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Bureau of Land Management: FY2023 Appropriations

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in the Department of the Interior (DOI), manages 244 million acres of federal land, nearly all in the West. Under its multiple-use mission, BLM manages lands for diverse purposes, including livestock grazing, energy development, recreation, and conservation. The agency also administers onshore federal energy and mineral resources generally.

P.L. 117-328, Division G, enacted on December 29, 2022, contained FY2023 regular appropriations for BLM of \$1,494.0 million. From the start of FY2023 on October 1, 2022, until regular appropriations were enacted, BLM received continuing appropriations at FY2022 levels.

The FY2023 BLM appropriation of \$1,494.0 million was 6% over the FY2022 regular appropriation of \$1,410.9 million in P.L. 117-103, Division G. (This FY2022 total does not include emergency supplemental appropriations of \$1.2 million in P.L. 117-43 to address natural disasters.) The FY2023 enacted appropriation was less than the amounts requested by the President, passed by the House, and included in S. 4686 as introduced. President Biden requested \$1,561.4 million for BLM. On July 1, 2022, the House Appropriations Committee reported H.R. 8262 (H.Rept. 117-400), with \$1,545.9 million for BLM for FY2023. On July 20, 2022, the House passed H.R. 8294, an omnibus appropriations measure with the same amount (in Division E). On July 28, 2022, the Senate Appropriations Committee Chair released a Senate Committee Majority Draft bill and draft explanatory statement with \$1,536.4 million for BLM for FY2023. On the same day, S. 4686 was introduced reflecting the draft text.

BLM discretionary appropriations are provided in Title I of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations laws. BLM also receives a portion of the appropriations to DOI for wildland fire management. For further information, see CRS In Focus IF12142, *Funding for Wildfire Management: FY2023 Appropriations for Forest Service and Department of the Interior*. Mandatory (permanent) appropriations are provided to BLM under various statutes within the jurisdiction of authorizing committees. DOI estimated BLM mandatory appropriations at \$599.2 million for FY2023. This total does not include \$95.0 million for BLM *deferred maintenance* (DM, discussed below).

For FY2023, issues for Congress included determining the amount of funding for BLM accounts and activities and the terms and conditions of such funding, as well as whether to enact related Biden Administration proposals. Congress could conduct oversight of expenditures as well as consider additional funding (e.g., for any emergency that arises).

Discretionary Appropriations Accounts

For each BLM discretionary funding account, **Table 1** shows FY2022 enacted amounts and FY2023 amounts requested by the Biden Administration, passed by the House, included in S. 4686 as introduced, and enacted.

Management of Lands and Resources (MLR). The largest account—MLR—funds diverse programs including rangelands, wild horses and burros, wildlife and aquatic habitat, recreation, energy and minerals, law enforcement, facility maintenance, and national conservation lands. This account also funds workforce and organizational support, including financial and information technology management. The FY2023 appropriations law included \$1,337.7 million for this account—6% over FY2022.

Although the FY2023 appropriation for the account was higher than the FY2022 level, the President's FY2023 request, House, and Senate bill supported higher increases overall for the account and for most of its programs. The Administration expressed that increases proposed for FY2023 were intended to support several goals. These goals included fostering conservation of 30% of the nation's lands and waters by 2030; addressing climate change, including through improvements in land health and resiliency and deployment of clean energy generation and transmission projects; and remediating and reclaiming abandoned wells and mine sites, to improve human health, safety, and the environment and to create jobs. (*Fiscal Year 2023, The Interior Budget in Brief*, p. BLM-1). A few programs that received increases are highlighted below.

There are 82,384 wild horses and burros on BLM lands, more than triple the appropriate management level—the level that BLM determined the range can support—of 26,785. BLM manages an additional 62,398 animals off-range. For wild horse and burro management, the FY2023 appropriation was \$147.9 million, 8% over FY2022. The Administration, House, and Senate bill had sought higher amounts, with increases for administering fertility control, removing animals from the range, and caring for animals in long-term pasture facilities, among other purposes.

For wildlife and aquatic habitat management, the FY2023 appropriation was \$207.2 million, 5% over FY2022. The explanatory statement on the FY2023 enacted bill expressed an expectation that BLM would use funding for invasive species, sage grouse habitat, and the National Seed Strategy, among other purposes. The Administration, House, and Senate bill had sought higher amounts, with increases intended for addressing climate change, water quantity and quality, landscape connectivity and function, and adaptive management and for advancing the President's Civilian Climate Corps proposal, among other purposes.

