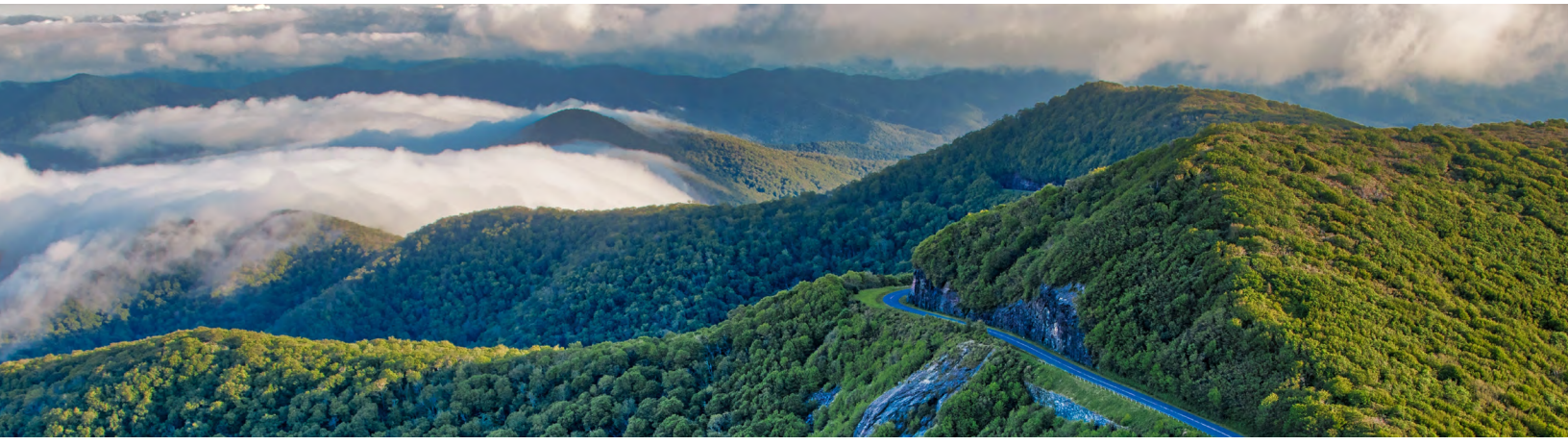
American Relief Act

FLASH REPORT: STATUS OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR'S 2025 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR DISASTER RELIEF

Between 2020 and 2024, the United States experienced several separate weather and related disasters, including hurricanes, wildfires, a typhoon, and other severe storms and flooding that caused widespread damage to critical infrastructure, livelihoods, and property.

On December 21, 2024, the American Relief Act (ARA)[1] was signed into law, under which the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2025, provided funds for expenses related to the consequences of disasters occurring in or prior to calendar year 2024 as well as funds for aging infrastructure and historic and cultural resource preservation work. The Act provided the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) with approximately $3.1 billion[2] to support the needs of its disaster response—specifically, under Title IV for the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and Title VII for the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). NPS, FWS, BIE, and BOR received the majority of DOI's 2025 disaster relief supplemental funds. The funding is available until expended.

We are issuing this flash report to provide information on DOI's funding status as of the end of 2025, including the bureaus' spending approach; planned, ongoing, and completed projects; and potential challenges and risks DOI may face as it spends disaster funding. We did not review whether DOI's use of the funds to date complied with the requirements of the ARA.



[1] Pub. L. No. 118-158, Division B, 138 Stat. 1726 (2024).

[2] Included in this appropriation, our office received $8 million for salaries and expenses for oversight of DOI activities funded by the Act.

Storm Overview

Hurricane Milton

Milton made landfall in Florida as a Category 3 hurricane on October 9, 2024, delivering 10 to 15 inches of rainfall. Its impact on east-central Florida was significant, producing at least 19 tornadoes and wind gusts that downed trees and power lines.

St. Mary Siphon Failure

On June 17, 2024, the St. Mary Canal Siphon, located in north-central Montana, breached, causing significant local flooding and erosion. Washouts of estimated 30 to 50 feet occurred, leading to property and infrastructure damage and causing significant public safety risks.

Spring 2023 Alaska Floods

In May 2023, western Alaska experienced significant flooding due to snowmelt entering Moose Creek, a rural community south of Fairbanks. These floods led to outages, closed roads, and significant property damage.

