

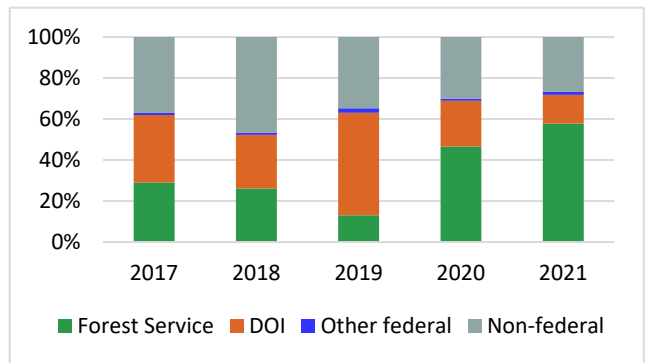
November 2022

Federal Agencies Receiving Wildfire Spending

The federal government has a vested role in the prevention and suppression of wildfires, as well as helping communities rebuild after a wildfire event. Federal wildfire spending comes in many forms and is spread throughout numerous different federal agencies and departments.

The U.S. government is directly responsible for wildfire response and management across roughly 650 million acres of federal lands in the U.S., most of which is overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) **Forest Service (FS)** and the **Department of the Interior (DOI)**. In 2021, 5.2 million acres of federal land were burned by wildfires, compared to 1.9 million acres of nonfederal land.¹ In addition to fighting active wildfires, the federal government implements wildfire preventative measures in addition to post-disaster recovery efforts on federal lands.

Percentage Acreage Burned by Ownership



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS) [IF10244](#)

The federal government also supports wildfire-related activities on nonfederal lands through wildfire prevention and disaster recovery programs administered by the **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**, the **Department of Energy (DOE)**, and the **Department of Defense (DoD)**, among other departments and agencies. The **National Interagency Fire Center (NFIC)** is responsible for developing national wildland fire policy and oversees interagency activities. And other federal departments and agencies, like the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**, fund or conduct direct research on wildfire mitigation and prevention.

2021 Horne Fire, Isle Royale National Park | Photo Credit: Mike Ausema



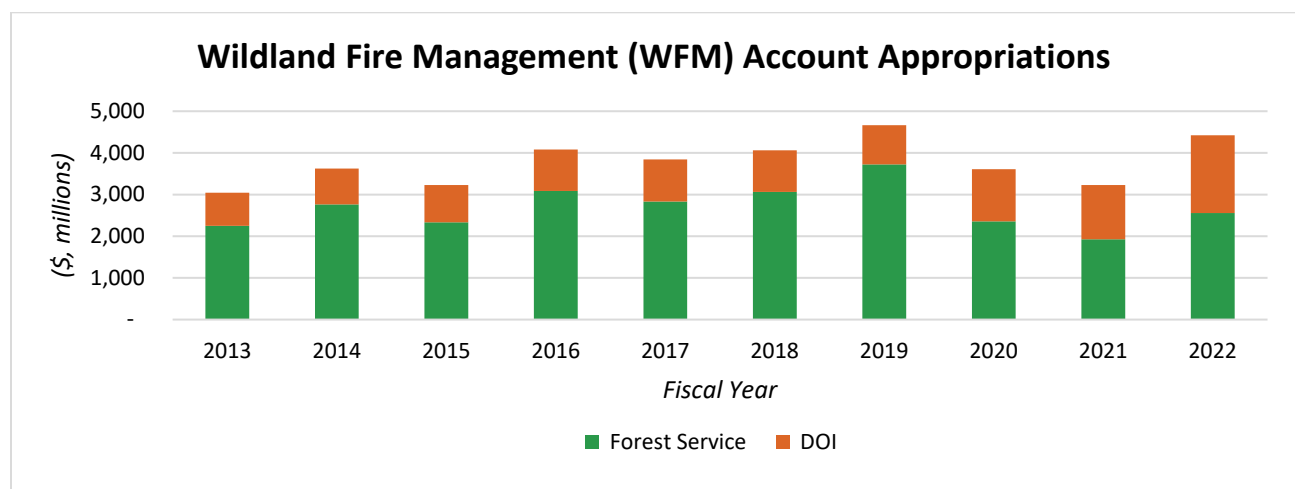
Forest Service

The majority of federal wildfire funding is allocated to the U.S. Forest Service within USDA. Much of this spending is directed toward the FS’s Wildland Fire Management (WFM) account, which funds the personnel, equipment, and immediate post-fire risk mitigation activities necessary for wildfire suppression on federal lands. As of May 2021, the Forest Service Wildland Fire Management program supported 10,000 firefighters, 900 fire engines, 18 airtankers, and 108 helicopters. The Wildland Fire Management account also includes the FS’s Hazardous Fuels program, which is aimed at reducing flammable vegetation in high priority and high-risk areas. According to the [Congressional Research Service](#) (CRS), the FS WFM account received \$2.56 billion in discretionary appropriations in FY 2022, 18% of the Forest Service’s total budget.²

The FS has other programs related to wildfire mitigation within the Forest & Rangeland Research, State & Private Forestry, and National Forest System funding accounts. Some of these programs were once included under the overarching Wildland Fire Management account but have since moved. These FS programs cover a wide range wildfire-related expenditures, including competitive grants to nonfederal land managers and federally-funded wildfire research.

Department of Interior

Congress appropriates wildfire funding to DOI through its department-wide Wildland Fire Management (WFM) account. Similar to the FS’s WFM account, the DOI account funds personnel, equipment, immediate post-fire risk mitigation, and hazardous fuels management. The DOI WFM account also includes the Joint Fire Science Program, which competitively funds fire science research projects nationally. According to the CRS, the DOI WFM account received \$1.86 billion in discretionary appropriations in FY2022.³



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS) [IF11978](#) and [R46583](#)

¹ Congressional Research Office (CRS), Wildfire Statistics, November 4, 2022. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10244>

² Congressional Research Office (CRS), Funding for Wildfire Management: FY2022 Appropriations for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior, September 26, 2022. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11978>

³ Ibid

Other Federal Departments and Agencies Associated with Wildfire-Related Spending

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA):** Outside of the Forest Service, USDA oversees the federal crop insurance program and various disaster programs (the latter of which are either ad hoc or permanently authorized through the five-year farm bill). These programs provide taxpayer-subsidized payments to agricultural producers for wildfire-related livestock, crop, and other losses, in addition to losses caused by other natural disasters such as drought, floods, etc.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):** FEMA provides federal assistance to states and local communities after natural disasters. The Disaster Relief Fund provides funds for the mitigation, management, and control of wildfires and other natural disasters on public and private land.
- **Department of Energy (DOE):** DOE provides grants and trainings to communities and industry to address threats to the U.S. energy sector, including the threats of wildfires and other natural disasters. This funding allows communities to upgrade nearby transmission lines and develop technologies to mitigate wildfire and the risk of other disasters, among other activities.
- **Department of Defense (DoD):** DoD assists state and local governments in preventing and responding to threats, including wildfires and other natural disasters, that are likely to impair military installations and readiness. DoD also trains members of the armed services to fight wildfires and assists in wildfire suppression operations on both federal and nonfederal land when necessary.
- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA):** NOAA's mission is to research, predict, and report on changes in climate and weather, which includes wildfires. For example, NOAA partners with DOI and USDA to rapidly detect and report wildfire starts.

Wildfire Water Drop, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks | Photo Credit: Mark Garrett, NPS