For energy and minerals management, the FY2023 appropriation was \$234.3 million, 8% over FY2022. The FY2023 appropriation included \$41.0 million for renewable energy, a 32% increase over FY2022, and \$163.3 million for oil and gas, a 4% increase over FY2022. Oil and gas management includes remediation of legacy wells in Alaska. The Administration, House, and Senate bill had sought higher funding for energy and minerals for FY2023.

Not all MLR programs received increased funding for FY2023. For instance, the appropriation for FY2023 was lower than FY2022 for programs including cultural resources, recreation, and DM. However, under the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-152), BLM receives mandatory appropriations for DM. (See below.)

The FY2023 appropriations law contained provisions related to MLR programs, including the following. Section 417 prohibited funding for the destruction of healthy wild horses and burros or for sales of animals that result in processing into commercial products. Section 421 extended, to October 1, 2024, the authority in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §§6801 et seq.) for BLM (and other agencies) to charge, collect, and use fees for recreation on agency lands. (BLM estimated \$28.0 million in FY2023 fee collections.) Some provisions supported by the Administration, House, and Senate bill were not included in the law (e.g., to allow BLM to collect and retain onshore oil and gas inspection fees to cover inspection costs, similar to offshore energy operations).

Oregon and California Grant Lands. This account funds management of more than 2 million acres of forested lands in Western Oregon, primarily for timber production. The FY2023 appropriations law included \$120.3 million for this account—3% over FY2022. For FY2023, the President’s request, House, and Senate bill supported higher increases.

Range Improvements. The Range Improvements account funds rehabilitation, protection, and improvement of BLM rangelands. The FY2023 appropriations law included \$10.0 million for this account, the same as enacted for FY2022 and contained in the FY2023 President’s request, House,

and Senate bill. Under law, 50% of grazing fees collected on BLM lands or \$10.0 million—whichever is greater—is credited to a Range Improvement Fund. Through the Range Improvements account, BLM typically receives an annual appropriation of \$10.0 million for the fund.

Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures. This account allows BLM to use monies paid to the agency for certain activities, such as processing rights-of-way and energy and mineral authorizations. The FY2023 estimate was \$30.0 million, offset by collections, for a net of \$0. For FY2023, the Administration, House, and Senate bill had the same amount, as did the FY2022 appropriations law.

Miscellaneous Trust Funds. This account appropriates contributions made to BLM (e.g., from individuals, businesses, and states). The FY2023 enacted amount was \$26.0 million. This amount was the same as the FY2023 Administration requested, House-passed, and Senate bill levels as well as the FY2022 enacted level.

Selected Mandatory Appropriations

Deferred Maintenance. Under the GAOA, BLM receives mandatory appropriations for DM through the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund. BLM’s appropriation is about \$95.0 million annually (assuming maximum revenue to the fund). The explanatory statement on the FY2023 enacted bill set out an allocation of \$95.2 million among 14 specific projects and other purposes (e.g., program administration). BLM estimated its DM at \$4.4 billion in FY2021 (the most recent available), about four times the FY2019 estimate (\$1.1 billion). The increase is largely due to changes in estimation methods.

Land Acquisition. BLM typically receives appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to acquire lands. Under the GAOA, LWCF programs receive mandatory appropriations. The explanatory statement on the FY2023 enacted bill set out an allocation of \$70.1 million among several specific projects and other purposes (e.g., acquisitions that foster recreational access). The mandatory appropriation for FY2022 was \$67.4 million.

Table 1. BLM Discretionary Appropriations by Account (dollars in millions)

Account	FY2022 Enacted P.L. 117-103	FY2023 Requested	FY2023 H.R. 8294 House Passed	FY2023 S. 4686 Introduced	FY2023 Enacted P.L. 117-328
Management of Lands and Resources	\$1,257.6	\$1,396.7	\$1,384.8	\$1,371.7	\$1,337.7
Oregon and California Grant Lands	117.3	128.7	125.0	128.7	120.3
Range Improvements	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Trust Funds	26.0	26.0	26.0	26.0	26.0
Total BLM	\$1,410.9	\$1,561.4	\$1,545.9	\$1,536.4	\$1,494.0

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

Notes: *The Interior Budget in Brief* for FY2023 shows a higher requested total largely due to differences in rescissions and offsetting collections. For Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures, the \$0 amounts are a result of an appropriation matched by offsetting fees. On July 28, 2022, the Senate Appropriations Committee Chair released the Senate Committee Majority Draft. On the same day, S. 4686 was introduced reflecting the draft text. Column figures may not sum to totals shown due to rounding.

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