



May 8, 2019

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: FY2020 Appropriations

Introduction

Congress generally funds the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS, an agency within the Department of the Interior) in annual appropriations laws for the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Discretionary appropriations for FWS fund many of the essential functions related to the agency’s mission, namely the conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. Discretionary funding covers activities including resource management and conservation, construction projects, land acquisition, and payments and grants to states and other parties. FWS also receives mandatory appropriations, most of which are disbursed directly to states. The Administration’s FY2020 request estimates \$1.485 billion for mandatory appropriations for FWS in FY2020. The remainder of this In Focus looks at the agency’s discretionary appropriations.

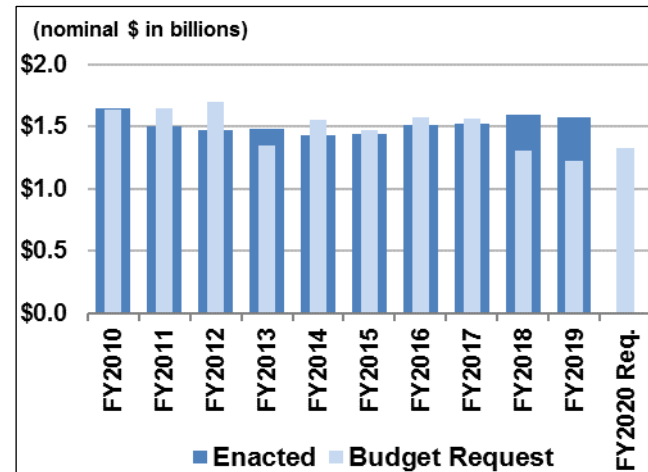
Issues for Congress include the level of discretionary funding for FWS, its distribution across agency programs, and the possible consideration of the Administration’s proposals to provide no funding for some activities. Congress also may consider FWS-related policy issues, including the creation of the Public Lands Infrastructure Fund as proposed in the Administration’s FY2020 request.

FWS Discretionary Appropriations

From FY2010 through FY2019, FWS received \$1.518 billion annually, on average, in discretionary funding. Enacted appropriations exceeded requested amounts in four years, and requested levels were higher than enacted levels

in six years (see **Figure 1**). For FY2019, P.L. 116-6 provided \$1.578 billion in discretionary appropriations. Appropriations are provided for nine accounts (**Table 1**).

Figure 1. FWS Discretionary Funding Enacted and Administration Requests, FY2010-FY2020



Sources: CRS, with data from FWS budget justifications and enacted appropriations.

For FY2020, the Administration requested \$1.328 billion in discretionary appropriations for FWS, \$250.1 million (15.9%) below the FY2019-enacted level of \$1.578 billion (**Table 1**).

Table 1. FWS Appropriations by Account, FY2019 Enacted and FY2020 Administration’s Request
(nominal \$ in millions)

Account	FY2019 Enacted		FY2020 Request	
Resource Management	1,292.1	81.9%	1,257.2	94.7%
Construction	54.1	3.4%	15.7	1.2%
Land Acquisition	65.2	4.1%	4.5	0.3%
Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund	46.0	2.9%	-31.0 ^a	-2.3%
National Wildlife Refuge Fund	13.2	0.8%	—	—
North American Wetlands Conservation Fund	42.0	2.7%	40.0	3.0%
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund	3.9	0.2%	3.9	0.3%
Multinational Species Conservation Fund	11.6	0.7%	6.0	0.5%
State and Tribal Wildlife Grants	64.6	4.1%	31.3	2.4%
Coastal Impact Assistance Program (rescission)	-15.0	-1.0%	—	—
Total	1,577.6	100.0%	1,327.6	100.0%

Sources: CRS, with data from conference report (H.Rept. 116-9) accompanying H.J.Res. 31 (P.L. 116-6) and FWS FY2020 budget justification.

a. The FY2020 Administration’s request proposes no discretionary funding for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and a \$31 million cancellation of prior-year balances.

