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Forest Service: FY2024 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. The FS is an agency within the Department of Agriculture, but it receives discretionary appropriations through the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

FY2024 Appropriations

Budget Request

The Biden Administration requested \$9.73 billion in total FY2024 discretionary appropriations for the FS (see **Table 1**). This amount would have been an increase of \$2.66 billion (38%) from FY2023 regular enacted appropriations.

FY2024 Enacted Appropriations

Congress appropriated \$9.32 billion in total FY2024 discretionary appropriations for the FS. This total reflects regular enacted funding of \$6.07 billion, \$2.30 billion provided pursuant to a wildfire adjustment, and \$945.2 million in additional appropriations. (See **Table 1** and **Figure 1**.)

Combined, the regular enacted funding and the wildfire adjustment total \$8.37 billion, which reflects an increase of \$1.30 billion from FY2023 appropriations. The \$8.37 billion in regular enacted funding and wildfire adjustment were provided in P.L. 118-42, Division E.

Additional FS appropriations available for FY2024 were provided in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58, Division J).

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

Account	FY2023			FY2024			
	Regular	Supplemental	Total	Request	Regular	Supplemental	Total
Wildland Fire Management (WFM)	\$946.0	\$1,582.0	\$2,528.0	\$2,970.6	\$2,312.7	\$36.0	\$2,348.7
Wildfire Adjustment	2,210.0	—	2,210.0	2,300.0	2,300.0	—	2,300.0
<i>Total WFM and Wildfire Adjustment</i>	<i>3,156.0</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>4,738.0</i>	<i>5,270.6</i>	<i>4,612.7</i>	<i>36.0</i>	<i>4,648.6</i>
National Forest System (NFS)	1,974.4	738.9	2,714.2	2,226.3	1,863.6	529.8	2,393.4
Forest Service Operations (FSO)	1,152.7	—	1,152.7	1,316.5	1,150.0	—	1,150.0
State, Private, and Tribal Forestry (SPTF)	337.8	453.4	791.1	327.7	303.3	305.4	608.7
Forest and Rangeland Research (FRR)	307.3	4.0	311.3	349.1	300.0	2.0	302.0
Capital Improvement & Maintenance (CIM)	142.0	222.0	364.0	235.0	140.1	72.0	212.1
Other	3.7	—	3.7	5.7	3.7	—	3.7
Total, Without Wildfire Adjustment	4,863.8	3,001.2	7,865.0	7,430.8	6,073.3	945.2	7,018.5
Total, with Wildfire Adjustment	7,073.8	3,001.2	10,075.0	9,730.8	8,373.3	—	9,318.5

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

Notes: FY2024 supplemental funding reflects emergency appropriations provided in P.L. 117-58. FY2024 Regular Enacted reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 118-42, Division E. FY2023 Regular Enacted reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 117-328, Division J. FY2023 Supplemental Enacted reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 117-58 and P.L. 117-328, Division N. Figures reflect rescissions, cancellations, and deferrals. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding. Prior to FY2024, the SPTF account was referred to as State and Private Forestry (SPF).

For FY2024 (and each fiscal year thereafter), the portion was \$945.2 million in advance emergency appropriations. The FS also receives mandatory appropriations, calculated by CRS using FS estimates to be \$1.40 billion for FY2024 (including transfers). Mandatory appropriations include land acquisition funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; 54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.) and mandatory transfers from the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF). Mandatory appropriations also derive from certain timber-related receipts, certain recreation revenues authorized under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (P.L. 108-447, Division J, as amended), and other sources.

Regular FY2024 appropriations were not enacted by the start of the fiscal year, but continuing resolutions provided funding at the FY2023 levels until enactment of full-year appropriations on March 9, 2024.

Forest Service Appropriation Accounts

Wildland Fire: Wildland Fire Management and the Wildfire Adjustment

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.

Starting in FY2020, additional funds for suppression operations are available to the 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)). This mechanism allows Congress to provide additional funding above a specified baseline (\$1.011 billion for the FS) for wildfire suppression through an adjustment to the limit on total discretionary spending. The maximum amount available pursuant to the adjustment is \$2.30 billion for the FS in FY2024, which is to 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, Private, and Tribal Forestry

The State, Private, and Tribal Forestry (SPTF) account funds programs that provide assistance to nonfederal forest

owners. Many of these programs are implemented through state forestry agencies. Prior to FY2024, the account was referred to as State and Private Forestry (SPF).

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.

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). The FS receives additional funding to address DM through mandatory transfers from the National Parks and Public Land LRF.

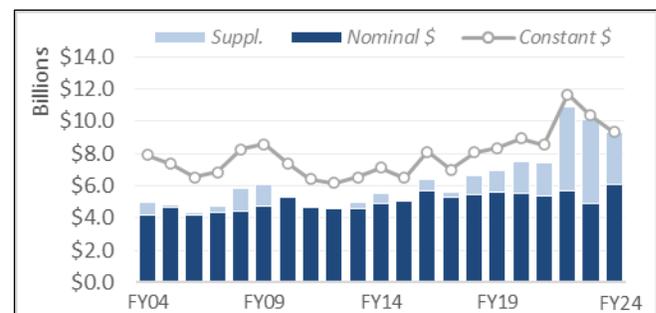
Other

“Other” includes several smaller appropriations accounts for the Range Betterment Fund; gifts, donations, and bequests for research; and management of national forest lands for subsistence uses. 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

The 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 the 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-FY2024



Source: CRS analysis of appropriations acts, accompanying explanatory statements, and departmental reporting.

Note: Figures are adjusted to constant FY2024 dollars using the Office of Management and Budget’s GDP Chained Price Index.

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