



## Bureau of Land Management: FY2019 Appropriations

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 248 million acres of grasslands, forests, high mountains, arctic tundra, deserts, and other public land, nearly all in the West. Under its multiple-use mission, BLM manages these lands for diverse purposes, including livestock grazing, recreation, and preservation. The agency also administers onshore federal energy and mineral resources covering nearly 700 million acres of federal subsurface mineral estate, and it supervises the mineral operations on about 56 million acres of Indian trust lands.

At issue for Congress is determining the amount of funding to provide for BLM programs and activities for FY2019, the terms and conditions of such funding, and whether to enact related Trump Administration proposals.

For FY2019, the Administration requested \$1,023.3 million in discretionary appropriations for BLM, a \$308.7 million (23.2%) decrease from the FY2018 level of \$1,331.9 million. On July 19, 2018, the House passed H.R. 6147 with \$1,387.0 million for BLM. This was \$55.0 million (4.1%) more than the FY2018 appropriation and \$363.7 million (35.5%) more than the Administration’s request. On August 1, 2018, the Senate passed H.R. 6147 with \$1,343.4 million for BLM. This was \$11.5 million (0.9%) more than the FY2018 level and \$320.1 million (31.3%) more than the Administration’s request, but \$43.6 million (3.1%) less than the House-passed amount. (See **Table 1**.)

BLM discretionary appropriations generally are provided in Title I of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations laws. Mandatory (permanent) appropriations also are provided to BLM under various statutes within the jurisdiction of authorizing committees. For FY2019, BLM estimates its mandatory appropriations at \$74.8 million. This would be a decrease from the \$200.2 million estimated for FY2018, in part due to a proposed cancellation of unobligated mandatory funds.

### Appropriations Accounts

BLM discretionary appropriations are provided through several accounts. The Administration’s FY2019 request for these accounts is shown in **Figure 1**. **Table 1** contains FY2019 account funding levels in the request, the House-passed version of H.R. 6147, and the Senate-passed version of H.R. 6147 as compared with FY2018 enacted amounts.

**Management of Lands and Resources.** The largest account—Management of Lands and Resources—comprised 89.1% of the request. This account funds an array of BLM programs, including energy and minerals, rangelands, wild horses and burros, wildlife and fisheries, threatened and endangered species, recreation, resource protection, law enforcement, resource management planning, and facility maintenance.

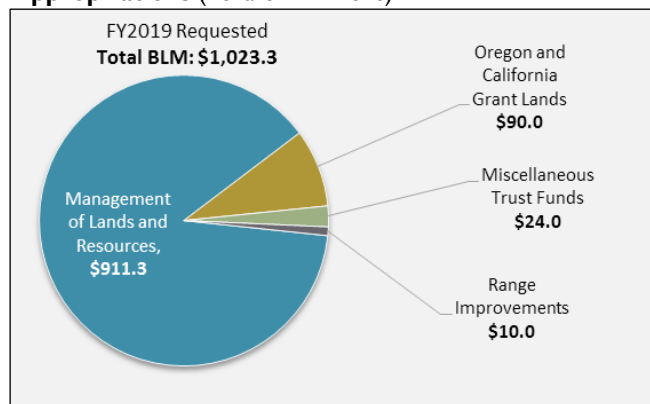
The Administration proposed a budget restructuring within the account to increase flexibility, cost savings, and program integration. Affected budget activities and subactivities included soil, water, and air; riparian areas; rangeland; threatened and endangered species; wildlife and fisheries; abandoned mine lands; and hazardous materials. The Senate, but not the House, adopted this restructuring.

The House and Senate included more money for this account than requested for FY2019 and enacted for FY2018. The Administration sought a decrease for this account and most of its activities. However, the request contained additional funds for a few programs, including coal management to improve coal leasing and permitting, and establishment of a competitive oil and gas leasing program on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. The House and Senate did not specify funding for most of these purposes.

The House would provide the most funding for BLM deferred maintenance—\$114.2 million. This would be an additional \$35.0 million over FY2018, \$89.3 million over the request, and \$55.0 million over the Senate level.

The President’s request included \$5.9 million to support a Department of the Interior (DOI) reorganization to achieve common regional boundaries for DOI agencies and to transfer some BLM functions from headquarters to the field. The intent is to improve public service, efficiency, and communication. The House and Senate did not explicitly identify funding for BLM reorganization.

**Figure 1. BLM FY2019 Administration-Requested Appropriations (dollars in millions)**



**Source:** Prepared by CRS with information from the House Committee on Appropriations. Not shown are requested rescissions for the Land Acquisition account and the former Construction account (totaling \$12.1 million) and a request of \$0 for Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures due to a match by offsetting fees.

