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## Bureau of Land Management: FY2021 Appropriations

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in the Department of the Interior (DOI), manages 244 million acres of federal land, nearly all in the West. Under its multiple-use mission, BLM manages lands for diverse purposes, including livestock grazing, energy development, recreation, and conservation. The agency also administers onshore federal energy and mineral resources generally.

This In Focus pertains to discretionary appropriations for BLM, particularly those enacted for FY2021, in comparison with appropriations enacted for FY2020 and requested by President Trump for FY2021. The FY2021 enacted appropriation for BLM was \$1,309.6 million (P.L. 116-260, Division G), with direction and details in an explanatory statement. This total was \$60.2 million less than in FY2020 (\$1,369.8 million, P.L. 116-94, Division D) and \$87.3 million more than requested by the Trump Administration for FY2021 (\$1,222.4 million). The FY2021 enacted total also was \$14.9 million more than the total passed by the House (\$1,294.7 million, H.R. 7608, Division C) and \$31.3 million less than that in a Senate Appropriations Committee majority draft measure (\$1,340.9 million) released on November 10, 2020.

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. BLM mandatory appropriations were \$335.8 million for FY2020 and are estimated at \$297.0 million for FY2021.

For FY2021, issues for Congress included determining the amount of funding to provide BLM accounts and activities and the terms and conditions of such funding, as well as whether to enact related Trump Administration proposals.

### Appropriations Accounts

BLM discretionary appropriations are provided through several accounts. For each account, **Table 1** shows amounts enacted for FY2020, requested by the Trump Administration for FY2021, and enacted for FY2021.

**Management of Lands and Resources.** The largest account—Management of Lands and Resources—funds diverse programs including energy and minerals, wild horses and burros, rangelands, wildlife and fisheries, facility maintenance, resource protection, law enforcement, and recreation.

For FY2021, the enacted appropriation for this account was \$1,184.3 million, \$13.0 million less than enacted for FY2020 (\$1,197.2 million) and \$105.7 million more than President Trump requested (\$1,078.5 million). Both the

FY2020 and FY2021 appropriations contained general rescissions from unobligated prior-year funds (of \$19.0 million and \$13.0 million, respectively). The allocations among activities and programs are not readily available; thus, comparisons in this section exclude these general rescissions.

Both the FY2021 appropriation and the Administration's request included increases for certain programs over FY2020 enacted levels. For example, cadastral, lands and realty management—which performs cadastral surveys, manages rights-of-way, and implements changes to land ownership—received increased funds to convey lands to Alaska Native veterans and to facilitate broadband infrastructure on BLM lands. Wild horse and burro management funding also was augmented for BLM's proposal "to institute an aggressive, non-lethal population control strategy to address the current unsustainable trajectory of on-range wild horse and burro population growth ... to include a robust expansion of fertility control." (*Congressional Record*, explanatory statement, December 21, 2020, p. H8528.) In 2020, the number of wild horses and burros on BLM lands was 95,114, more than triple the appropriate management level—the level that the range can support, as determined by BLM—of 26,770.

For other programs, both the FY2021 appropriation and the Administration's request included decreases from FY2020 enacted levels. For instance, administrative support was reduced; less funding was needed due to the completion of organizational changes to new, unified DOI regions, according to BLM. Funding for deferred maintenance (DM) for transportation assets and other facilities also was reduced. (See "Deferred Maintenance," below.)

The FY2021 BLM appropriation provided level or increased funding (relative to FY2020) for some programs that the Trump Administration had proposed to cut. These programs included rangeland management, wildlife and aquatic habitat management, resource management planning, abandoned mine lands and hazardous materials management, and the national landscape conservation system. The FY2021 appropriation also included level funding for coal management, which the Trump Administration had sought to increase, to improve coal leasing, permitting, and inspections.

**Land Acquisition.** BLM typically receives appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to acquire lands. The FY2021 appropriations law rescinded unobligated funds (-\$5.4 million) and did not contain discretionary appropriations, given the establishment of \$900 million in mandatory spending (from the LWCF) under the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-

152) beginning in FY2021. Of this total, the FY2021 explanatory statement allocated \$66.1 million for BLM land acquisition, including \$23.6 million for six individual acquisitions and \$20.5 million for acquisitions that foster recreational access generally. The Administration's FY2021 overall request for the account was -\$5.0 million, including a rescission of unobligated funds and no funding for individual projects to focus on maintaining current BLM lands. The FY2020 appropriation was \$29.9 million.

