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National Park Service: FY2021 Appropriations

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Park System, which includes 423 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. This CRS product discusses NPS's FY2021 appropriations; for information on FY2022, see CRS In Focus IF11928, *National Park Service: FY2022 Appropriations*.

FY2021 Appropriations

P.L. 116-260, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, was enacted on December 27, 2020. It contained \$3.123 billion for NPS, 8% less than the enacted FY2020 regular appropriation of \$3.377 billion in P.L. 116-94. The act included increases for some NPS accounts compared with FY2020 (**Table 1**) but decreased or eliminated funding for two accounts, both covering activities that received mandatory appropriations in the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-152), enacted in August 2020.

FY2021 appropriations in P.L. 116-260 were 12% higher than the Trump Administration's request of \$2.793 billion. The enacted discretionary appropriation exceeded the Administration's request for all but one NPS account.

In addition to discretionary appropriations, NPS reported mandatory appropriations for FY2021 of \$1.033 billion, an increase of 82% over NPS mandatory funding for FY2020. The increase was largely due to changes enacted in the GAOA, which designated as mandatory spending agency funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; 54 U.S.C. §200301), previously provided through discretionary appropriations. Other NPS mandatory appropriations come from entrance and recreation fees, concessioner fees, donations, and other sources. NPS's mandatory total does not include NPS's share from the deferred maintenance fund established by the GAOA, which is recorded as a separate allocation from a DOI department-wide account.

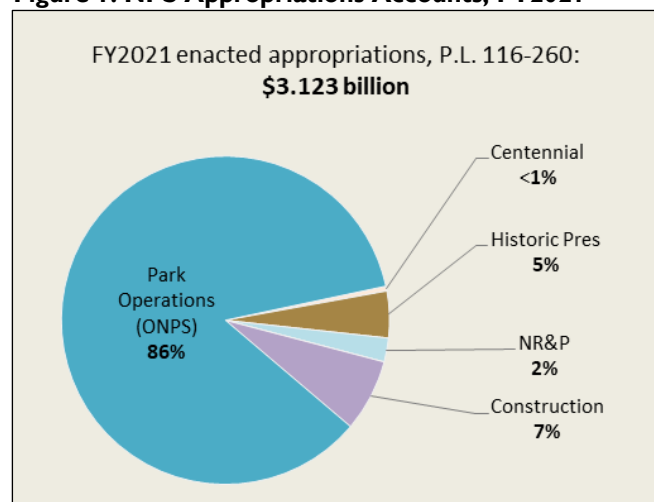
In earlier action, on July 24, 2020, the House passed H.R. 7608, an FY2021 consolidated appropriations bill with \$3.224 billion for NPS (also see H.Rept. 116-448 on H.R. 7612, an earlier stand-alone House Interior bill). On November 10, 2020, the Senate Committee on Appropriations released a draft bill with \$3.122 billion for NPS. Because regular FY2021 appropriations were not enacted by the start of the fiscal year, several continuing

resolutions provided funding at FY2020 levels before enactment of P.L. 116-260.

NPS's Appropriations Accounts

NPS had six budget accounts in FY2021, but one account—*Land Acquisition and State Assistance*—did not receive discretionary appropriations (**Figure 1** and **Table 1**). About 86% of NPS's FY2021 discretionary appropriations went to the *Operation of the National Park System* (ONPS) account to support day-to-day activities, programs, and services at park units, including resource stewardship, visitor services, park protection, facility operations and maintenance, and administrative costs. The FY2021 appropriation for the ONPS account was \$2.688 billion; the Administration had requested \$2.517 billion.

Figure 1. NPS Appropriations Accounts, FY2021



Source: Joint explanatory statement, P.L. 116-260.

Notes: ONPS = Operation of the National Park System. NR&P = National Recreation & Preservation. Figure does not show rescissions.

The next-largest amount, 7% of the regular appropriation, went to NPS's *Construction* account, which covers rehabilitation and replacement of existing facilities as well as new construction. NPS prioritizes deferred maintenance in project planning. Projects are evaluated based on department-wide criteria related to the condition of assets and their importance to the park's purposes. The account also covers other construction activities and planning. P.L. 116-260 appropriated \$223.9 million for the NPS Construction account for FY2021; the Administration's request was \$192.6 million.

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

Account	FY2020 Enacted (P.L. 116-94)	FY2021 Request	House-Passed H.R. 7608	Senate Comm. Draft	P.L. 116-260	% Change FY2020-FY2021
Operation of the Nat'l. Park System	2,577.0	2,516.7	2,776.6	2,648.6	2,688.3	+4%
Construction	389.3	192.6	223.9	249.0	223.9	-42%
Land Acquisition and State Assistance	206.1	8.6	-2.0 ^a	-2.0 ^a	-23.0 ^a	-111%
Historic Preservation Fund	118.7	40.7	136.4	138.0	144.3	+22%
Nat'l. Recreation and Preservation	71.2	33.9	74.3	74.0	74.2	+4%
Centennial Challenge	15.0	0	15.0	15.0	15.0	—
Total	3,377.3	2,792.6	3,224.3	3,122.3	3,122.7	-8%

Sources: Joint explanatory statement for P.L. 116-260, data from House Committee on Appropriations, and NPS FY2021 budget request. Totals may not sum precisely due to rounding.

- a. For the Land Acquisition and State Assistance account, the legislation provided no new funding and contained a rescission. In past years, this account was supported by funding from the LWCF, which was made mandatory spending by the GAOA (see above).

About 5% of the FY2021 discretionary appropriations were for the *Historic Preservation Fund* (HPF) account. The HPF was established by 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. P.L. 116-260 provided \$144.3 million for FY2021, primarily for NPS formula grants to state and tribal historic preservation offices to preserve cultural and historical assets and sites. Portions of the total also were for competitive grant programs, historically black colleges and universities, and historic revitalization, as well as the Save America's Treasures program (which preserves nationally significant sites, structures, and artifacts) and sites related to the U.S. Semiquincentennial (the observance of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States). The Administration had requested \$40.7 million overall for the HPF account.

The *National Recreation and Preservation* (NR&P) account received about 2% of the FY2021 total discretionary appropriations. This 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 FY2021 appropriation for the NR&P account was \$74.2 million, of which \$23.9 million was for national heritage areas. The Administration had requested \$33.9 million for the account, of which \$0.4 million would have been for national heritage areas.

Less than 1% of the FY2021 appropriation went to the *Centennial Challenge* account, to support the National Park

Centennial Challenge Fund. Authorized by Congress in 2016 (54 U.S.C. §103501), 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 projects are prioritized. The FY2021 appropriation for the account was \$15.0 million; the Administration had requested no discretionary funding. The fund also receives offsetting collections from the sale of senior passes under the Federal Lands Recreational Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §6801).

In past years, NPS's *Land Acquisition and State Assistance* (LASA) account consisted of discretionary appropriations from the LWCF, the primary funding source for the federal land management agencies to acquire lands. The account covered NPS's own acquisitions—typically nonfederal “inholdings” inside the boundaries of national park units—and NPS grants to states for outdoor recreation needs. In August 2020, the GAOA made all funding from the LWCF mandatory spending. The discretionary account received no funding for FY2021 and had a \$23.0 million rescission. Prior to enactment of the GAOA, the Administration had requested \$8.6 million for the account.

For More Information

For more information, see CRS Report R42757, *National Park Service Appropriations: Ten-Year Trends*; and CRS Report R46519, *Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies: Overview of FY2021 Appropriations*.

Laura B. Comay, Dep Asst Dir/Spec

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