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Bureau of Land Management: FY2020 Appropriations

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 246 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 preservation. The agency also administers onshore federal energy and mineral resources generally and supervises mineral operations on Indian trust lands.

At issue for Congress is determining the amount of funding to provide for BLM programs and activities for FY2020, the terms and conditions of such funding, and whether to enact related Trump Administration proposals.

For FY2020, BLM is receiving continuing appropriations at the FY2019 level through November 21, 2019 (under P.L. 116-59), unless full-year appropriations are enacted sooner. The Administration requested \$1,187.4 million in discretionary appropriations for BLM for FY2020, a \$158.8 million (11.8%) decrease from the FY2019 enacted level of \$1,346.2 million. On June 25, 2019, the House passed H.R. 3055 with \$1,411.8 million for BLM (in Division C), which would be \$65.6 million (4.9%) more than the FY2019 enacted level and \$224.4 million (18.9%) more than the FY2020 request. On September 26, 2019, the Senate Appropriations Committee reported S. 2580 with \$1,399.4 million for BLM. This would be \$53.2 million (4.0%) more than the FY2019 enacted level and \$212.0 million (17.9%) more than the FY2020 request. (See **Table 1**.)

BLM discretionary appropriations generally are provided in Title I of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations laws. Mandatory (permanent) appropriations also are provided to BLM under various statutes within the jurisdiction of authorizing committees. For FY2020, BLM estimated its mandatory appropriations at \$201.3 million. This would be a decrease from the \$241.2 million estimated for FY2019, in large part due to an anticipated reduction in receipts from the sale of BLM lands in Nevada.

Appropriations Accounts

BLM discretionary appropriations are provided through several accounts. **Figure 1** shows the Administration’s FY2020 request for these accounts. **Table 1** contains account-level funding for the FY2020 request, House-passed bill, and Senate committee-reported bill.

Management of Lands and Resources. The largest account—Management of Lands and Resources—comprised 89% of the request. It funds varied programs, including energy and minerals, rangelands, wild horses and burros, wildlife and fisheries, recreation, resource protection, law enforcement, and facility maintenance.

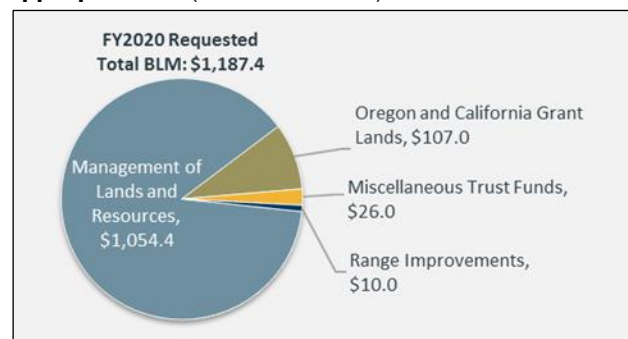
Overview. As compared with FY2019 enacted funding, the Administration’s FY2020 request contained lower funding for the account overall and for many of its programs,

including rangeland management, wildlife and aquatic habitat management, and resource management planning.

H.R. 3055 and S. 2580 included higher appropriations for this account than requested for FY2020 and enacted for FY2019. H.R. 3055 would increase funds for many programs over FY2019, such as management of wild horses and burros, wildlife and aquatic habitat, recreation, and the National Landscape Conservation System. Also, the House bill would change the period of availability of most funds from “no-year” (available until expended) to “two-year.” The Senate committee bill generally would provide level or increased funding for programs, with the largest increase (\$35.0 million, 43%) for wild horse and burro management.

Reorganization. For FY2019, Congress appropriated \$14.1 million for Department of the Interior reorganization but did not specify the BLM portion. The reorganization seeks to improve public service, communication, and efficiency. The FY2020 BLM request included \$7.7 million to foster common regional boundaries of agencies, transfer some headquarters functions to the field, and integrate agencies’ business operations. The FY2020 House bill did not identify funding for BLM reorganization. The House Appropriations Committee expressed that “approximately 93 percent of Bureau employees are already working in the field” and directed that “no additional relocations of headquarters staff take place” (H.Rept. 116-100, p. 13). The Senate committee bill does not make explicit whether funds are included for BLM reorganization.

Figure 1. BLM FY2020 Administration-Requested Appropriations (dollars in millions)



Source: Prepared by CRS with information from the House Appropriations Committee. Not shown are rescissions for the Land Acquisition account (-\$10.0 million) and \$0 for Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures due to a match by offsetting collections.

Land Acquisition. BLM typically receives appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to acquire lands. To focus on maintaining current BLM lands, the Administration’s FY2020 request did not include funding for particular acquisition projects or for acquisitions that generally facilitate access to BLM land for recreation. The

overall request was -\$10.0 million, reflecting a rescission of unobligated balances. Relative to FY2019, H.R. 3055 contained increased funds and S. 2580 contained nearly level funding. Both bills included funds for recreational access generally and for individual acquisition projects.

