



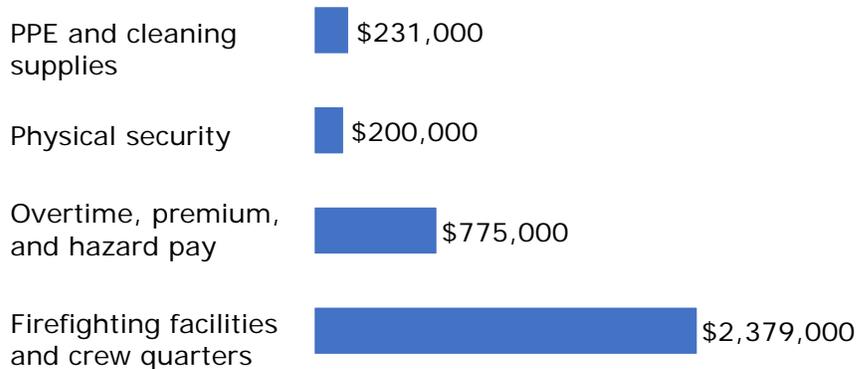
The NPS has had responsibility for national parks since 1916. It relies on the help of volunteers and partners and receives more than 318 million visitors each year.

The NPS created a website to update the public about its COVID-19 response plan. The website includes:

- News releases
- Digital resources
- Program operation information
- Employee protection resources
- Ideas for responsible recreation

Visitors can also take “virtual tours” of national parks. The tours are available on various social media sites and include photographs, webcams, live programs, children’s activities, games and challenges, and a calendar of events.

Figure 3: Funding Amounts in the FWS’ Spend Plan



As part of its request, the FWS agreed to demonstrate to the Department that all costs are defensible and to build strong internal controls and develop routine reporting. Additionally, the FWS stated that it would develop communications strategies, especially for internal communications to employees affected by the pandemic. Currently, the FWS is awaiting further guidance from the OWF on how to allocate its Wildland Fire Management Program funding.

The FWS kept its refuges open while State and other Federal agency lands were closed. During the pandemic, the FWS saw an increase in visitors to and interest in its public lands.

In its funding request to the OS, the FWS stated that it would establish an executive oversight team to monitor the status of projects, review obligation trends, and ensure that all funding requirements have been met. The FWS is reporting its obligations and providing supporting documentation to the OS on a weekly basis.

The National Park Service

The NPS received \$5,467,000 in CARES Act funding from the OS. The funding included \$3,438,000 for Wildland Fire Management, but those funds had not yet been obligated as of October 29, 2020. The OWF originally requested the funds, which were approved for wildland fire employee housing and firefighting facilities to comply with local and State social distancing mandates. Ultimately, the NPS did not need the OWF funds in fiscal year 2020. When asked what it planned to do with the unneeded funds, the NPS stated that it is discussing this with the DOI but did not have a final plan as of October 29, 2020.



In 1946, Congress merged the General Land Office and the U.S. Grazing Service to establish the BLM. The BLM manages 1 of every 10 acres of land in the United States and approximately 30 percent of the Nation's minerals.

The BLM created a COVID-19 response website to notify visitors of updates to the bureau's many offices and districts. The website also provides information on how to visit public lands responsibly and safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

States with a BLM presence have their own websites for updating visitors. The websites include alerts and news releases; refer visitors to local, State, and CDC guidance; and provide recommendations on how to prepare for accessing BLM lands with limited visitor services. Some recommendations include:

- Bringing sanitation supplies
- Taking out trash
- Reducing cash transactions by paying fees through the recreation.gov website

Though the NPS did not specifically make such a request, the OS transferred \$1,759,000 to the NPS for PPE and cleaning supplies obligations incurred prior to May 1, 2020. Most of the expenditures were moved from the original NPS accounts to CARES Act accounts, and the transfer of the remaining expenditures was to be completed by July 29, 2020. The NPS is not authorized to use the funds received for costs incurred after May 1, 2020.

On its website, the NPS states that it is issuing PPE to employees performing critical functions such as visitor and resource protection, emergency management services, and facility maintenance. It also states that Park staff are following CDC guidance by cleaning and maintaining facilities to safeguard employee and public health and safety.

The NPS is tracking confirmed employee cases of COVID-19 and has stated that it will notify the public if an employee presented an exposure risk to visitors, based on CDC guidance.

The NPS requires that parks and regions review their costs to ensure they are appropriate to charge to the CARES Act. The NPS has informed us that it provides weekly reports to the DOI's Office of Budget on COVID-19-related costs paid for with the supplemental funding and regular annual appropriations.

The Bureau of Land Management

The BLM received \$4,053,000 in CARES Act funding from the OS. The funding included \$3,223,000 for Wildland Fire Management Program requirements for expanded facilities. This includes costs associated with barracks staff tasked with cleaning and enforcing barracks quarantine; this staff also assists the residents and administrative office staff who provide cleaning services after hours and contracting officers and budget staff who execute virus-related contracts after hours. The BLM has expended approximately \$1,000,000 of the funds and anticipates that it will not need most of the remaining funds for expanded facilities.

The funds the OS transferred for PPE, cleaning supplies, and labor were based on actual obligations and were a reimbursement for expenses already incurred. The BLM stated that it has expended \$650,000 for PPE and cleaning supplies but was only able to use \$104,000 of CARES Act funding.

Timeline[§]

March 20 – The DOI increases procurement thresholds temporarily with the nationwide emergency declaration.

March 27 – The Office of Budget provides initial guidance on submitting apportionments, operating plans, and reporting associated with the CARES Act.

March 31 – The Office of Budget gives guidance to DOI bureaus and offices for executing emergency supplemental funding provided in the CARES Act. The BLM requests CARES Act funds from the DOI.

April 3 – The DOI provides bureau budget officers with information on soliciting CARES Act funding requests through its external communications site and asks them to submit operating and management plans.

April 6 & 8 – The FWS, NPS, and BLM request CARES Act funds from the DOI.

April 27 – The DOI informs the FWS, NPS, and BLM that it approved funding for the Wildland Fire Management Program.

May 19 – The DOI informs the NPS that it approved funding for PPE and cleaning supplies. The DOI informs the BLM that it approved funding for wildland fire and nonfire expenses.

July 8 – The OWF requests CARES Act funds from the DOI.

July 29 – The DOI informs the OWF that it approved the CARES Act funding.

August 7 – The DOI Deputy Secretary provides guidance on bureau and office accountability for CARES Act charge card spending.

[§]All dates in 2020

Per the COVID-19 updates on the BLM's regional websites, visitors may continue to use BLM-managed public lands in a safe and responsible manner. The BLM recommends visiting areas close to home, avoiding popular or crowded locations where social distancing may be difficult, and limiting group activities to members of one household.

On June 5, 2020, the BLM's budget office provided guidance to BLM staff on the appropriate uses of the CARES Act funding. The BLM reports weekly to the DOI's Office of Budget on COVID-19-related costs paid for with the supplemental funding and regular annual appropriations.