

House Appropriations Committee

Chairman Hal Rogers

Website address: <http://appropriations.house.gov/>

FY 2016 Omnibus – Interior & Environment Appropriations

Legislation will block excessive regulatory overreach, provide wildfire response funding, promote domestic energy production, and help conserve America's vast natural resources

The Interior and Environment portion of the Omnibus provides funding to address the nation's most pressing public lands issues, including fighting and preventing wildfires, maintaining our vast natural resources, expanding domestic energy production, and promoting responsible and efficient use of federal lands. In addition to funding, the legislation contains several policy provisions aimed at reining in harmful regulatory overreach by federal agencies – such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – that creates unnecessary, harmful, bureaucratic red tape and that hinders job creation and economic growth.

Overall, the legislation provides \$32.159 billion for Interior and Environment programs – \$1.7 billion above the fiscal year 2015 enacted level and \$1.1 billion below the President's budget request. A large portion of this increase is targeted to additional wildfire funding and to fully fund the Payment In Lieu of Taxes program, which, without mandatory authorization, must be covered by discretionary dollars. This level reflects the increased domestic discretionary funding provided by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, which was enacted on November 2.

Wildfire Fighting and Prevention – In total, the bill provides \$4.2 billion for wildfire fighting and prevention programs within the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service – \$670 million above the 2015 enacted level – including \$1 billion in firefighting reserve funds. This robust level will fund wildland fire suppression operations for the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service at the full 10-year average, enabling quick and effective responses to the types of forest fires that have devastated millions of acres of public and private land this year alone.

In addition, the bill provides \$545 million for hazardous fuels reduction activities (an increase of \$19 million) and \$360 million for the timber program (an increase of \$21 million) to improve the health of our national forests and prevent fires from starting.

Domestic Energy Production – The bill helps encourage domestic energy production to further the nation's goal of energy independence and to reduce energy costs for consumers. For example, the legislation:

- Does not include Administration proposals to impose \$48 million in new fees on onshore oil and gas producers.
- Provides a \$23 million increase for the Bureau of Land Management to improve onshore energy and minerals development.

- Provides \$241 million, including \$90 million in grants, to reclaim abandoned mine land sites and spur economic development. The bill maintains \$69 million for the operation of state programs, and rejects the Administration's proposal to add more federal regulators to duplicate oversight of state programs.
- Establishes a new Indian energy office to expedite permitting for energy development on Indian reservation lands.

National Park Service (NPS) – The bill provides \$2.9 billion for the National Park Service – an increase of \$237 million above the 2015 enacted level. \$94 million of this increase is targeted to reduce maintenance backlogs and for programs related to the Park Service's Centennial anniversary.

The total funding includes \$2.4 billion for the Operation of the National Park System (ONPS), \$62.6 million for National Recreation and Preservation, \$65.4 million for Historic Preservation grants, and \$193 million for construction of facilities.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – The bill holds the line on EPA funding at \$8.1 billion – continuing a funding level that is lower than fiscal year 2010. In addition, the bill continues to hold EPA staffing levels at the lowest level since 1989. Within the EPA, the bill:

- Does not include a White House proposal to spend \$138 million on new or expanded EPA regulatory programs.
- Provides \$2.3 billion for local drinking water and sewer construction projects through the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds.
- Funds the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$300 million – the same as the fiscal year 2015 level.

The agreement also includes several policy provisions to rein in regulatory overreach at the EPA (outlined below) to help prevent excessive bureaucratic red tape that unnecessarily burdens American businesses and industries and that slows economic growth.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – The BLM is funded at \$1.2 billion – \$117 million above the fiscal year 2015 enacted level – to provide for the effective stewardship of the nation's vast public lands.

The legislation also includes funding and policy provisions to protect American ranchers from regulations that increase costs and harm their livelihoods. For example, the bill does not include an Administration proposal to charge \$22.5 million in new grazing fees on BLM and Forest Service lands, and provides \$79 million – an increase of \$1.5 million – for Range Management to continue to reduce the backlog of grazing permit applications.

In addition, the bill includes \$60 million within the BLM to conserve sage-grouse habitat by removing juniper trees, eradicating invasive weeds, and conducting prescribed burns.

American Indian and Alaska Native Programs – The bill helps to honor the nation's treaty obligations to American Indians and Alaska Natives by significantly increasing funding for health care, law enforcement, and education. The legislation funds the Indian Health Service at \$4.8 billion – \$165 million

above the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. The Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Education are funded at \$2.8 billion – \$195 million above the 2015 enacted level.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – The FWS is funded at \$1.5 billion, \$68 million above the fiscal year 2015 enacted level. Within the total, the bill provides: \$1 million to compensate ranchers for livestock killed by wolves; \$2 million to stop the spread of invasive quagga and zebra mussels in the West; and \$7.9 million to stop the spread of Asian carp into the Great Lakes. The legislation also increases funding for effective state wildlife grant programs, includes funding and a directive to ensure that national fish hatcheries remain open and at full production, and includes new directives and reporting requirements that begin to reform the Endangered Species Act.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant Program – The legislation appropriates \$450 million from LWCF, with more than 50 percent directed to state and local recreation, conservation, and battlefield protection programs. These funds will help ensure that public land is protected and available for recreation.

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) – The bill includes \$452 million for PILT, a program that provides funds to local governments to help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable federal lands within their jurisdictions.

Policy Provisions – The legislation includes policy provisions to stop unnecessary and harmful regulatory overreach by federal agencies that hinders job creation and economic growth. Some of these provisions include:

- A requirement that the Department of the Interior work with states on the Stream Buffer Zone rule.
- A prohibition on funding for the EPA to regulate lead content in ammunition or fishing tackle under the Toxic Substances Control Act.
- Exemptions from onerous greenhouse gas regulations for livestock producers.
- A provision requiring the Administration to report to Congress on federal agency obligations and expenditures on climate change programs.
- A directive to enhance congressional oversight of EPA’s review of mining permits.
- A provision requiring the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service to report on non-emergency closures of public lands to hunting, fishing, shooting, and other recreational activities.
- A directive for BLM and the Forest Service to make vacant grazing allotments available to a holder of a grazing permit or lease when lands are unusable because of drought or wildfire.
- A prohibition on funding for the Fish and Wildlife Service to issue further rules to place sage-grouse on the Endangered Species List.
- A prohibition on the Department of the Interior from administratively creating new wilderness areas.

- A provision requiring a full administrative review be completed before grazing issues can be litigated in federal court.
- A directive that the Forest Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management work with state and local governments in drought-stricken regions to facilitate the prompt removal of hazardous trees on these lands and to prioritize funding to reduce the threat of wildfire.

For the full Committee Report on the Interior/Environment portion of the Omnibus, including a detailed funding table, please visit:

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