



Updated October 11, 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.

FS received \$10.847 billion in total FY2022 discretionary appropriations (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. Of the total FY2022 emergency supplemental funding, P.L. 117-43 provided \$1.360 billion for disaster relief and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58, Division J, Title VI) provided \$1.666 billion for ecosystem restoration and wildfire risk reduction purposes. FS also received another \$5.0 billion in mandatory appropriations through P.L. 117-169, popularly known as the Inflation Reduction Act. For more information, see CRS In Focus IF11974, *Forest Service: FY2022 Appropriations*.

FY2023 Appropriations

Budget Request

The Biden Administration requested \$8.946 billion in total FY2023 discretionary appropriations for FS (see **Table 1**).

Not including supplemental appropriations, this amount would be an increase of \$1.126 billion (14%) from FY2022 enacted appropriations. FS estimated \$1.249 billion in mandatory appropriations and transfers for FY2023, the same amount as estimated for FY2022.

Legislative Activity

On July 20, 2022, the House passed H.R. 8294, an omnibus appropriations measure with \$8.842 billion in funding for FS in Division E (see **Table 1**). On July 28, 2022, S. 4686 was introduced, reflecting a Senate Appropriations Committee majority draft text with \$8.596 billion for FS. Regular FY2023 appropriations were not enacted by the start of the fiscal year, but a continuing resolution provides funding at the FY2022 levels through December 16, 2022 (P.L. 117-180).

Supplemental Appropriations

The IIJA provided FS with \$5.447 billion in emergency-designated supplemental appropriations in total from FY2022 through FY2026. For FY2023 and each fiscal year thereafter, IIJA provided 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			Suppl. Enacted
	Enacted	Request	H-Passed H.R. 8294	S-Introduced S. 4686	
Wildland Fire Management (WFM)	\$2,005.1	\$2,678.7	\$2,678.7	\$2,604.7	\$36.0
Wildfire Adjustment	2,120.0	2,210.0	2,210.0	2,210.0	—
<i>Total WFM and Wildfire Adjustment</i>	<i>4,125.1</i>	<i>4,888.7</i>	<i>4,888.7</i>	<i>4,814.7</i>	<i>36.0</i>
National Forest System (NFS)	1,866.5	2,175.9	1,997.7	1,899.7	529.8
Forest Service Operations (FSO)	1,069.1	1,112.7	1,112.7	1,112.7	—
Forest and Rangeland Research (FRR)	296.6	317.8	360.4	302.8	2.0
State and Private Forestry (SPF)	315.2	307.0	332.6	323.2	305.4
Capital Improvement & Maintenance (CIM)	144.0	140.4	146.2	139.0	72.0
Other	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	—
Total, Without Wildfire Adjustment	5,700.3	6,736.00	6,631.8	6,385.8	945.2
Total, with Wildfire Adjustment	7,820.3	8,946.0	8,841.8	8,595.8	—
FY2022 Supplemental Funding	3,026.4	—	—	—	—

Source: CRS, with information from the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and other budget documents.

Notes: FY2022 Supplemental Funding reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 117-43 and P.L. 117-58. FY2023 Suppl. Enacted reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 117-58. 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 National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund.

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*.

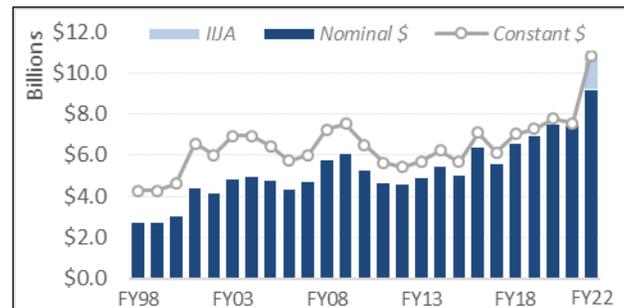
Issues for Congress

For FY2023, issues for Congress include 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, in part due to supplemental appropriations provided through IJA (see **Figure 1**). 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 requested additional changes, including moving funding for the Hazardous Fuels program from the NFS account back to the WFM account. The House-passed and Senate-introduced bills for FY2023 supported this change.

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