California Severe Winter Storms

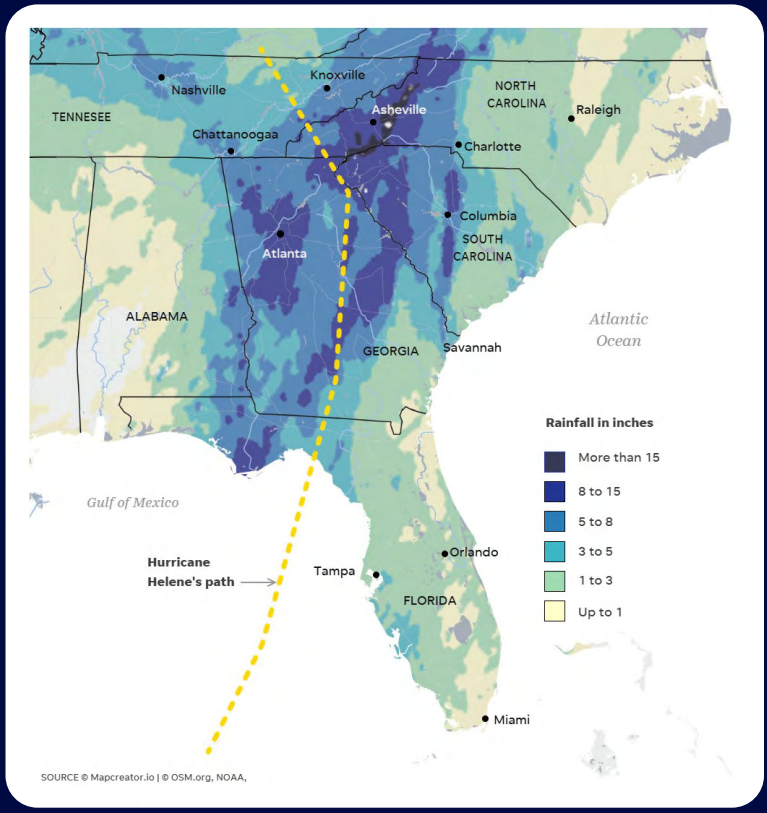
Throughout 2022 and 2023, California experienced a series of hazardous storms across the State, causing significant flooding, mudslides, and damage.

Illinois Severe Storms

In spring 2024, Illinois experienced a series of hazardous storms across the State, causing significant facility damage and flooding.

Hurricane Helene

Helene made landfall in Florida as a Category 4 hurricane on September 26, 2024. Its 800-mile path across the Southeastern United States delivered more than 30 inches of rain, leading to flooding in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia.



Source: Hurricane Helene's path (map illustration), in *Maps track Hurricane Helene's 800-mile path of destruction across southeastern US*, USATODAY (Sept. 29, 2024; updated Oct. 29, 2024, 2:23 p.m. ET), https://www.usatoday.com/story/graphics/2024/09/29/hurricane-helene-damage-maps/75440587007/.

Colony Fire

On June 20, 2024, the Colony Fire burned almost 70 acres, destroying several buildings (including an irrigation building) on the Walker River Paiute Reservation.

Maine Severe Storms and Flooding

Between January 9 and 13, 2024, Maine experienced severe storms and flooding, damaging Passamaquoddy and Mi'kmaq Tribal buildings.

