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# National Park Service: FY2023 Appropriations

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which includes 423 units valued for their natural, cultural, and recreational importance. System lands cover 81 million federal acres and 4 million nonfederal acres. As part of the Department of the Interior (DOI), NPS receives funding in annual appropriations laws for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Selected issues for Congress include the total level of NPS appropriations, funding to address NPS’s backlog of deferred maintenance, and funds for NPS assistance to nonfederal entities.

## FY2023 Request

The Biden Administration requested \$3.607 billion in discretionary appropriations for NPS for FY2023. The requested amount is 10% higher than NPS’s FY2022 discretionary appropriation of \$3.265 billion enacted in P.L. 117-103, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022. (The FY2022 total does not include \$229.5 million provided in P.L. 117-43 as supplemental funding in response to natural disasters, which is designated as emergency spending outside of discretionary spending limits.) The FY2023 request includes increases for some accounts and level funding or reductions for others compared with FY2022 (Table 1).

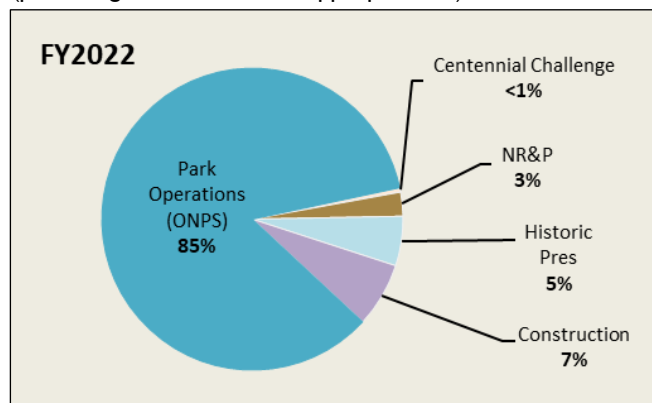
The Administration also estimated \$1.143 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS for FY2023, an increase of 5% over estimated NPS mandatory funding for FY2022. These mandatory appropriations come from entrance and recreation fees, concessioner fees, donations, and other sources, and also include land acquisition funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF, 54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.). The LWCF funding had been provided in discretionary appropriations through FY2020 but was made mandatory in the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-152). NPS’s mandatory total does not include NPS’s share from the National Parks and Public

Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF)—the deferred maintenance fund established by the GAOA—which is allocated from a DOI department-wide account.

## NPS’s Appropriations Accounts

NPS has five 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 Discretionary Appropriations Accounts** (percentages reflect FY2022 appropriations)



Source: Joint explanatory statement for P.L. 117-103.

Notes: ONPS = Operation of the National Park System; NR&P = National Recreation and Preservation. FY2022 data do not reflect supplemental (emergency-designated) appropriations in P.L. 117-43 to address natural disasters.

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

Account	FY2022 Enacted (P.L. 117-103)	FY2023 Request	% Change from FY2022
Operation of the Nat'l. Park System	2,767.0	3,086.6	+12%
Construction	226.0 <sup>a</sup>	279.3	+24%
Historic Preservation Fund	173.1	151.8	-12%
Nat'l. Recreation and Preservation	83.9	74.6	-11%
Centennial Challenge	15.0	15.0	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,265.0</b>	<b>3,607.3</b>	<b>+10%</b>

Sources: Joint explanatory statement for P.L. 117-103, and NPS FY2023 budget request. Totals may not sum precisely due to rounding.

a. Does not include supplemental funding provided in P.L. 117-43 to address natural disasters, which is designated as emergency spending outside of discretionary spending limits.

NPS's *Construction* account covers repair, replacement, and improvement of existing facilities as well as new construction. Projects are evaluated based on criteria related to the condition of assets, their importance to park purposes, and project benefits and risks. The account also covers other construction activities and planning.

NPS administers historic preservation programs through its *Historic Preservation Fund* (HPF) account. Under the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. §§300101 et seq.), the HPF 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 Recreation Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §§6801-6814).

## Issues for Congress

### Deferred Maintenance

NPS's backlog of deferred maintenance (DM), estimated at \$21.83 billion total (as of the first quarter of FY2022), has been a significant issue in the appropriations process. Despite legislation and agency actions aimed at addressing the backlog, it has increased over the past decade, including a 59% increase between FY2020 and FY2021 that NPS attributes primarily to changes in its methods for estimating DM. NPS funding to address DM comes from multiple sources and includes both discretionary and mandatory spending. Congress may continue to assess NPS's progress in addressing DM, including the balance of discretionary and mandatory funding provided for this purpose.

Two discretionary appropriations subactivities ("Line-Item Construction and Maintenance" in the Construction account and "Repair and Rehabilitation" in the ONPS account) have been primary sources of discretionary funding for NPS DM, although they are not exclusively used for DM. For FY2022, P.L. 117-103 provided \$272.7 million for these two budget subactivities; for FY2023, NPS requests \$270.7 million. Portions of other NPS discretionary budget activities also are used for DM.

The majority of mandatory spending for NPS DM derives from the GAOA (P.L. 116-152), enacted in 2020. To address DM of five agencies, the GAOA established the

LRF, which receives deposits based on amounts of federal energy revenues each year for five years. The fund has a cap of \$1.900 billion annually, with 70% of the available funding allocated to NPS. For FY2021 and FY2022, the maximum revenues were available, so NPS received \$1.330 billion each year. Under the GAOA, NPS must submit to Congress, with annual budget justifications, lists of priority DM projects to be addressed with LRF funding.

Appropriators may specify alternate allocations for the funds. For FY2021 and FY2022, the funds were allocated as proposed in the NPS budget submissions. For more information, see CRS In Focus IF11636, *The Great American Outdoors Act* (P.L. 116-152).

Additionally, allocations from the Highway Trust Fund support NPS road repair and improvements, including DM. Other mandatory funding sources, such as recreation fees, also have been used for NPS DM. For more information, see CRS Report R44924, *National Park Service Deferred Maintenance: Frequently Asked Questions*.

### Land Acquisition Funding

The GAOA shifted LWCF land acquisition funding from discretionary to mandatory spending. Allocation of the funding remains an issue in the appropriations process, as the GAOA requires that agency budget submissions include account, program, and project allocations for the LWCF funds, and appropriations acts may specify alternate allocations. For FY2022, in addition to allocating monies for projects proposed in the NPS budget request, appropriators designated five NPS land acquisition projects as community project funding/congressionally directed spending. For more information, see CRS Report RL33531, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*; and CRS In Focus IF11636, *The Great American Outdoors Act* (P.L. 116-152).

### NPS Assistance to Nonfederal Sites and Programs

Some Members of Congress and other stakeholders have questioned whether NPS assistance to nonfederal sites and programs should be reduced in order to focus funding on the agency's "core" mission of managing national parks. Two NPS discretionary accounts (NR&P and HPF) provide funding for such nonfederal assistance. These accounts combined represented less than 10% of total NPS funding in FY2022. For FY2023, the Biden Administration's request would decrease overall funding for both accounts, while increasing funding for some programs. In previous years, both the Trump and the Obama Administrations proposed reductions for some programs, including NPS grants to national heritage areas, which are nonfederally managed. Some stakeholders have encouraged heritage areas to develop plans for self-sufficiency, but Congress has increased heritage area funding over the past decade. For more information, see CRS Report RL33462, *Heritage Areas: Background, Proposals, and Current Issues*; CRS Report R45800, *The Federal Role in Historic Preservation: An Overview*; and CRS Report R42757, *National Park Service Appropriations: Ten-Year Trends*.

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