

June 22, 2022

Forest Service: FY2023 Appropriations

The Forest Service (FS) is responsible for managing 193 million acres of land in the National Forest System (NFS); conducting forestry research; and providing assistance to state, local, private, and international forest owners. FS is an agency within the Department of Agriculture, but it receives discretionary appropriations through the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Congress appropriated \$10.847 billion in total FY2022 discretionary appropriations for FS (see **Table 1** and **Figure 1**), reflecting regular-enacted funding of \$5.700 billion, \$2.120 billion provided pursuant to the wildfire adjustment, and \$3.026 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations. For more information, see CRS In Focus IF11974, *Forest Service: FY2022 Appropriations*.

FY2023 Appropriations

Budget Request

The Biden Administration requested \$8.951 billion in total FY2023 discretionary appropriations for FS (see **Table 1**). Not including supplemental appropriations, this amount would be an increase of \$1.131 billion (14%) from FY2022 enacted appropriations.

FS also estimated \$1.249 billion in mandatory appropriations and transfers for FS for FY2023, the same amount as estimated for FY2022. These mandatory appropriations and transfers are derived from and used for

various sources and purposes, including land acquisition funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; 54 U.S.C. §200301). The LWCF funding was discretionary through FY2020 but was made mandatory beginning in FY2021 in the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-152). FS estimates \$218.2 million in mandatory funding from LWCF for FY2023. GAOA also authorized a transfer of mandatory appropriations from the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) to FS. FS estimates \$285.0 million in mandatory funding from the LRF for FY2023. For more information, see CRS In Focus IF11636, *The Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152)*.

Supplemental Appropriations

P.L. 117-43 contained \$1.360 billion in emergency-designated supplemental funding for FY2022 for FS for disaster relief. In addition, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58, Division J, Title VI) provided FS with \$5.447 billion in emergency-designated supplemental appropriations in total from FY2022 through FY2026. For FY2022, IIJA provided \$1.666 billion to several FS accounts for ecosystem restoration and wildfire risk reduction purposes. For FY2023 and each fiscal year thereafter, IIJA provides for \$945.2 million in supplemental appropriations (see **Table 1**). The FY2023 spending plan for these funds is available as an appendix to FS's FY2023 Budget Justification.

Table 1. Forest Service (FS) Discretionary Appropriations, by Account (\$ in millions)

Account	FY2022			FY2023	
	Reg.	Suppl.	Total Enacted	Request	Suppl. Enacted
Wildland Fire Management (WFM)	\$2,005.1	\$552.2	\$2,557.3	\$2,678.7	\$36.0
Wildfire Adjustment	2,120.0	—	2,120.0	2,210.0	—
<i>Total WFM and Wildfire Adjustment</i>	<i>4,125.1</i>	<i>552.2</i>	<i>4,677.3</i>	<i>4,888.7</i>	<i>36.0</i>
National Forest System (NFS)	1,866.5	1,444.8	3,311.3	2,180.9	529.8
Forest Service Operations (FSO)	1,069.1	105.0	1,174.1	1,112.7	—
Forest and Rangeland Research (FRR)	296.6	27.0	323.6	317.8	2.0
State and Private Forestry (SPF)	315.2	355.4	670.6	307.0	305.4
Capital Improvement & Maintenance (CIM)	144.0	542.0	686.0	140.4	72.0
Other	3.7	—	3.7	3.7	—
Total, Without Wildfire Adjustment	5,700.3	3,026.4	8,726.6	6,741.0	945.2
Total, with Wildfire Adjustment	7,820.3	—	10,846.6	8,951.0	—

Source: CRS, with information from the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, P.L. 117-103, P.L. 117-43, and P.L. 117-58.

Notes: Reg. reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 117-103. Suppl. reflects supplemental appropriations provided in P.L. 117-43 (FY2022 only) and P.L. 117-58 (FY2022 and FY2023). Figures reflect rescissions, cancellations, and deferrals. Column totals may not add due to rounding.

Forest Service Appropriation Accounts

FS has several discretionary appropriations accounts, discussed below in order of decreasing requested funding.