**Land Acquisition.** BLM typically receives appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to acquire lands. For FY2019, the Administration did not seek funding for particular acquisitions or to facilitate access to BLM

land for recreation. The overall request was -\$6.6 million, reflecting a rescission of unobligated balances. The House provided \$17.4 million, including funds for recreational access generally, but the House committee report did not identify individual acquisition projects pending additional information from the Administration. The Senate included \$26.0 million, with portions dedicated to 11 individual projects and acquisitions benefitting recreational access.

**Oregon and California Grant Lands.** Oregon and California (O&C) Grant Lands constituted 8.8% of the request for FY2019. This account funds management of more than 2 million acres of forested lands in western Oregon, primarily for sustained yield of timber production. The Administration would reduce funding from FY2018. The House would provide level funding and the Senate nearly level funding. Also, the House, but not the Senate, accepted an Administration proposal to consolidate funding for activities to enhance flexibility and program efficiency.

**Range Improvements.** The Range Improvements account funds rehabilitation, protection, and improvement of BLM rangelands. Of the Administration's total request, 1.0% was for this purpose. The request, House, Senate, and FY2018 appropriation contained \$10.0 million.

**Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures.** This account provides BLM monies received by the agency for varied purposes, such as costs of processing rights-of-way and energy and mineral authorizations. As is typically the case, the amounts proposed by the Administration, House, and Senate are offset by collections, making them \$0. This was also the case for FY2018.

**Miscellaneous Trust Funds.** This account appropriates to BLM contributions (for various purposes) from individuals, businesses, user groups, and states. It comprised 2.3% of FY2019 requested funds. The request, House, and Senate proposed funding at the FY2018 level.

#### Legislative Proposals by the Administration

In the FY2019 request, the Trump Administration proposed extending or amending authorities through changes in law and changes to agency practices under existing law. Some

of these proposals, and other provisions in bill or committee report language, are discussed below.

**Energy and Minerals.** The request proposed changing the distribution of revenues from geothermal leasing on federal lands—currently 50% to the states, 25% to the Treasury, and 25% to counties—to return to a distribution of 50% for states and 50% for the Treasury. To maintain global competitiveness, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees (in report language) supported reducing from 6% to 2% the federal royalty rate for soda ash mined on federal land and directed BLM to take related actions.

**Wild Horses and Burros.** The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (16 U.S.C. §§1331 et seq.) provides BLM authority to destroy healthy, excess wild horses and burros and to sell without limitation excess animals meeting certain criteria. In practice, BLM generally sells animals with limits (e.g., a minimum purchase price). The House and Senate continued to bar the use of funds for the destruction of healthy, unadopted BLM wild horses and burros and for the sale of animals for processing into commercial products. To reduce the overpopulation of animals, the Administration had proposed using sales without limitations and removing the funding ban. Both bills increased monies for wild horses and burros, and the House bill authorized use of single-sex or non-reproducing herds, including through sterilization.

**Recreation.** The authority in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §§6801 et seq.) that allows BLM (and other agencies) to charge, collect, and use fees for recreation on agency lands is set to expire on September 30, 2019. The Administration supported permanent authority through authorizing legislation, while also seeking a short-term extension. The House provided a two-year extension, and the Senate included a one-year extension. The House bill also generally barred funds from being used to prohibit use of, or access to, BLM and other federal lands for hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting, under specified conditions. The Senate committee report directed DOI and the Forest Service to provide advance notification of land closures for these activities.

**Table I. BLM Discretionary Appropriations by Account** (dollars in millions)

Account	FY2018 Enacted	FY2019 Request	% Change from FY2018	House-Passed H.R. 6147	% Change from FY2018	Senate-Passed H.R. 6147	% Change from FY2018
Management of Lands and Resources	\$1,166.0	\$911.3	-21.8%	\$1,228.6	5.4%	\$1,176.8	0.9%
Land Acquisition	24.9	-6.6	-126.5%	17.4	-30.2%	26.0	4.4%
Oregon and California Grant Lands	107.0	90.0	-15.8%	107.0	0%	106.5	-0.4%
Range Improvements	10.0	10.0	0%	10.0	0%	10.0	0%
Service Charges, Deposits, & Forfeitures	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Miscellaneous Trust Funds	24.0	24.0	0%	24.0	0%	24.0	0%
<b>Total BLM</b>	<b>\$1,331.9</b>	<b>\$1,023.3</b>	<b>-23.2%</b>	<b>\$1,387.0</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>\$1,343.4</b>	<b>0.9%</b>

**Source:** Prepared by CRS with information from the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.

**Notes:** The amounts of \$0 for Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures are a result of an appropriation matched by offsetting fees. The FY2019 request total reflects a -\$5.5 million rescission of prior-year unobligated funds for construction not shown in the column.

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