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# Funding for Wildfire Management: FY2024 Appropriations for the Forest Service and Department of the Interior

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service (FS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) are responsible for wildfire response and management across federal lands within their respective jurisdictions. Both the FS and DOI generally receive discretionary appropriations for wildfire management activities through annual Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations laws. Wildfire management funding for DOI is provided to the department-level Office of Wildland Fire. Wildfire management appropriations fluctuate annually but overall have risen more than fourfold since FY1994 (see **Figure 1**). For more information, see CRS Report R46583, *Federal Wildfire Management: Ten-Year Funding Trends and Issues (FY2011-FY2020)*.

## FY2024 Budget Request

The Biden Administration requested a total of \$7.100 billion in FY2024 discretionary appropriations for FS and DOI wildfire purposes (see **Table 1**), a decrease of \$108.7 million relative to the FY2023 regular enacted appropriation of \$7.208 billion. The request included \$4.927 billion in the agencies’ Wildland Fire Management (WFM) accounts, \$2.650 billion pursuant to the wildfire adjustment, and \$153.0 million to other FS accounts for other wildfire purposes.

## FY2024 Enacted Appropriations

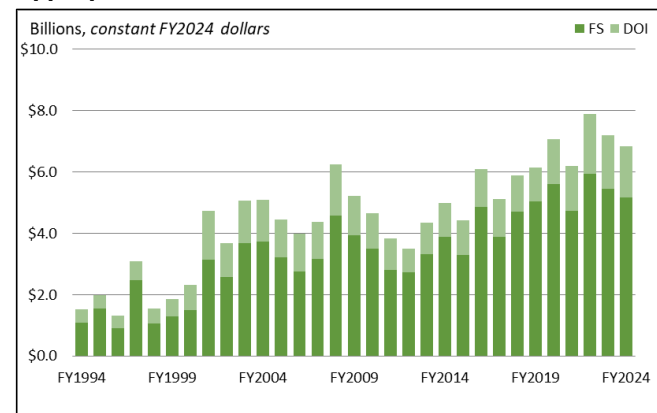
The FS and DOI received a combined total of \$7.022 billion in FY2024 discretionary appropriations (see **Table 1**). The combined total consists of \$5.296 billion for the FS and \$1.726 billion for DOI. This combined total also consists of \$3.725 billion in the agencies’ WFM accounts, \$2.650 billion pursuant to the wildfire adjustment, and \$646.9 million to other FS accounts for other wildfire purposes. One component of the combined total is \$649.1 million for hazardous fuels management purposes (\$278.3 million for the FS in the agency’s NFS account and \$370.8 million for DOI in the agency’s DOI account).

The FY2024 combined total reflects \$6.352 billion in regular appropriations provided through the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42, Division E), and \$670.0 million in emergency supplemental appropriations provided through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58). Regular FY2024 appropriations were not enacted by the start of the fiscal year, but continuing resolutions provided funding at the FY2023 levels until P.L. 118-42 was signed into law on March 9, 2024.

## Wildfire Accounts and Activities

The FS and DOI each have a WFM account. Within their respective WFM accounts, both agencies receive funding for wildland fire preparedness and suppression activities.

**Figure 1. FS and DOI Discretionary Wildfire Appropriations, FY1994-FY2024**



**Source:** CRS analysis of appropriations acts, accompanying explanatory statements, and departmental reporting.

**Notes:** DOI = Department of the Interior; FS = Forest Service. Figures are adjusted to constant dollars using the Office of Management and Budget’s GDP Chained Price Index.

DOI also receives funding through its WFM account for fuel reduction and other wildfire activities (e.g., site rehabilitation, assistance programs, research, facilities maintenance). The FS also receives appropriations for fuel reduction and other wildfire purposes, but most of this funding has been provided through other appropriations accounts, including National Forest System (NFS); State, Private, and Tribal Forestry; and Forest and Rangeland Research. Unlike DOI, the FS has a separate budget line item in its WFM account for salaries and expenses.

Since FY2020, the FS and DOI have received additional funding for suppression through the *wildfire adjustment* (2 U.S.C. §901(b)(2)(F)), also known as the *wildfire funding fix*, a budgetary mechanism that allows for an upward adjustment of the discretionary spending allocations to accommodate a specific amount of additional funding for suppression. A precondition for using the adjustment is that Congress must appropriate a baseline amount of funding for suppression purposes. The baseline is equal to the 10-year suppression obligation average as reported in FY2015 (\$1.011 billion for the FS; \$383.7 million for DOI). For each of FY2020-FY2024, Congress appropriated the baseline suppression funds to the agencies’ respective WFM accounts and appropriated the funds provided through the wildfire adjustment to a separate account for each agency, the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund. The wildfire adjustment is available annually through FY2027, and the maximum amount available under the adjustment increases annually.

