



November 29, 2023

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: FY2024 Appropriations

Introduction

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), an agency within the Department of the Interior (DOI), has a mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. Congress funds FWS through discretionary and mandatory appropriations. FWS discretionary appropriations typically are included in the annual Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations acts. Discretionary appropriations fund many activities related to the agency's mission, such as resource management and conservation, construction projects, and payments and grants to states and other parties. This In Focus focuses primarily on annual discretionary funding for FWS for FY2024.

FWS sometimes receives supplemental funding in addition to annual discretionary appropriations. For instance, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58), enacted in 2021, provided FWS with supplemental funding of \$91.0 million annually from FY2022 to FY2026. The monies were provided for activities under the Resource Management account, including fish and wildlife passage restoration and regional ecosystem restoration. Further, mandatory (permanent) appropriations are provided to FWS under various statutes within the jurisdiction of authorizing committees. *The Interior Budget in Brief, Fiscal Year 2024*, estimated FWS mandatory appropriations at \$2.14 billion in FY2023 and \$1.99 billion for FY2024. These totals do not include \$95.0 million in annual mandatory funding authorized under the Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152) for deferred maintenance.

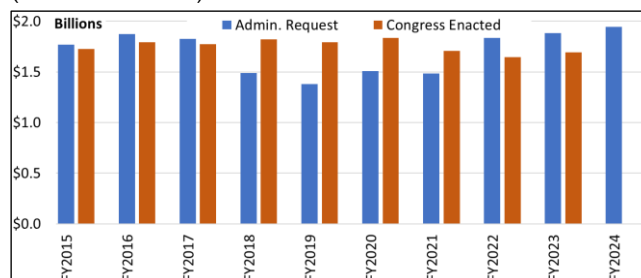
FWS Discretionary Appropriations

From FY2015 to FY2023, FWS received, on average, \$1.76 billion annually in discretionary funding (adjusted to FY2022 dollars; see **Figure 1**). For FY2024, the Administration requested \$2.09 billion in discretionary funding for FWS across eight accounts (**Table 1**).

Regular FY2024 appropriations were not enacted by the start of the fiscal year (October 1, 2023). FWS is receiving funding at FY2023 levels under a continuing resolution in effect through February 2, 2024 (P.L. 118-22).

For FY2024, H.R. 4821, as passed by the House on November 3, 2023, would appropriate \$1.54 billion for FWS, a \$233.8 million decrease from the FY2023 enacted level and \$552.7 million less than the Administration's FY2024 request. S. 2605, as reported by the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 27, 2023, would appropriate \$1.80 billion for FWS for FY2024, \$30.6 million more than the FY2023 enacted level and \$288.4 million less than the FY2024 request.

Figure 1. FY2015-FY2024 FWS Discretionary Funding (in FY2022 dollars)



Source: CRS using “budget authority” data from Appendix A of *The Interior Budget in Brief*. In general, enacted amounts are taken from the volume two years later than the fiscal year indicated.

Notes: Appropriations generally exclude supplemental funding, transfers, recessions, and cancellations. Figures are adjusted to FY2022 constant dollars using Office of Management and Budget, *President’s Budget Fiscal Year 2024, Historical Tables, Table 10.1: Gross Domestic Product and Deflators Used in the Historical Tables: 1940-2028*.

Resource Management Account

The Resource Management account comprises the majority (88% in FY2023) of the FWS annual discretionary appropriation (**Table 1**). For FY2024, the Administration requested a \$303.4 million increase from the FY2023 enacted level for this account. The House-passed bill contained a \$212.5 million decrease from FY2023. The Senate committee-reported bill contained a \$30.4 million increase from FY2023. **Table 2** shows the funding levels for activities within the account.

