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National Park Service: FY2020 Appropriations

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which includes 419 units valued for their natural, cultural, and recreational importance and covers 85 million acres (81 million acres of federal land and 4 million nonfederal). NPS, which is part of the Department of the Interior, typically receives funding in annual appropriations laws for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Issues for Congress include the aggregate level of NPS appropriations, funding to address NPS’s backlog of deferred maintenance, and funding for land acquisition, among others.

FY2020 Appropriations

The Trump Administration requested \$2.742 billion in FY2020 discretionary appropriations for NPS. The request was 15% less than the FY2019 NPS appropriation of \$3.223 billion enacted in P.L. 116-6, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, FY2019. (For FY2019, P.L. 116-20 also provided \$0.128 billion in supplemental funding for NPS to address hurricane damage.) The FY2020 request included reductions for all NPS accounts as compared with FY2019. The Administration also estimated \$0.733 billion in mandatory appropriations for NPS for FY2020, a decrease of 4% from estimated NPS mandatory funding for FY2019. NPS’s mandatory appropriations come from entrance and recreation fees, concessioner fees, donations, and other sources and are used for a variety of specified purposes, including deferred maintenance.

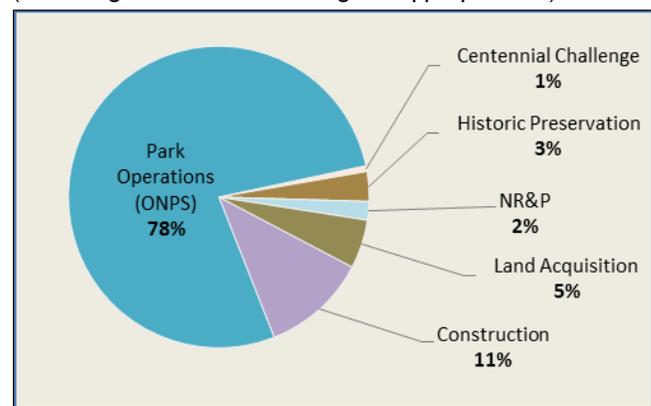
On June 3, 2019, the House Committee on Appropriations reported H.R. 3052 (H.Rept. 116-100), which would provide \$3.362 billion for NPS for FY2020. The amount is 23% higher than the Administration’s request and 4% higher than the FY2019 regular appropriation. The House bill includes increases for all NPS accounts compared to the

Administration’s request, as well as increases or level funding for all but one account (Construction) compared to FY2019 enacted appropriations in P.L. 116-6 (Table 1).

NPS’s Appropriations Accounts

NPS has six discretionary appropriations accounts (Figure 1). The high majority of NPS discretionary appropriations have typically gone to the Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) account to support the day-to-day activities, programs, and services of the park system. These include resource stewardship, visitor services, park protection, facility operations and maintenance, and administrative costs.

Figure 1. NPS Appropriations Accounts
(Percentages Reflect FY2019 Regular Appropriations)



Source: H.Rept. 116-9. Figure does not reflect FY2019 supplemental appropriations in P.L. 116-20.

Notes: ONPS = Operation of the National Park System.
NR&P = National Recreation and Preservation.

Table 1. NPS Discretionary Appropriations by Account (\$ in millions)

Account	FY2019 Enacted (P.L. 116-6) ^a	FY2020 Request	Request % Change from FY2019	House Comm.-Reported H.R. 3052	H.R. 3052 % Change from FY2019
Operation of the National Park System	2,502.7	2,425.5	-3%	2,647.0	+6%
Construction	364.7	246.3	-33%	319.7	-12%
Land Acquisition and State Assistance	168.4	4.8	-97%	208.4	+24%
Historic Preservation Fund	102.7	32.7	-68%	121.7	+19%
National Recreation and Preservation	64.1	32.3	-50%	73.5	+15%
Centennial Challenge	20.0	0	-100%	20.0	—
LWCF Rescission ^b	—	—	—	-28.1	—
Total	3,222.7	2,741.7	-15%	3,362.1	+4%

Source: H.Rept. 116-9; NPS FY2020 budget justification; H.Rept. 116-100. Column totals may not sum precisely due to rounding.

a. Table does not reflect FY2019 supplemental appropriations of \$128.0 million in P.L. 116-20 (provided as emergency spending outside of discretionary spending limits).

- b. The amount reflects a rescission of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) contract authority.

