

Updated June 20, 2025

National Park Service: FY2025 Appropriations

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which includes 433 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 staffing levels supported by NPS appropriations, funding to address NPS deferred maintenance, allocations for land acquisition, and NPS assistance to nonfederal entities.

FY2025 Appropriations

The Biden Administration requested \$3.576 billion in discretionary appropriations for NPS for FY2025. The request was 8% higher than NPS's FY2024 discretionary appropriation of \$3.325 billion enacted in P.L. 118-42 (**Table 1**). NPS also estimated \$1.240 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS for FY2025, a decrease of 1% from estimated NPS mandatory funding for FY2024. These mandatory appropriations, among other sources, include land acquisition funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF, 54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.), which was designated as mandatory spending by 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 (see discussion below).

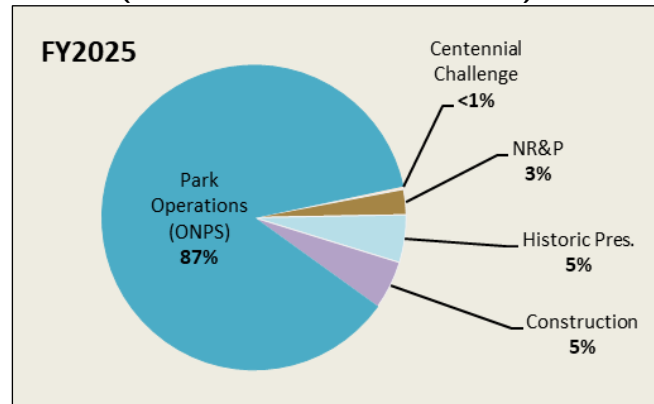
On July 24, 2024, the House passed H.R. 8998 (H.Rept. 118-581), with \$3.122 billion for NPS for FY2025—13% less than requested and 6% less than the FY2024 appropriation. On July 25, 2024, the Senate Committee on Appropriations reported S. 4802 (S.Rept. 118-201), with \$3.491 billion for NPS—2% less than the request and 5% more than FY2024. The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4), enacted on March 15, 2025, did not specify a total NPS appropriation for FY2025. While generally continuing NPS accounts at FY2024 levels, P.L. 119-4 contained several changes. DOI's FY2026 Budget in Brief estimated the NPS total for FY2025 as \$3.337 billion, 7% less than requested and <1% more than the FY2024 enacted appropriation (**Table 1**). Regarding FY2025 allocations, the Budget in Brief stated that the President “reserves his authority ... to revise spending within the amounts provided by Congress.”

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's Discretionary Appropriations by Account (FY2025 Estimated Share of Total)



Source: P.L. 119-4.

Notes: ONPS = Operation of the National Park System. NR&P = National Recreation and Preservation. Totals do not sum precisely due to rounding. Also see notes to **Table 1**.

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. Some funding goes to state and tribal historic preservation offices as formula grants to preserve cultural and historical assets. Congress also has provided 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 (54 U.S.C. §§103501 et seq.), which matches donations for projects or programs that further the NPS mission and visitor experience. The fund also receives offsetting collections from senior pass

sales under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §§6801 et seq.).

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

Account	FY2024 Enacted (P.L. 118-42)	FY2025 House-Passed Request	Senate Committee- H.R. 8998	Reported S. 4802	FY2025 Full-Year CR (P.L. 119-4)	% Change from FY2024
Operation of the Nat'l. Park System	2,888.4	3,090.4	2,714.2	2,994.3	2,894.4 ^a	+<1%
Construction	172.3	237.2	135.6	202.3	172.3 ^b	—
Historic Preservation Fund	188.7	151.4	168.9	182.8	168.9 ^c	-10%
Nat'l. Recreation and Preservation	91.2	84.4	91.6	96.2	89.6 ^c	-2%
Centennial Challenge	12.0	13.0	12.0	15.0	12.0 ^b	—
Total	3,325.1^d	3,576.4	3,122.3	3,490.5	3,337.2^{b,d}	+<1%

Sources: H.Rept. 118-581, S.Rept. 118-201, P.L. 119-4, and DOI, FY2026 Budget in Brief. Funding totals may not sum precisely due to rounding. CR = continuing resolution.