Wildland Fire Management

The largest share of FS appropriations generally goes to the Wildland Fire Management (WFM) account. In addition to salaries and expenses, the WFM appropriation funds two programs: preparedness and suppression. Appropriations for preparedness are used to support efforts that assist with fire prevention and detection, equipment, and training. Appropriations for suppression are used primarily for wildfire response, which includes aviation asset operations, incident support functions, and resources for postfire analysis and recovery.

Wildfire Adjustment/Wildfire Funding Fix

Starting in FY2020, additional funds for suppression operations are available to FS (and the Department of the Interior) pursuant to the wildfire adjustment, a budgetary mechanism established in P.L. 115-141 (Division O, §102(a)), commonly referred to as the *wildfire funding fix*. This mechanism allows Congress to provide additional funding above a specified baseline for wildfire suppression through an adjustment to the limit on total discretionary spending. The baseline is the 10-year suppression obligation average, as reported in FY2015 (\$1.011 billion for FS). The maximum amount available pursuant to the adjustment is \$2.210 billion for FS in FY2023 and will increase annually as specified in statute. The wildfire adjustment is available annually through FY2027.

National Forest System

The NFS account funds activities related to the management of national forests and grasslands. These activities include planning, recreation, grazing, timber production, watershed protection, wildlife management, and law enforcement, among others.

Forest Service Operations

The Forest Service Operations (FSO) account funds certain fixed costs and administrative expenses related to facilities maintenance and leasing, information technology, and other agency-wide organizational services. This account was established in FY2021.

Forest and Rangeland Research

The Forest and Rangeland Research (FRR) account funds research and development efforts to provide scientific information and new technologies to support sustainable forest and rangeland management. FRR funds the Forest Inventory and Analysis program, which is a continuous census of U.S. forest resources.

State and Private Forestry

The State and Private Forestry (SPF) account funds programs that provide assistance to nonfederal forest owners. Several of these programs are implemented through state forestry agencies.

Capital Improvement and Maintenance

The Capital Improvement and Maintenance (CIM) account funds FS efforts to provide and maintain facilities, roads,

trails, and other infrastructure needs across the NFS. It includes funding to address a backlog of deferred maintenance (DM). Starting in FY2021, FS receives additional funding to address DM through mandatory transfers from the LRF.

Other

“Other” includes several smaller appropriations accounts for the Range Betterment Fund; gifts, donations, and bequests for research; management of national forest lands for subsistence uses; and administration of communication site authorizations. This category also includes funding to complete land acquisitions and exchanges as authorized by specified laws, referred to as *special acts*.

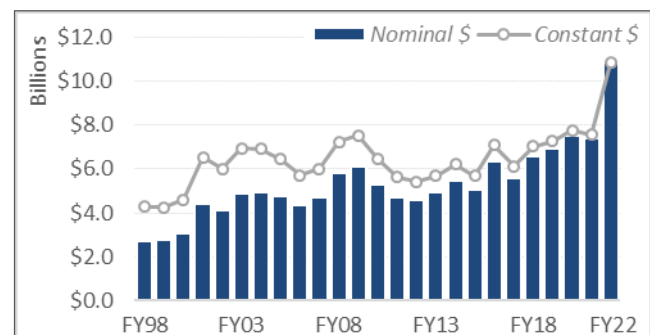
Issues for Congress

For FY2023, issues for Congress included determining the amount of funding to provide FS accounts and activities and the terms and conditions of such funding, as well as whether to enact related Biden Administration proposals.

Total Funding

FS’s discretionary funding fluctuates annually but increased substantially in FY2022 to its highest level to date. (See **Figure 1** for FS discretionary appropriations over the previous 25 years.) This increased funding level may enable FS to pursue many agency objectives, such as increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration activities. However, it may take several years for FS to demonstrate whether the funding is resulting in any measurable outcomes. This is in part due to the slow pace of forest management activities generally but also may be attributable to other factors.

Figure 1. FS Discretionary Appropriations, FY1998-FY2022



Source: CRS.

Notes: Figures are adjusted to constant FY2022 dollars using the Office of Management and Budget’s GDP Chained Price Index.

Budgetary Changes

FS’s budgetary structure has changed significantly since FY2020, and these budgetary changes have altered how FS funding is provided and reported. These changes may improve congressional oversight moving forward but may make examining funding trends over time at the account or program level more challenging. For FY2023, FS is requesting additional changes, including moving funding for the Hazardous Fuels program from the NFS account back to the WFM account.

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