NPS's Construction account covers rehabilitation and replacement of existing facilities as well as new construction. In recent years, the agency has planned no new facility construction in order to prioritize deferred maintenance. NPS prioritizes projects based on "mission factors" and cost-benefit considerations. The account also covers other construction activities and planning functions.

Funding for the Land Acquisition and State Assistance (LASA) account comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; 54 U.S.C. §§200301 *et seq.*), the primary funding source for the federal land management agencies to acquire lands. For more information on the LWCF, see CRS Report RL33531, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding History, and Issues*. The account covers both NPS's own acquisitions—typically consisting of nonfederal "inholdings" inside the boundaries of national park units—and NPS grants to states for outdoor recreation needs.

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 fund receives \$150 million annually from offshore energy revenues, but monies are available only as provided in appropriations acts. Most of the funding goes to state and tribal historic preservation offices as formula grants to preserve cultural and historical assets and sites. Congress has also made some funding available 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 for NPS assistance to national heritage areas.

The Centennial Challenge account supports the National Park Centennial Challenge Fund. Authorized by Congress in 2016 (54 U.S.C. §§103501 *et seq.*), the fund provides matching grants to spur partner donations for projects or programs that further the NPS mission and enhance the visitor experience. Deferred maintenance is prioritized. The fund is also authorized to receive offsetting collections from the sale of senior passes under the Federal Lands Recreational Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §§6801-6814).

Issues in NPS Appropriations

Deferred Maintenance

NPS's backlog of deferred maintenance (DM), estimated at \$11.920 billion as of the end of FY2018, continues to be a significant issue in the appropriations process. Despite legislation and agency actions aimed at addressing the backlog, it has increased over the past decade.

NPS funding to address DM comes from discretionary appropriations and other sources. Two appropriations subactivities ("Line-Item Construction" in the Construction account and "Repair and Rehabilitation" in the ONPS account) are among the primary sources of funds for NPS DM, and for FY2019 NPS also allocated funds from a "General Program Increase" for the Construction account in

P.L. 116-6. According to NPS, these three sources provided a combined \$395.3 million for FY2019. For FY2020, H.R. 3052 would provide \$363.3 million for the two budget subactivities with no general program increase. Portions of other NPS discretionary budget activities are also used for DM. Additionally, allocations from the Highway Trust Fund support NPS road repair and improvements. Other sources, such as recreation fees, may also be used.

Congress has considered whether to increase discretionary funding for NPS DM, provide mandatory funding, and/or direct the agency to use existing funding differently. For additional information, see CRS Report R44924, *The National Park Service's Maintenance Backlog: Frequently Asked Questions*; and CRS In Focus IF10987, *Legislative Proposals for a National Park Service Deferred Maintenance Fund*.

Land Acquisition Funding

The extent to which NPS land acquisition funding should be increased, decreased, or redirected continues to be a focus for Congress. At a broad level, some in Congress object to further expansion of the federal estate, whereas others feel that more areas need federal protection. For NPS, some Members have suggested that agency funding to acquire new lands is misplaced when maintenance needs for existing lands in the system are not being met. Some also assert that recent acquisitions have lacked the national value of earlier iconic parks. Supporters of NPS land acquisition funding have noted that the majority of funds are used to acquire nonfederal inholdings within existing park units. They contend that such acquisitions help to complete valued parks and may facilitate maintenance efforts.

Congress provided \$44.4 million for NPS land acquisition in FY2019. For FY2020, H.R. 3052 would provide \$68.4 million. The Administration requested no funding for new NPS land acquisition projects in FY2020, stating that elimination of this funding would allow NPS to focus resources on management of existing lands and assets.

NPS Assistance to Nonfederal Sites and Programs

Some Members, along with the Trump and Obama Administrations, have questioned whether some NPS assistance to nonfederal sites and programs should be reduced in order to focus funding on the agency's "core mission" of managing federal parks. Two agency accounts (NR&P and HPF), along with some of the LASA account, fund NPS assistance to nonfederal entities. These monies combined represented less than 10% of total NPS funding in FY2019. For FY2020, House-reported H.R. 3052 would increase funding for all of these assistance accounts over FY2019 amounts. The Trump Administration, by contrast, proposed reductions in many nonfederal assistance programs and elimination of some types of assistance, including NPS grants to national heritage areas (which are nonfederally managed). The FY2020 budget justification encouraged heritage area managers to seek sustainable funding from local and private beneficiaries.

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