

May 8, 2023

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

For FY2023, Congress appropriated \$10.08 billion in total discretionary appropriations for FS (P.L. 117-328), 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**). For more information, see CRS In Focus IF12141, *Forest Service: FY2023 Appropriations*.

For FY2024, issues facing Congress include determining the amount of funding to provide FS accounts and activities and the terms and conditions of such funding, including whether to enact related Biden Administration proposals. Other issues relate to the FS's program implementation and progress toward forest management objectives.

FY2024 Appropriations

Budget Request

The Biden Administration requested \$9.73 billion in total FY2024 discretionary appropriations for FS (see **Table 1**).

Comparing the FY2024 request with the FY2023 regular enacted funding is complicated by the FS receiving the bulk of its wildland fire management (WFM) funding through supplemental funding in FY2023; these funds typically are provided as regular appropriations. With one exception, the FY2024 request includes increases to all FS accounts over FY2023 regular enacted funding; the request includes a decrease to the State and Private Forestry (SPF) account.

The FS also receives mandatory appropriations, estimated by the agency at around \$1.46 billion for FY2024. These mandatory appropriations are derived from and used for various sources and purposes (e.g., land acquisition funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund, deferred maintenance funding under a mandatory transfer from the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund).

Supplemental Appropriations

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 ecosystem restoration and wildfire risk reduction purposes. For FY2022, IIJA provided \$1.67 billion. Starting in FY2023 and for each fiscal year thereafter, IIJA provided for \$945.2 million in advance emergency appropriations to several FS accounts. The FY2024 spending plan for these funds is available as an appendix to FS's FY2024 budget justification.

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

Account	FY2023 Enacted		FY2024	
	Regular	Total	Request	Enacted Supplemental
Wildland Fire Management (WFM)	\$946.0	\$2,528.0	\$2,970.6	\$36.0
Wildfire Adjustment	2,210.0	2,210.0	2,300.0	—
<i>Total WFM and Wildfire Adjustment</i>	<i>3,156.0</i>	<i>4,738.0</i>	<i>5,270.6</i>	<i>36.0</i>
National Forest System (NFS)	1,974.4	2,714.2	2,226.3	529.8
Forest Service Operations (FSO)	1,152.7	1,152.7	1,316.5	—
Forest and Rangeland Research (FRR)	307.3	311.3	349.1	2.0
State and Private Forestry (SPF)	337.8	791.1	327.7	305.4
Capital Improvement & Maintenance (CIM)	142.0	364.0	235.0	72.0
Other	3.7	3.7	5.7	—
Total, Without Wildfire Adjustment	4,863.8	7,865.0	7,430.8	945.2
Total, With Wildfire Adjustment	7,073.8	10,075.0	9,730.8	945.2

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

Notes: FY2023 Enacted *Regular* reflects appropriations provided in P.L. 117-328. FY2023 Enacted *Total* reflects regular appropriations plus the emergency supplemental appropriations provided in P.L. 117-58 and P.L. 117-328 (see **Table 2** for supplemental funding by account). FY2024

Enacted Supplemental reflects emergency appropriations provided in P.L. 117-58. Figures reflect rescissions, cancellations, and deferrals. Figures may not match FS FY2024 budget documents due to different reporting approaches between FS and CRS. Totals may not add due to rounding.

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

Account	FY2023	FY2024
WFM	\$1,582.0	\$36.0
NFS	739.8	529.8
FRR	4.0	2.0
SPF	453.4	305.4
CIM	222.0	72.0
Total	3,001.2	945.2

Sources: P.L. 117-58, Division J (FY2023 and FY2024) and P.L. 117-328, Division N (FY2023 only).

Forest Service Appropriation Accounts

FS has several discretionary appropriations accounts, discussed below in decreasing order of FY2024 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 \$2.300 billion for FS in FY2024 and is set 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.

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

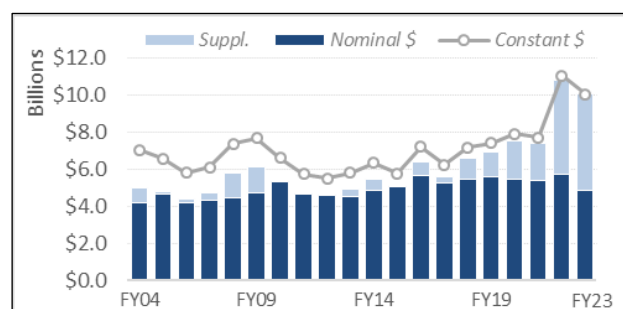
Other

“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*.

20 Years of Forest Service Funding

FS’s discretionary funding fluctuates annually. Funding increased substantially in FY2022 to its highest level to date, in part due to supplemental appropriations provided through IIJA (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.

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

Anne A. Riddle, Analyst in Natural Resources Policy

IF12396

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.