

September 30, 2022

# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: FY2023 Appropriations

## Introduction

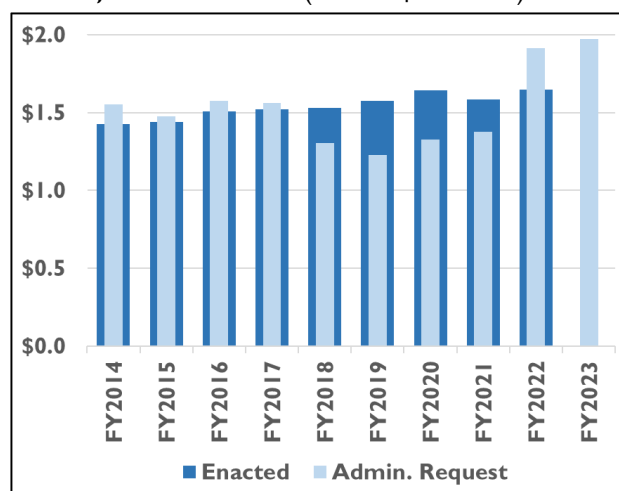
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), an agency within the Department of the Interior (DOI), has a mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. Congress funds FWS through discretionary and mandatory appropriations. FWS discretionary appropriations typically are included in the annual Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. Discretionary appropriations fund many activities related to the agency's mission, such as resource management and conservation, construction projects, and payments and grants to states and other parties. This In Focus pertains primarily to annual discretionary funding for FWS for FY2023.

## FWS Discretionary Appropriations

From FY2014 to FY2022, FWS received \$1.54 billion annually, on average, in discretionary funding (**Figure 1**). For FY2023, the Administration requested \$1.97 billion in discretionary funding (**Table 1**). This would be an increase of \$326.4 million (19.8%) over the FY2022 enacted amount of \$1.65 billion in P.L. 117-103, Division G, which provided discretionary appropriations across eight accounts for FWS. The FY2023 requested level is higher than the requested or enacted level (in nominal dollars) for any year from FY2014 to FY2022. For FY2023, the House-passed bill, H.R. 8294, Division E, would appropriate \$1.88 billion for FWS, an increase of \$230.8 million (14.0%) over the FY2022 enacted level and \$95.6 million (4.8%) less than

the Administration's FY2023 request. The Senate-introduced bill, S. 4686, would appropriate \$1.84 billion for FWS in FY2023, \$192.4 million (11.7%) above the FY2022 enacted level and \$134.0 million (6.8%) below the FY2023 request. There is no Senate-passed bill as of the date on this In Focus.

**Figure 1. FWS Discretionary Funding: Requested and Enacted, FY2014-FY2023** (nominal \$ in billions)



**Sources:** CRS; data from FWS budget justifications and House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.

**Table 1. Discretionary Funding by Account for FWS**  
(nominal \$ in millions)

| Account   | FY2022 Enacted    | FY2023 Admin.    | FY2023 H.R. 8294 | FY2023 S. 4686    |
|---|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Resource Management                                       | \$1,451.5         | \$1,746.1        | \$1,649.8        | \$1,603.8         |
| Construction  | 11.6 <sup>a</sup> | 46.4             | 32.9             | 46.4 <sup>b</sup> |
| Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund          | 23.1 <sup>a</sup> | 23.7             | 24.6             | 24.1              |
| National Wildlife Refuge Fund                             | 13.2              | —                | 13.2             | 13.2              |
| North American Wetlands Conservation Fund                 | 48.5              | 46.5             | 50.0             | 48.5              |
| Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund              | 5.0               | 7.9              | 5.1              | 5.5               |
| Multinational Species Conservation Fund                   | 20.0              | 19.0             | 25.5             | 20.0              |
| State and Tribal Wildlife Grants                          | 72.6              | 82.4             | 75.4             | 76.5              |
| <b>Total</b> (may differ from column sum due to rounding) | <b>\$1,645.6</b>  | <b>\$1,972.0</b> | <b>\$1,876.4</b> | <b>\$1,838.1</b>  |

**Sources:** CRS; data from House and Senate Committees on Appropriations.

a. This figure includes a rescission/cancellation of unobligated balances.

b. This figure does not include the \$63.1 million in emergency funding included in Title V of S. 4686 in response to natural disasters.

## Resource Management Account

The Resource Management account comprises the majority of the FWS discretionary appropriations. For FY2023, the Administration, House-passed, and Senate-introduced bills

supported varying increases over the FY2022 enacted level for this account of \$294.6 million (20.3%), \$198.2 million (13.7%), and \$152.3 million (10.5%), respectively (**Table 2**).