Other FWS Accounts

In FY2023, \$217.6 million in annual discretionary funding was appropriated for seven other FWS accounts that support construction, conservation activities, financial and technical assistance, and revenue sharing, among other activities (**Table 1**). For FY2024, the Administration requested a \$15.6 million increase from the FY2023 enacted level for these seven accounts. The House-passed bill contained a \$21.3 million decrease from FY2023. The Senate committee-reported bill contained a \$0.2 million increase from FY2023.

Issues for Congress

Among other issues for FY2024, Congress is considering the funding levels of agency activities that aim to improve and restore habitats. For example, the IIJA provided \$200 million to be distributed over five years to FWS for technical assistance and project funding to restore fish passages in rivers. The Administration’s FY2024 request would provide an additional \$18.6 million through the Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation activity for fish passage improvement. Authorizing committees continue to assess

the funding of programs aimed to support wildlife movement across public, tribal, and private lands.

For FY2024, Congress also is considering whether to enact Administration proposals as set out in *The Interior Budget in Brief*. One proposal would expand the authority for agencies to transfer funds under the IIJA to FWS to accelerate and improve environmental reviews in support of development of infrastructure projects and energy solutions. In its report on S. 2605, the Senate Appropriations Committee noted that the requested transfer authority of unobligated IIJA funding to FWS (and the National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service) was included in S. 2309.

A second Administration proposal would shift the Office of Subsistence Management from FWS to the DOI Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, with a related shift of funding from activities within Resource Management. According to FWS, the change would facilitate expanded tribal comanagement partnerships and incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into subsistence management. In its report on S. 2605, the Senate Appropriations Committee expressed support for this transfer.

Table 1. Discretionary Funding by Account for FWS
(nominal \$ in millions)

Account	FY2023 Enacted	FY2024 Request	H.R. 4821 House Passed	S. 2605 Comm. Reported
Resource Management	1,555.7	1,859.1	1,343.2	1,586.1
Construction	29.9	51.0	15.0	29.9
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund	24.6	23.7	22.0	24.6
National Wildlife Refuge Fund	13.2	0.0	13.2	13.2
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	50.0	50.0	48.5	50.2
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation	5.1	9.9	5.0	5.1
Multinational Species Conservation Fund	21.0	22.0	20.0	21.0
State and Tribal Wildlife Grants	73.8	76.6	72.6	73.8
Accounts Total	\$1,773.3	\$2,092.2	\$1,539.5	\$1,803.8

Source: CRS using data from House and Senate Appropriations Committees (H.Rept. 118-155 on H.R. 4821 and S.Rept. 118-83 on S. 2605) and House floor amendments. FY2024 request amounts are from S.Rept. 118-83, which includes \$5.0 million in the Resource Management account (see **Table 2**) that H.Rept. 118-155 identifies separately as an administrative provision. Columns may not sum to totals shown due to rounding.

Table 2. Activities Within Resource Management Account (nominal \$ in millions)

Activity	FY2023 Enacted	FY2024 Request	H.R. 4821 House Passed	S. 2605 Comm. Reported
Ecological Services	296.0	384.5	270.4	298.7
Habitat Conservation	74.2	100.1	64.8	79.7
National Wildlife Refuge System	541.6	624.9	487.4	539.2
Conservation and Enforcement	175.0	223.2	148.1	174.0
Fish and Aquatic Conservation	241.6	259.8	222.6	247.2
Science Support	35.4	55.5	30.3	36.4
General Operations	166.3	206.2	116.4	165.9
Stewardship Priorities	25.6	0	0	44.9
Damage Recovery Provision	0	5.0	0	0
Account Total	\$1,555.7	\$1,859.1	\$1,340.0	\$1,586.1

Source: CRS using data from House and Senate Appropriations Committees (H.Rept. 118-155 on H.R. 4821 and S.Rept. 118-83 on S. 2605).

Notes: The total for the House-passed column differs from the amount shown in **Table 1**, because it does not reflect \$3.2 million in floor amendments that did not specify the activity. Columns may not sum to totals shown due to rounding.

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