**Table I. FS and DOI Discretionary Wildfire Appropriations (\$ in millions)**

Account	FY2023		FY2024				
	Total Enacted	Request	House-Passed H.R. 8294	Senate-Introduced S. 4686	Enacted		
					Regular	Supplemental	Total
<b>FS, Total</b>	<b>\$5,437.9</b>	<b>\$4,985.1</b>	<b>\$4,992.2</b>	<b>\$4,964.7</b>	<b>\$4,888.1</b>	<b>\$407.4</b>	<b>\$5,295.5</b>
WFM, Total	2,528.0	2,970.6	2,678.7	2,604.7	2,312.7	36.0	2,348.7
Salaries and Expenses	914.0	1,422.6	1,154.3	1,154.3	1,109.7	—	1,109.7
Preparedness	32.0	208.0	192.0	192.0	192.0	—	192.0
Suppression	1,546.0	1,011.0	1,011.0	1,011.0	1,011.0	—	1,011.0
Other/Unallocated	36.9	6.0	—	—	—	36.0	36.0
Hazardous Fuels	—	323.0	321.4	247.4	—	—	—
Wildfire Adjustment	2,120.0	2,300.0	2,210.0	2,210.0	2,300.0	—	2,300.0
NFS Hazardous Fuels	309.8	—	—	—	175.5	102.8	278.3
Other	390.1	153.0	103.5	150.0	100.0	268.6	368.6
<b>DOI, Total</b>	<b>1,770.4</b>	<b>1,539.6</b>	<b>1,543.1</b>	<b>1,503.3</b>	<b>1,003.8</b>	<b>262.6</b>	<b>1,726.1</b>
WFM, Total	1,430.4	1,325.9	1,203.1	1,163.3	663.8	262.6	1,376.1
Preparedness	469.4	592.5	477.2	477.2	381.8	42.3	534.6
Suppression	458.7	383.7	383.7	383.7	—	—	—
Fuels Management	403.4	293.3	304.3	267.0	247.0	156.4	370.8
Other/Unallocated	98.4	56.5	38.0	35.5	35.0	64.0	87.0
Wildfire Adjustment	340.0	350.0	340.0	340.0	340.0	—	350.0
<b>Total, FS and DOI</b>	<b>7,208.2</b>	<b>7,099.5</b>	<b>6,535.3</b>	<b>6,467.9</b>	<b>6,351.6</b>	<b>670.0</b>	<b>7,021.6</b>

**Sources:** CRS, with information from the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and other budget documents.

**Notes:** FY2023 Total Enacted reflects regular and supplemental appropriations provided in P.L. 117-58 and P.L. 117-328. FY2024 Regular Enacted reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 118-42; FY2024 Supplemental Enacted reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 117-58. WFM = Wildland Fire Management; NFS = National Forest System. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding.

### Preparedness

Preparedness includes tasks necessary to ensure readiness for wildfire response. Prior to FY2021, both the FS and DOI used preparedness funds to maintain and train baseline personnel; manage infrastructure, equipment, and resources (e.g., aviation assets, engines, communication equipment); develop and maintain technological capacity and tools; and prepare and execute fire management plans, cooperative agreements, and interagency coordination. Starting in FY2021, many of these activities for the FS are covered in the salaries and expenses WFM budget line item.

### Suppression

Suppression is the work associated with extinguishing or confining a fire. Suppression appropriations are used primarily for wildfire response, including funding aviation asset operations, conducting other functions in direct support of wildfire incidents, and funding postfire emergency stabilization activities. In FY2024, some suppression funding was allocated for presuppression activities. Baseline suppression funding is provided to the FS's and DOI's respective WFM accounts. Funds provided pursuant to the wildfire adjustment are transferred to the WFM account as needed.

### Fuel Reduction

Fuel reduction is manipulating or removing fuels (e.g., vegetation) to reduce potential wildfire risk, such as through thinning or prescribed fire. Fuel reduction funding

may be used for projects (or *treatments*) on federal lands, to provide assistance for projects on nonfederal lands, or to otherwise incentivize fuel removal from federal lands. Fuel reduction activities are funded within DOI's Fuels Management activity (WFM account) and FS's Hazardous Fuels activity (NFS account). The FS requested to move the Hazardous Fuels activity to its WFM account for FY2024; P.L. 118-42 did not adopt this proposed change. The FS and DOI also receive funding through other accounts and programs that may be used for fuel reduction; thus, funding provided to each agency's respective Fuels program does not reflect the total funding available for these activities.

### Other Wildfire Activities

The FS and DOI receive appropriations for several other wildfire-related activities. For DOI, funding is provided within the WFM account for postfire rehabilitation, wildfire science and research, and facilities maintenance. For the FS, funding for other wildfire activities is provided as budget line items to other accounts for wildfire assistance programs, wildfire science and research, burned area recovery, and postfire restoration activities. In previous years, some of these activities did not receive line item appropriations and were funded through allocations and other indirect sources.

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