

DIVISION G – DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT,
AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2021

The following statement is an explanation of the effects of Division G, which provides appropriations for the Department of the Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Forest Service, the Indian Health Service, and related agencies for fiscal year 2021.

The joint explanatory statement accompanying this division is approved and indicates congressional intent. Unless otherwise noted, the language set forth in House Report 116-448 carries the same weight as language included in this joint explanatory statement and should be complied with unless specifically addressed to the contrary in this joint explanatory statement. While some language is repeated for emphasis, it is not intended to negate the language referred to above unless expressly provided herein.

In cases where the House report or this joint explanatory statement direct the submission of a report, such report is to be submitted to both the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations. Where this joint explanatory statement refers to the Committees or the Committees on Appropriations, unless otherwise noted, this reference is to the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies and the Senate Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

Each department and agency funded in this Act is directed to follow the directions set forth in this Act and the accompanying statement and to not reallocate resources or reorganize activities except as provided herein or otherwise approved by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees through the reprogramming process as referenced in this Act. This joint explanatory statement addresses only those agencies and accounts for which there is a need for greater explanation than provided in the Act itself. Funding levels for appropriations by account, program, and activity, with comparisons to the fiscal year 2020 enacted level and the fiscal year 2021 budget request, can be found in the table at the end of this division.

Unless expressly stated otherwise, any reference to “this Act” or “at the end of this statement” shall be treated as referring only to the provisions of this division.

Conservation Partnerships.—Funds are available for land management agencies to enter into agreements with youth and veterans organizations as authorized by the John McCain 21st Century Service Conservation Corps Act (Public Law 116–9). The Committees continue to support the partnerships between the Department and the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps and Public Land Corps, which help to engage youth and veterans in hands-on service to our public lands and expects these efforts to continue.

Forest Service Modernization Efforts.—The Committees appreciate the efforts of individuals across the Service to implement the transition to the modernized budget structure for fiscal year 2021. The Committees recognize that the culture of the Service relies heavily on historical practices, which can be an impediment to change for the better. The Committees understand the new budget structure will require the Service to think differently about mission execution and are hopeful that the modernized structure will result in improved transparency, better human resources planning, and ultimately better management of the agency.

Of the funds provided for Federal Lands Forest Health Management, \$3,000,000 is for Service-wide strategic workforce planning efforts. Concurrently, the Committees direct the Service to evaluate the impact of the number of Service employees serving as details or in acting positions, as it relates to availability of expertise, along with the practice of detailing employees and incentivizing frequent moves to accelerate advancement. The Service is directed to provide the Committees with a briefing on these efforts within 60 days of enactment of this Act.

To continue to build upon the momentum of Budget Modernization, the Executive Leadership Team is directed to meet quarterly with the Committees to discuss ongoing Forest Service modernization efforts. The Service is directed to report to the Committees on an evaluation of the Service's leadership structure, Executive Leadership Team composition, and any changes that should be made to realign leadership positions with the new budget structure no later than June 1, 2021. In particular, the Committees are interested in data and recommendations relating to any changes that could be made to improve the representation of Wildland Fire Management leadership under this structure and the potential creation of a new Deputy Chief for Fire and Aviation. The Committees recognize that wildland fire-related activities touch every aspect of the agency and believe that providing the fire function with a senior leadership role at the Service will improve coordination and better represents the role fire plays in agency budgeting and decision making.

Technology Modernization.—In lieu of House direction regarding technology modernization, the Committees support technologies such as the Risk Management Assistance framework, machine-learning generated collaborative technology-based strategic wildfire risk planning tools and the productionization of these data-driven decision support tools, and the implementation of the Wildfire Technology Modernization section of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. The Service is directed to make significant financial investments in these technologies and report to the Committees within 90 days of enactment of this Act on ongoing and planned investments in such technologies. Additionally, the Committees expect the Forest Service to increase technological investments in future budgets.