**Oregon and California Grant Lands.** This account funds management of more than 2 million acres of forested lands in Western Oregon, primarily for timber production. For FY2021, the appropriations law contained \$114.8 million, an increase over the FY2020 appropriation and the Administration's FY2021 request. In report language, the House Appropriations Committee expressed concern about disparities in timber targets and timber awarded and harvested in some areas (H.Rept. 116-448).

**Range Improvements.** The Range Improvements account funds rehabilitation, protection, and improvement of BLM rangelands. The FY2021 appropriated and requested amount was \$10.0 million, the same as the FY2020 enacted total. Under law, 50% of grazing fees collected on BLM lands, or \$10.0 million—whichever is greater—are credited to a Range Improvement Fund. Through the Range Improvements account, BLM typically receives an annual appropriation of \$10.0 million for the fund.

**Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures.** This account allows BLM to use monies paid to the agency for particular activities, such as costs of processing rights-of-way and energy and mineral authorizations. The FY2021 appropriation of -\$20.0 million reflected a rescission of unobligated funds from earlier years. Appropriations for the account typically are offset entirely by collections, as for FY2020 enacted and FY2021 requested funding.

**Miscellaneous Trust Funds.** This account appropriates contributions made to BLM from individuals, businesses, user groups, and states. The FY2021 appropriated and requested level of \$26.0 million was equal to the FY2020 enacted appropriation.

### Legislative Proposals by the Administration

In the FY2021 request, the Trump Administration proposed extending or amending some authorities and enacting new ones. Some of these proposals are discussed below.

**Deferred Maintenance.** BLM estimated its DM at \$955.3 million in FY2018, mostly for roads, bridges, and trails. The FY2021 appropriation and the Administration's request had reductions from FY2020 enacted funding for DM. However, the Trump Administration also supported a new fund with mandatory spending for DM of BLM and other agencies. The GAO subsequently established the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund. Of the \$1.9 billion for FY2021 allocated to five agencies, the FY2021 explanatory statement identified \$95.0 million for BLM, including for dozens of projects.

**Energy and Minerals.** The FY2021 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. The Trump Administration said the change would foster consistency with other revenue-sharing programs and would increase the return to the public. Some counties favor the status quo to reflect their energy investments and enhance funds for services. The FY2021 appropriations law did not include this change.

**Recreation.** The FY2021 appropriations law extended by one year, to October 1, 2022, the authority in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA, 16 U.S.C. §§6801 et seq.) that allows BLM (and other agencies) to charge, collect, and use fees for recreation on agency lands. The explanatory statement directed DOI (and the Forest Service) to post on a centralized website the FLREA projects performed each year. The Trump Administration supported permanent authority through authorizing legislation and sought a two-year extension (to September 30, 2023) in appropriations law. For FY2021, BLM estimated \$28.1 million in recreation fee collections.

**Table 1. BLM Discretionary Appropriations by Account** (dollars in millions)

Account	FY2020 Enacted	FY2021 Request	FY2021 Enacted
Management of Lands and Resources	\$1,197.2	\$1,078.5	\$1,184.3
Land Acquisition	29.9	-5.0	-5.4
Oregon and California Grant Lands	112.1	112.8	114.8
Range Improvements	10.0	10.0	10.0
Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures <sup>a</sup>	0	0	-20.0
Miscellaneous Trust Funds	26.0	26.0	26.0
<b>Total BLM</b>	<b>\$1,369.8<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>\$1,222.4</b>	<b>\$1,309.6</b>

**Source:** CRS, with information from the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.

**Notes:** Components may not sum to totals due to rounding. *The Interior Budget in Brief* for FY2022 shows higher FY2020 and FY2021 enacted totals largely due to differences in rescissions and offsetting collections.

- The amounts of \$0 for Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures are a result of an appropriation matched by offsetting fees.
- FY2020 enacted total reflects rescissions of \$5.4 million of unobligated Construction funds not shown in table.

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