**Table 2. Resource Management Account for FWS**

(nominal \$ in millions)

| Activity                           | FY2022<br>Enacted | FY2023<br>Admin  | H.R.<br>8294     | S. 4686          |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Ecological Services                | \$277.4           | \$356.2          | \$354.8          | \$312.5          |
| Habitat Conservation               | 71.3              | 83.4             | 84.4             | 74.8             |
| National Wildlife Refuge System    | 518.8             | 597.9            | 573.6            | 550.0            |
| Conservation and Enforcement       | 164.7             | 201.4            | 185.2            | 178.5            |
| Fish and Aquatic Conservation      | 220.8             | 260.4            | 235.2            | 246.0            |
| Cooperative Landscape Conservation | 12.8              | 19.0             | — <sup>a</sup>   | 13.2             |
| Science Support                    | 23.2              | 38.5             | 49.6             | 29.4             |
| General Operations                 | 155.6             | 188.4            | 166.9            | 172.7            |
| Stewardship Priorities             | 6.8               | —                | —                | 25.6             |
| <b>Activities Total</b>            | <b>\$1,451.5</b>  | <b>\$1,745.1</b> | <b>\$1,649.8</b> | <b>\$1,602.8</b> |
| Damage Recovery Provision          | —                 | 1.0              | —                | 1.0              |
| <b>Account Total</b>               | <b>\$1,451.5</b>  | <b>\$1,746.1</b> | <b>\$1,649.8</b> | <b>\$1,603.8</b> |

**Sources:** CRS; data from House and Senate Committees on Appropriations. Totals may differ from column sum due to rounding.

a. Merged with Science Support activity.

### Other FWS Appropriations Accounts

In FY2022, \$194.1 million in discretionary funding was appropriated for seven other accounts that support construction, conservation activities, financial and technical assistance, and revenue sharing (Table 1). For FY2023, the Administration, House-passed bill, and Senate-introduced bill supported increased funding over the FY2022 levels for these accounts—\$31.8 million (16.4%), \$32.6 million (16.8%), and \$40.1 million (20.7%), respectively.

### FWS Mandatory Appropriations

FWS also receives mandatory appropriations primarily for states to fund fish and wildlife conservation and recreation. The Administration's FY2023 budget request estimated \$1.77 billion in mandatory appropriations for FWS programs in FY2023. This total does not include an estimated \$95.0 million for FWS deferred maintenance.

### Supplemental Funding for FWS in FY2023

FWS received additional funding for FY2023 under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58) and the so-called Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA; P.L. 117-169). The IIJA and the IRA provided additional appropriations to FWS in FY2022 and future years. Enacted in 2021, the IIJA provided emergency appropriations that broadly support infrastructure and other activities for many federal agencies, including FWS. The IIJA appropriated \$91.0 million annually from FY2022 to FY2026 to FWS for Resource Management account activities, including fish and wildlife passage restoration and regional ecosystem restoration. The IIJA also authorized appropriations through

the Federal Lands Transportation Program, with \$36.0 million for FWS annually from FY2022 to FY2026.

The 2022 IRA broadly addressed climate, health care, and tax issues. The law appropriated \$250.0 million in FY2022 mandatory appropriations for FWS. Of this amount, \$125.0 million was for Endangered Species Act (ESA) recovery plan development and implementation; \$121.3 million was for rebuilding and restoring National Wildlife Refuge System units and state wildlife management areas by addressing invasive species and the effects of weather events and by increasing resiliency to weather events; and \$3.8 million was for associated administrative expenses.

### Issues for Congress

For FY2023, Congress might consider the amounts, terms, and conditions of funding for FWS accounts and activities, as well as whether to enact related Administration proposals. For instance, the House-passed bill would merge the Cooperative Landscape Conservation (CLC) activity into the Science Support activity. The House Appropriations Committee recommended this merger to reflect a shift in how FWS approaches and coordinates landscape-scale conservation. CLC activity funding previously went to 22 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) throughout the country whose structure and governance were set by FWS. FWS is shifting away from LCCs to support a wider range of landscape conservation partnerships with varying structures and more locally led conservation programs.

Other issues Congress may consider center on optimal funding levels for particular activities, such as ESA-related activities in FY2023. The House-passed bill would provide \$354.8 million to the Ecological Services activity, which covers administration of ESA and related activities. This amount includes funding for listing species under ESA, planning and consultation on listed species, and conservation and recovery of ESA-listed and other species. This would be an increase of \$77.4 million (27.9%) over the FY2022 enacted level. The Senate-introduced bill would provide \$312.5 million for Ecological Services, a \$35.1 million (12.6%) increase over the FY2022 enacted level. Some ESA activities received supplemental funding from the IIJA and the IRA in FY2022.

Congress also might consider potential limitations on some FWS funding, such as for issuing permits for importing hunting trophies. The House-passed bill would prohibit the use of funds to issue permits for importing sport-hunted trophies of elephants and lions killed in Tanzania, Zambia, or Zimbabwe. The House Appropriations Committee expressed concern that FWS's current case-by-case analysis of permits may be inadequate for determining countries' safeguards to protect species from poaching. Some Members opposed to this provision asserted that it would discourage hunting in Africa and lead to a loss of revenue for conserving species that is generated from licensed and regulated hunting.

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