

April 19, 2024

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: FY2025 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 pertains primarily to discretionary funding for FWS for FY2025. For FY2025, issues for Congress include determining the amount of funding for FWS accounts and activities, the terms and conditions of such funding, and whether to enact related Biden Administration proposals.

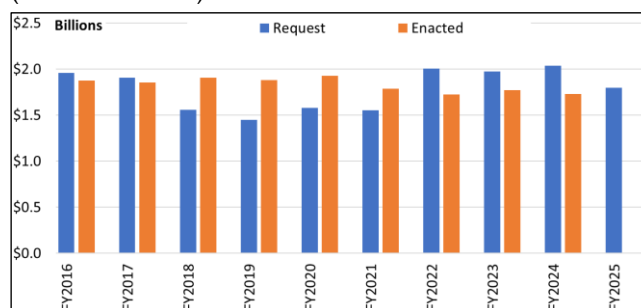
FWS sometimes receives supplemental funding in addition to annual discretionary appropriations. For instance, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58), enacted in 2021, provided FWS with supplemental funding of \$91.0 million annually from FY2022 to FY2026. The monies were provided for activities under the Resource Management account, including fish and wildlife passage restoration and regional ecosystem restoration.

Mandatory (permanent) appropriations also are provided to FWS under various statutes within the jurisdiction of authorizing committees. *The Interior Budget in Brief, Fiscal Year 2025*, estimated FWS mandatory appropriations at \$2.02 billion for FY2025. This total does 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 FY2016 to FY2024, FWS received, on average, \$1.83 billion in discretionary funding (adjusted to FY2023 dollars; see **Figure 1**). For FY2025, the Administration requested \$1.89 billion in discretionary funding for FWS across eight accounts (**Table 1**). The FY2025 Administration request is approximately \$163.4 million above the FY2024 enacted amount of \$1.72 billion.

Figure 1. FWS FY2016-FY2024 Enacted Discretionary Funding and FY2025 Administration Request
(in FY2023 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. Enacted amounts for FY2024 are from the explanatory statement accompanying P.L. 118-42, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024.

Notes: Appropriations generally exclude supplemental funding, transfers, rescissions, and cancellations. Amounts adjusted to FY2023 constant dollars using Office of Management and Budget, *Historical Tables, Table 10.1: Gross Domestic Product and Deflators Used in the Historical Tables: 1940-2029*.

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

Account	FY2024 Enacted	FY2025 Request
Resource Management	1,520.3	1,706.6
Construction	19.3	32.2
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund	23.0	14.4
National Wildlife Refuge Fund	13.2	0.0
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	49.0	33.0
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund	5.0	5.1
Multinational Species Conservation Fund	20.5	21.0
State and Tribal Wildlife Grants	72.4	73.8
Accounts Total	\$1,722.7	\$1,886.1

Source: CRS using data from the *Congressional Record*, vol. 170, no. 39 (March 5, 2024), pp. S1801-S1803, and “budget authority” data from Appendix A, *The Interior Budget in Brief, Fiscal Year 2025*, p. A-3.

Notes: Totals do not include supplemental funding and transfers. Columns may not sum to totals shown due to rounding.

Resource Management Account

The Resource Management account comprises the majority (88% in FY2024) of the FWS annual discretionary appropriation (Table 1). For FY2025, the Administration request of \$1.71 billion is \$186.3 million above the FY2024 enacted level for this account. Table 2 shows the funding levels for activities within the account.

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

Activity	FY2024 Enacted	FY2025 Request
Ecological Services	288.3	338.2
Habitat Conservation	72.0	82.7
National Wildlife Refuge System	527.0	602.3
Conservation and Enforcement	173.7	221.3
Fish and Aquatic Conservation	226.8	239.3
Science Support	33.8	37.9
General Operations	153.8	183.8
Stewardship Priorities	44.9	0.0
Damage Recovery Provision	0.0	1.0
Account Total	\$1,520.3	\$1,706.6

Source: CRS using data from the Congressional Record, vol. 170, no. 39 (March 5, 2024), pp. S1799-S1801, and The Interior Budget in Brief, Fiscal Year 2025, pp. FWS-9-FWS-10.

Notes: Columns may not sum to totals shown due to rounding.

Other FWS Accounts

In FY2024, \$202.4 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 FY2025, the Administration requested \$179.5 million for the seven accounts, an overall \$22.9 million decrease from the FY2024 enacted level. The request reflected decreases to the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund accounts. It also reflected an elimination of appropriations for the National Wildlife Refuge Fund. Under the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act (16 U.S.C. §715s), FWS makes payments to counties with FWS lands from the sale of products on those lands. The FY2025 budget did not include appropriations for this purpose.

Selected FY2025 Administration Budget Proposals

The FY2025 Administration request includes several budget proposals, some of which are discussed herein. One proposal seeks a statutory change to increase the percentage of funds available (from not more than 4% to not more than 7%) for the administration of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA; 16 U.S.C. §§4401 et seq.). According to FWS, the proposed percentage increase would foster oversight of NAWCA grants. NAWCA authorizes grants to public-private partnerships in the United States, Canada, and Mexico to carry out wetland conservation

projects. The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund receives annual discretionary appropriations and funds transferred from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (previously known as the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund; 26 U.S.C. §9504). For FY2025, the Administration requested \$33.0 million for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, a decrease of \$16.0 million from the FY2024 enacted level (Table 1). The North American Wetlands Conservation Fund receives 15% of the receipts deposited into the trust fund in the fiscal year following their collection.

A second proposal in the FY2025 Administration request seeks to increase the percentage of funds available (from not more than 3% to not more than 5%) to administer the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA; 16 U.S.C. §§6101 et seq.). According to FWS, this increase would help agency staff guide grantees through grant complexities, provide strategic guidance on conservation priorities, and increase outreach and awareness of the NMBCA grant program. The NMBCA authorizes grants for the conservation of neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Of the amounts made available, 75% are to be expended on projects outside the United States. The budget proposal also seeks to lower the nonfederal match requirements for projects outside the United States from 3:1 to 1:1 for the NMBCA grant program as a means to increase opportunities to support bird conservation measures.

A third proposal in the FY2025 Administration request seeks to expand the Good Neighbor Authority (16 U.S.C. §2113a), currently available to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS), to include FWS and the National Park Service. The Good Neighbor Authority authorizes BLM and FS to enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with states, counties, and federally recognized Indian tribes to perform watershed restoration and forest management services on the federal land managed by those agencies.

A fourth FY2025 Administration relates to FWS planning and consultation activities (under the Ecological Services activity). In FY2024, the Administration sought to expand the authority for agencies to transfer funds under the IJA to FWS to accelerate and improve environmental reviews in support of development of infrastructure projects and energy solutions on federal land. The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-47), Division B, Section 754, authorized the transfer of unobligated IJA funds to the FWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service, subject to specified terms and conditions, for the costs of carrying out responsibilities related to the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. §§1531 et seq.). This proposal, if enacted, would allow a similar transfer for FY2025.

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