually, on average, in discretionary funding

(Figure 1). Enacted levels exceeded requested levels in five years, and requested levels exceeded enacted levels in five years, including in each of the last four years.

For FY2021, P.L. 116-260 provided \$1.584 billion in discretionary appropriations across eight accounts for FWS. The FY2021 enacted level was \$59.7 million (3.63%) less than the FY2020 enacted level and \$205.2 million (14.89%) above the FY2021 Administration request (Table 1).

Figure 1. FWS Discretionary Funding: Requested and Enacted, FY2012-FY2021



Sources: CRS; data from FWS budget justifications and enacted appropriations during these fiscal years.

Table 1. Discretionary Funding by Account, FY2020 Enacted and FY2021 Administration Request and Enacted (nominal \$ in millions with percentage of total in parentheses)

| Account | FY2020 Enacted | FY2020 Request | FY2021 Request | FY2021 Enacted |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Resource Management | \$1,364.3 (83.0%) | \$1,281.2 (92.9%) | \$1,379.8 (87.1%) | |
| Construction | 29.7 (1.8%) | 13.3 (1.0%) | 18.2 ^a (1.1%) | |
| Land Acquisition | 67.1 ^b (4.1%) | 10.9 ^b (0.8%) | 0.0 ^a (0.0%) | |
| Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund | 35.7 ^b (2.2%) | -8.0 ^b (-0.6%) | 30.8 ^{ab} (1.9%) | |
| National Wildlife Refuge Fund | 13.2 (0.8%) | 0.0 (0.0%) | 13.2 (0.8%) | |
| North American Wetlands Conservation Fund | 46.0 (2.8%) | 40.0 (2.9%) | 46.5 (2.9%) | |
| Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund | 4.9 (0.3%) | 3.9 (0.3%) | 4.9 (0.3%) | |
| Multinational Species Conservation Fund | 15.0 (0.9%) | 6.0 (0.4%) | 18.0 (1.1%) | |
| State and Tribal Wildlife Grants | 67.6 (4.1%) | 31.3 (2.3%) | 72.4 (4.6%) | |
| Total | 1,643.5 (100%) | 1,378.6 (100%) | 1,583.9 (100%) | |

Sources: CRS; data from explanatory statements for H.R. 1865 (P.L. 116-94 and H.R. 133 (P.L. 116-260) and FWS FY2021 budget justification.

a. This figure includes a rescission/cancellation of unobligated balances.

b. FWS received mandatory appropriations not included here for related activities pursuant to P.L. 116-152.

c. This figure includes a rescission/cancellation of unobligated balances. FWS received mandatory appropriations not included here for related activities pursuant to P.L. 116-152.

Resource Management Account

The Resource Management account comprises the majority of the FWS discretionary appropriations (\$1.380 billion [87.1%] of the \$1.584 billion enacted in FY2021; **Table 1**). The enacted level for FY2021 was \$15.5 million (1.14%) above the FY2020 enacted level and \$98.6 million (7.70%) above the FY2021 Administration request. The Resource Management account provided funding for eight activities (**Table 2**) in FY2021. All activities funded in FY2020 received funding in FY2021 (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Resource Management Discretionary Funding by Activity, FY2020 and FY2021 Enacted (nominal \$ in millions)

| Activity | FY2020 Enacted | FY2021 Enacted |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Ecological Services | \$266.0 | \$269.7 |
| Habitat Conservation | 70.3 | 70.2 |
| National Wildlife Refuge System | 502.4 | 503.9 |
| Conservation and Enforcement | 148.3 | 157.8 |
| Fish and Aquatic Conservation | 205.5 | 206.6 |
| Cooperative Landscape Conservation | 12.5 | 12.5 |
| Science Support | 17.3 | 17.3 |
| General Operation | 142.0 | 141.9 |
| Total^a | 1,364.3 | 1,379.8 |

Sources: CRS; data from explanatory statements accompanying H.R. 1865 (P.L. 116-94) and H.R. 133 (P.L. 116-260).

a. Total may differ from column sum due to rounding.

Other FWS Accounts

The remaining FWS discretionary funding for FY2021 was appropriated among seven other accounts (**Table 1**), one fewer than in FY2020. Certain activities funded through discretionary appropriations in the past instead received mandatory appropriations pursuant to GAOA in FY2021.

In FY2021, the Construction account received \$18.2 million in discretionary funding, down \$11.5 million (38.75%) from the FY2020 enacted level. Construction account appropriations support engineering design and construction throughout FWS facilities and infrastructure. FWS also received \$95 million for deferred maintenance in mandatory appropriations pursuant to GAOA in FY2021.

Unlike in FY2020, funding for the Land Acquisition account was not included in FY2021 discretionary appropriations. However, FWS received \$111.8 million in mandatory appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for land acquisition activities pursuant to GAOA, as described in the following section. FWS received \$67.1 million in discretionary appropriations for the Land Acquisition account in FY2020.

The other six accounts that received funding in FY2021 support conservation activities, financial and technical assistance, and a revenue sharing program (**Table 1**).

Accounts and Activities with No Requested Funding in FY2021

For FY2021, the Administration did not request funding for two of FWS’s discretionary appropriations accounts—the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and the National Wildlife Refuge Fund—in order “to support higher priorities.” The Administration also requested no funding for seven activities across three other accounts that received funding in FY2020. P.L. 116-260 provided FY2021 funding for both accounts and all seven activities, though, as noted, the Land Acquisition activities were provided through mandatory appropriations (**Table 3**).

Table 3. FY2020 and FY2021 Enacted Funding for Activities with No Requested Discretionary Funding in FY2021 (nominal \$ in millions)

| Activity (Account in Parentheses) | FY2020 Enacted | FY2021 Enacted |
|---|----------------|-------------------|
| Cooperative Landscape Conservation (RM) | \$12.5 | \$12.5 |
| Science Support (RM) | 17.3 | 17.3 |
| Land Protection Planning (LA) | 0.5 | 0.5 ^a |
| Exchanges (LA) | 1.5 | 1.5 ^a |
| Highlands Conservation Act (LA) | 10.0 | 10.0 ^a |
| Land Acquisition Projects (LA) | 31.3 | 48.9 ^a |
| Tribal Wildlife Grants (STWG) | 5.2 | 6.0 |

Sources: CRS; data from explanatory statements accompanying H.R. 1865 (P.L. 116-94) and H.R. 133 (P.L. 116-260).

Notes: RM = Resource Management; LA = Land Acquisition; STWG = State and Tribal Wildlife Grants.

a. Mandatory appropriation allocated in P.L. 116-260 pursuant to GAOA (P.L. 116-152).

Great American Outdoors Act

P.L. 116-260 allocated mandatory funding to FWS in FY2021 pursuant to GAOA, which addressed funding for deferred maintenance and land acquisition. The act established a new fund, the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund, and provided mandatory spending authority for the fund to address deferred maintenance needs of five federal agencies. FWS received \$95 million in mandatory appropriations from the fund. GAOA also provided mandatory spending authority for funds in the LWCF for land acquisition and other activities. FWS received \$111.8 million for land acquisition activities and \$11.2 million for species recovery land acquisition (part of the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund) in mandatory appropriations from the LWCF.

For more information on GAOA, see CRS In Focus IF11636, *The Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152*.

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