

Updated February 10, 2023

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. The FS also receives mandatory appropriations, estimated by the agency at \$1.25 billion for FY2023 (including transfers).

FY2023 Appropriations

Budget Request

The Biden Administration requested \$8.95 billion in total FY2023 discretionary appropriations for FS (see **Table 1**). This amount would have been an increase of \$1.13 billion (14%) from FY2022 regular enacted appropriations.

FY2023 Enacted Appropriations

Congress appropriated \$10.08 billion in total FY2023 discretionary appropriations for FS, reflecting regular enacted funding of \$4.86 billion, \$2.21 billion provided pursuant to a wildfire adjustment (see below), and \$3.00 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations (see

Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 1). Combined, the regular enacted funding and the wildfire adjustment total \$7.07 billion, which reflects a decrease of \$746.4 million from FY2022 appropriations. The regular enacted funding and wildfire adjustment were provided in P.L. 117-328, Division G.

The FY2023 emergency-designated supplemental appropriations were provided in two laws (see **Table 2**). First, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, P.L. 117-58, Division J) provided FS with \$5.45 billion in total from FY2022 through FY2026. For FY2023 (and each fiscal year thereafter), the portion was \$945.2 million in advance emergency appropriations. Second, the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328, Division N) provided \$510.0 million to several FS accounts for expenses related to wildfires, hurricanes, and other natural disasters in previous years and \$1.55 billion to FS for wildfire suppression purposes.

Regular FY2023 appropriations were not enacted by the start of the fiscal year, but continuing resolutions provided funding at the FY2022 levels until enactment of full year appropriations on December 29, 2022.

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

| Account | FY2023 | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | FY2022 | Request | H-Passed H.R. 8294 | S- Intro. S. 4686 | Enacted | | |
| | | | | | Reg. | Suppl. | Total |
| Wildland Fire Management (WFM) | \$2,005.1 | \$2,678.7 | \$2,678.7 | \$2,604.7 | \$946.0 | \$1,582.0 | \$2,528.0 |
| Wildfire Adjustment | 2,120.0 | 2,210.0 | 2,210.0 | 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>3,156.0</i> | <i>1,582.0</i> | <i>4,738.0</i> |
| National Forest System (NFS) | 1,866.5 | 2,175.9 | 1,997.7 | 1,899.7 | 1,974.4 | 739.8 | 2,714.2 |
| Forest Service Operations (FSO) | 1,069.1 | 1,112.7 | 1,112.7 | 1,112.7 | 1,152.7 | — | 1,152.7 |
| State and Private Forestry (SPF) | 315.2 | 307.0 | 332.6 | 323.2 | 337.8 | 453.4 | 791.1 |
| Capital Improvement & Maintenance (CIM) | 144.0 | 140.4 | 146.2 | 139.0 | 142.0 | 222.0 | 364.0 |
| Forest and Rangeland Research (FRR) | 296.6 | 317.8 | 360.4 | 302.8 | 307.3 | 4.0 | 311.3 |
| Other | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | — | 3.7 |
| FY2022 Supplemental Funding | 3,026.4 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total, Without Wildfire Adjustment | 8,726.7 | 6,736.0 | 6,631.8 | 6,385.8 | 4,863.8 | 3,001.2 | 7,865.0 |
| Total, with Wildfire Adjustment | 10,846.7 | 8,946.0 | 8,841.8 | 8,595.8 | 7,073.8 | — | 10,075.0 |

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

Notes: FY2022 Supplemental Funding reflects emergency appropriations provided in P.L. 117-43 and P.L. 117-58. FY2023 Reg. Enacted reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 117-328, Division G. FY2023 Suppl. Enacted reflects emergency appropriations provided in P.L. 117-58 and P.L. 117-328, Division N. Figures reflect rescissions, cancellations, and deferrals. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Table 2. FS FY2023 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations, by Account (\$ in millions)

| Account | P.L. 117-58 | P.L. 117-328 |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| WFM | \$36.0 | \$1,546.0 |
| NFS | 529.8 | 210.0 |
| SPF | 305.4 | 148.0 |
| CI&M | 72.0 | 150.0 |
| FRR | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| Total | 945.2 | 2,056.0 |

Sources: P.L. 117-58, Division J, and P.L. 117-328, Division N.

Forest Service Appropriation Accounts

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

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). FS receives additional funding to address DM through mandatory transfers from the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund.

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.

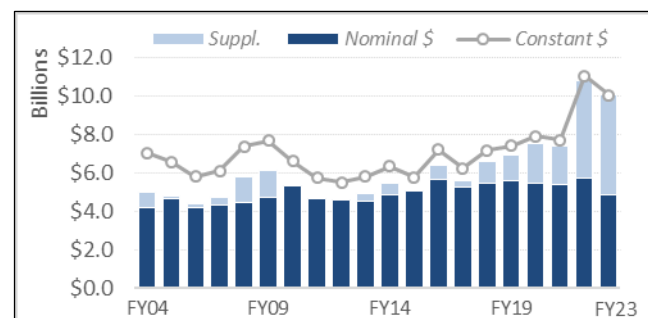
Other

“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*.

20 Years of Forest Service 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 the 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 the impacts of the additional funding—if any—to be measurable. This may be due to the slow pace of forest management activities generally; the time needed to plan, prioritize, and deploy funding to projects across the NFS; and other factors.

Figure 1. FS Discretionary Appropriations, FY2004-FY2023



Source: CRS.

Notes: Figures are adjusted to constant FY2023 dollars using the Office of Management and Budget's GDP Chained Price Index.

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