Oregon and California Grant Lands. Oregon and California Grant Lands constituted 9% of the request for FY2020. This account funds management of more than 2 million acres of forested lands in western Oregon, primarily for timber production. For FY2020, the Administration request and the Senate committee bill would provide funding equal to FY2019, but the House bill would increase funding. Neither the House nor the Senate committee have accepted an Administration proposal to consolidate funding for activities within the account.

Range Improvements. The Range Improvements account funds rehabilitation, protection, and improvement of BLM rangelands. Of the Administration's total request, 1% was for this purpose. The FY2020 request, H.R. 3055, and S. 2580 included \$10.0 million, equal to FY2019.

Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures. This account allows BLM to use monies paid to the agency for particular activities (e.g., processing rights-of-way). As in FY2019, the FY2020 amounts proposed by the Administration and included in H.R. 3055 and S. 2580 were offset by collections, making them \$0.

Miscellaneous Trust Funds. This account appropriates contributions made to BLM from individuals, businesses, user groups, and states. It comprised 2% of the FY2020 request. The FY2020 requested, House-passed, and Senate-committee amounts were equal and higher than FY2019.

Legislative Proposals by the Administration

In the FY2020 request, the Trump Administration proposed extending or amending some authorities and enacting new ones. Some of these proposals are discussed below.

Deferred Maintenance. BLM estimates its deferred maintenance at \$955.3 million, mostly for roads, bridges, and trails. FY2019 appropriations for deferred maintenance were \$75.0 million. For FY2020, the Administration

proposed a reduction (\$53.8 million), H.R. 3055 would increase funding (\$82.3 million), and S. 2580 would provide level funding. The Administration also proposed establishing a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund with \$6.5 billion over five years, with 5% for BLM deferred maintenance. H.R. 3055 and S. 2580 did not include this change, although related legislation has been introduced.

Energy and Minerals. The FY2020 request proposed altering the distribution of revenues from geothermal leasing on federal lands—currently 50% to the states, 25% to the Treasury, and 25% to counties—to a distribution of 50% for states and 50% for the Treasury. According to the Administration, the change would foster consistency with other revenue-sharing programs and increase the return to the public. Some counties favor the status quo to reflect their energy investments and enhance funds for services. H.R. 3055 and S. 2580 did not include this change.

Recreation. The authority in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (16 U.S.C. §§6801 et seq.) that allows BLM (and other agencies) to charge, collect, and use fees for recreation on agency lands is set to expire on September 30, 2020. The Administration supported permanent authority through authorizing legislation, while also seeking a two-year extension (through September 30, 2022) in appropriations law. Extensions would be provided by H.R. 3055 and S. 2580—through September 30, 2021, and October 1, 2021, respectively.

Wild Horses and Burros. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (16 U.S.C. §§1331 et seq.) provides BLM authority to destroy healthy, excess wild horses and burros and to sell without limitation excess animals meeting certain criteria. In practice, BLM generally sells animals with limits (e.g., a maximum per buyer). The FY2019 appropriations law (and recent earlier ones) barred the use of funds for the destruction of healthy, unadopted BLM wild horses and burros and for the sale of animals for processing into commercial products. In its FY2020 budget, the Administration proposed removing the funding ban and allowing sales without limitations to reduce the excess of wild horses. H.R. 3055 and S. 2580 did not include the Administration proposal and would continue the ban.

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

Account	FY2019 Enacted	FY2020 Request	% Change from FY2019	House Passed H.R. 3055	% Change from FY2019	S. Comm. Reported S. 2580	% Change from FY2019
Management of Lands and Resources	\$1,178.7	\$1,054.4	-10.5%	\$1,229.8	4.3%	\$1,230.0	4.4%
Land Acquisition	26.5	-10.0	-137.7%	33.8	27.5%	26.4	<-1%
Oregon and California Grant Lands	107.0	107.0	0%	117.2	9.5%	107.0	0%
Range Improvements	10.0	10.0	0%	10.0	0%	10.0	0%
Service Charges, Deposits, & Forfeitures ^a	0	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Miscellaneous Trust Funds	24.0	26.0	8.3%	26.0	8.3%	26.0	8.3%
Total BLM	\$1,346.2	\$1,187.4	-11.8%	\$1,411.8^b	4.9%	\$1,399.4	4.0%

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

Notes: n/a = not applicable.

- The amounts of \$0 for Service Charges, Deposits, and Forfeitures are a result of an appropriation matched by offsetting fees.
- The FY2020 House-passed total reflects a -\$5.0 million rescission of prior year unobligated funds for Construction (not shown).

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