Resource Management Account

The Resource Management (RM) account comprises the majority of the FWS discretionary budget (81.9% of the FY2019 enacted amount; **Table 1**). For FY2020, the Administration requested \$1.26 billion, \$34.9 million (2.7%) below the FY2019-enacted level of \$1.29 billion. In FY2019, the RM account provided funding for eight activities (**Table 2**). The FY2020 request did not include funding for two activities funded in FY2019—Cooperative Landscape Conservation and Science Support (**Table 3**).

Table 2. FWS Resource Management Appropriations by Activity, FY2019 Enacted and FY2020 Request
(nominal \$ in millions)

Activity	FY2019 Enacted	FY2020 Request
Ecological Services	251.8	240.0
Habitat Conservation	65.0	67.8
National Wildlife Refuge System	488.3	509.5
Conservation and Enforcement	141.3	143.3
Fish and Aquatic Conservation	167.2	155.6
Cooperative Landscape Conservation	12.5	—
Science Support	17.3	—
General Operation	148.7	140.9
Total	1,292.1	1,257.2

Sources: CRS, with data from H.Rept. 116-9 accompanying H.J.Res. 31 (P.L. 116-6) and FWS FY2020 budget justification.

Other FWS Accounts

The remaining funding is divided among eight other appropriations accounts (**Table 1**). Funding levels in the Administration’s FY2020 request are lower than the enacted levels for six accounts, and the Administration proposed no funding for two accounts (**Table 1**).

In FY2019, the Construction account received \$54.1 million in discretionary funding. These appropriations support engineering design and construction throughout FWS facilities and infrastructure through four activities: Line Item Construction Projects, Bridge and Dam Safety Programs, Nationwide Engineering Services, and Deferred Maintenance. For FY2020, the Administration requested \$15.7 million (a decrease of \$38.4 million or 71.0%; **Table 1**). The Administration’s request did not include funding for Deferred Maintenance as a separate activity for FY2020 (**Table 3**).

Funding for the Land Acquisition account is used to acquire land for recreation and conservation purposes. The Land Acquisition account received \$65.2 million in FY2019. The Administration’s FY2020 request is \$4.5 million, which includes a \$5.3 million cancellation of balances (a decrease of \$60.6 million or 93.0%; **Table 1**). The Administration did not request funding for five of the eight activities funded in FY2019 (**Table 3**).

The other six accounts fund conservation activities and financial and technical assistance programs for state, tribal, and international partners and other stakeholders (**Table 1**).

Accounts and Activities with No Requested Funding in FY2020

In its FY2020 request, the Administration did not request funding for two of FWS’s appropriations accounts—Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) and National Wildlife Refuge Fund (NWRF)—stating that funding was needed for “higher priorities” (**Table 3**). The Administration also proposed a cancellation of \$31.0 million in CESCF balances. The Administration also proposed not funding nine activities across four other accounts that received funding in FY2019 (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Activities with No Requested Funding in FY2020 Request with FY2019 Enacted Funding Level
(nominal \$ in millions)

Activity (Account in Parentheses)	FY2019
Cooperative Landscape Conservation (RM)	\$12.5
Science Support (RM)	17.3
Deferred Maintenance (C)	39.9
Land Protection Planning (LA)	0.5
Exchanges (LA)	1.5
Highlands Conservation Act Grants (LA)	20.0
Recreational Access (LA)	2.5
Land Acquisition Projects (LA)	22.6
Tribal Wildlife Grants (STWG)	4.2

Sources: CRS, with data from H.Rept. 116-9 accompanying H.J.Res. 31 (P.L. 116-6) and FWS FY2020 budget justification.

Notes: RM = Resource Management; C = Construction; LA = Land Acquisition; STWG = State and Tribal Wildlife Grants.

Legislative Proposal

In the FY2020 request, the Administration included a legislative proposal to create a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund. The fund would “be supported by the deposit of 50 percent of all Federal energy development revenue that would otherwise be credited or deposited as miscellaneous receipts to the Treasury over the 2020–2024 period, subject to an annual limit of \$1.3 billion.” The fund would support infrastructure improvements on certain federal lands, including wildlife refuges. This is a DOI initiative, and similar language is included in other DOI agency requests, such as the request for the National Park Service.

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