- The House Appropriations Committee majority summary of P.L. 119-4 (hereinafter HAC Summary) stated that a \$6.0 million increase to the Operation of the National Park System account was for planning and security for the 2025 Presidential Inauguration.
- The FY2025 total and amounts for the Construction and Centennial Challenge accounts were not explicitly provided in P.L. 119-4. Section 1101 of the act provided FY2025 Interior appropriations at FY2024 regular enacted levels unless otherwise specified. This table, as well as DOI's FY2026 Budget in Brief, shows FY2025 appropriations for these accounts at the same level as FY2024. The Budget in Brief states that the President "reserves his authority to revise spending within amounts provided by Congress."
- The HAC Summary stated that reductions to the Historic Preservation Fund account and the National Recreation and Preservation account were to remove community project funding/congressionally directed spending (i.e., earmarks).
- FY2024 total reflects rescissions of \$27.5 million in unobligated balances from the Construction account. For FY2025, P.L. 119-4, Section 1101(a)(7), specified that these rescissions were not included.

Issues for Congress

NPS Staffing Capacity

In May 2024 testimony before the House Natural Resources Committee, NPS highlighted a nearly 15% decline in its full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing levels since FY2010. For the past decade (FY2015-FY2024), agency data show a drop of 3% in NPS FTEs. During that decade, 23 new units were added to the system. NPS's FY2025 request sought a 5% FTE increase over the estimated FY2024 level of 18,899 FTE. Information is not readily available on the FTE levels supported by P.L. 119-4 or on any effects of executive branch initiatives in 2025 to reduce DOI staff.

Deferred Maintenance

NPS's backlog of deferred maintenance (DM), estimated by NPS at \$22.986 billion as of the end of FY2024, has been a focus in the appropriations process. Despite legislation and agency actions aimed at addressing the backlog, it has increased in the past decade, including a 59% increase between FY2020 and FY2021 that NPS attributes partly to changes in its methods for estimating DM. 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 subactivities ("Line-Item Construction and Maintenance" in the Construction account and "Repair and Rehabilitation" in ONPS) have provided the bulk of discretionary funding for NPS DM. For FY2024, P.L. 118-42 provided \$191.6 million for these two subactivities combined. P.L. 119-4 did not specify FY2025 amounts. In terms of mandatory spending, the GAOA's LRF has

provided \$1.3 billion annually for NPS DM for FY2021-FY2025, after which funding expires. The GAOA requires NPS to submit, in annual budget justifications, lists of DM projects to be funded from the LRF. Appropriators may specify alternate allocations but did not do so for FY2025. Other funding sources, such as recreation fees and allocations from the Highway Trust Fund, also have been used for NPS DM. See CRS Report R48136, *National Park Service Deferred Maintenance: Overview and Issues*; and CRS In Focus IF12888, *The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA): 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 program and project allocations for the LWCF funds, and appropriations acts may specify alternate allocations. In FY2024, appropriators provided \$104.3 million from the LWCF for NPS's own land acquisitions (in addition to funds for state grants). P.L. 119-4 did not address FY2025 amounts. See CRS In Focus IF12256, *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): Frequently Asked Questions*.

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, to better focus on the agency's "core" mission of managing national parks. In particular, some have encouraged national heritage areas, which are nonfederally managed, to become self-sufficient. Congress

has increased heritage area funding over the past decade as new areas have been added. Two NPS discretionary accounts (NR&P and HPF) provide funding for nonfederal assistance. Combined, they represented less than 10% of total NPS funding in FY2025 (**Table 1**). See CRS Report RL33462, *National Heritage Areas: Background and Issues*

for Congress; and CRS Report R45800, *The Federal Role in Historic Preservation: An Overview*.

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