Legislative Proposals

The 2021 budget request includes the following legislative proposals to request new authorities and reauthorize expiring legislation.

Forest Management—Dense undergrowth has grown profusely across much of the public lands, providing fuel for catastrophic wildfires and worsening insect infestation, invasive species, and disease. These conditions adversely affect the Nation's forests, rangelands, and watersheds and contribute to increased wildfire risk to surrounding communities. Active management of timber and rangeland vegetation is necessary to combat these threats, save lives, and protect property. The Administration proposes a package of forest management legislative reforms coupled with significant active management investments in the 2021 budget to help mitigate the serious risks of catastrophic wildfire. The proposed legislation would provide categorical exclusions on Interior lands for active forest management, including the ability to harvest dead, dying, or damaged trees and proactive fuels management, including the use of fuel breaks. Those changes are critical to help reduce fire risk, improve forest health, minimize post-fire impacts, prevent re-burn of fire-damaged areas, and improve safety for wildland firefighters.

Public Lands Infrastructure Fund—Interior and Agriculture manage an infrastructure asset portfolio with more than $18 billion in deferred maintenance, recapitalization, and other needs. The portfolio includes structures, trails, roads, utility systems, and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. To address those needs, the budget includes $6.5 billion over 5 years for a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund. The fund will support infrastructure improvements through an allocation of 70 percent for national parks, 10 percent for national forests, 10 percent for wildlife refuges, 5 percent for BIE schools, and 5 percent for lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The fund will be supported by the deposit of 50 percent of all Federal energy development revenue that would otherwise be credited or deposited as miscellaneous receipts to the Treasury over the 2021–2025 period, subject to an annual limit of $1.3 billion. Interior and Agriculture would prioritize projects, monitor implementation, and measure results. This investment will significantly improve many of America's most visible, visited, and treasured places.

Recreation Fee Program—The budget proposes to reauthorize the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which expires on October 1, 2021. As a precaution, the budget also proposes appropriations language to provide a 2-year extension of FLREA through September 2023. The revenues collected by the Department of the Interior from these recreation fees—$344.9 million in 2019—are an important source of funding to enhance the visitor experience through maintenance, operations, and improvements to recreation facilities on public lands.

Cancel Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act Account Balances—The budget proposes to cancel $230.0 million in unobligated balances from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) program. SNPLMA, enacted in 1998, authorizes BLM to sell specified public lands around Las Vegas, NV, and retain the proceeds for capital improvements and various conservation, restoration, and recreational purposes in Nevada. The SNPLMA program is not proposed for elimination; the proposal will only reduce a portion of the more than $800 million in remaining balances and will not affect any projects currently approved for support.

EPAct Geothermal Payments to Counties— The budget proposes to restore the disposition of Federal geothermal leasing revenues to the historical formula of 50 percent to the States and 50 percent to the U.S. Treasury by repealing Section 224(b) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. That section changed the distribution to direct 50 percent to States, 25 percent to counties, and 25 percent to the Federal government. The 25-percent share for county payments is inconsistent with longstanding revenue-sharing practices and reduces the return to Federal taxpayers from geothermal leases on Federal lands. The proposal is estimated to result in savings of $40 million over 10 years.