Bureau Spending Approach

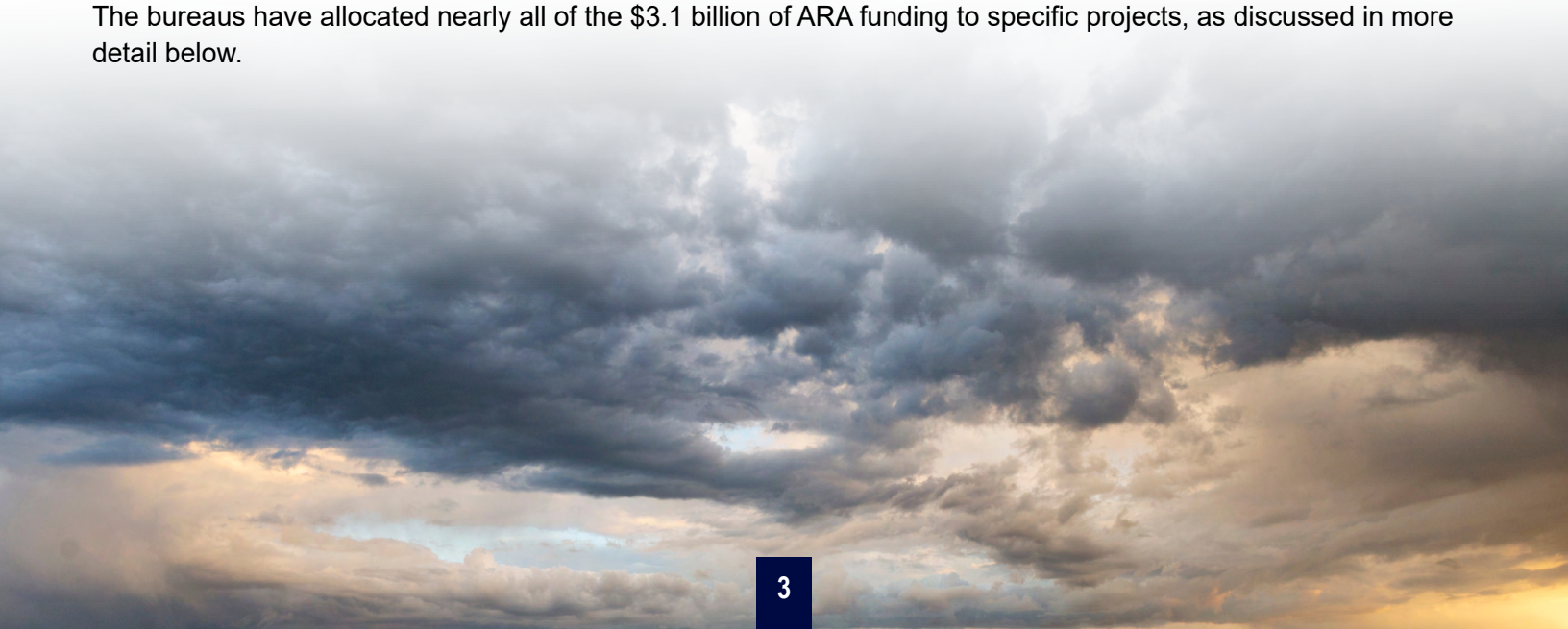
As of December 31, 2025, bureaus and offices obligated $95 million (3 percent) in ARA funds, leaving $3 billion unobligated. Of the $95 million in obligated funds, $73 million had been expended (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Funds Appropriated, Obligated, and Expended by DOI Bureaus and Offices as of December 31, 2025

Bureau/Office	Appropriated	Obligated	Expended	Unobligated
NPS	$2,312,871,000	$31,836,000	$15,539,000	$2,281,035,000
Construction	*$2,262,871,000*	*$31,585,000*	*$15,537,000*	*$2,231,286,000*
Historic Preservation Fund	*$50,000,000*	*$251,000*	*$2,000*	*$49,749,000*
FWS	$500,000,000	$15,575,000	$10,260,000	$484,425,000
BIE	$153,000,000	$0	$0	$153,000,000
BOR	$74,464,000	$33,663,000	$33,663,000	$40,801,000
Aging Infrastructure	*$46,534,000*	*$33,663,000*	*$33,663,000*	*$12,871,000*
Natural Disasters	*$27,930,000*	*$0*	*$0*	*$27,930,000*
BLM	$58,115,000	$0	$0	$58,115,000
BIA	$17,765,000	$12,565,000	$12,565,000	$5,200,000
USGS	$2,743,000	$1,624,000	$1,566,000	$1,119,000
Totals	**$3,118,958,000**	**$95,263,000**	**$73,593,000**	**$3,023,695,000**

Source: OIG.

The bureaus have allocated nearly all of the $3.1 billion of ARA funding to specific projects, as discussed in more detail below.



Bureau Spending Approach

National Park Service

Congress appropriated a total of $2.3 billion to NPS in the ARA—$2.26 billion for construction and $50 million for Historic Preservation Fund expenses. NPS has stated that it plans to spend all of its construction funding for projects to repair sites damaged by disasters at 32 parks, such as road repairs, building reconstruction, habitat restoration, and grant-funded historical site preservation. NPS allocated approximately $1.6 billion to the Blue Ridge Parkway to address the effects of Hurricane Helene. This is the largest allocation of the ARA funds, accounting for about 71 percent of all NPS ARA construction funding and nearly 52 percent of DOI's total ARA funding across all bureaus. Additionally, NPS allocated $99.6 million to Yosemite National Park, which was affected by California's 2022 and 2023 severe winter storms. Figure 2 shows the five NPS sites with the most allocated funding.

Figure 2: NPS Sites With the Most ARA Allocations

Park	State	Initial Allocation	% of NPS Construction Funds
Blue Ridge Parkway	VA/NC	$1,616,415,000	71.4
Yosemite National Park	CA	$99,611,000	4.4
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park	CA	$87,193,000	3.9
Olympic National Park	WA	$75,967,000	3.4
Acadia National Park	ME	$70,876,000	3.1
Total		**$1,950,062,000**	**86.2%**

Source: OIG.

Blue Ridge Parkway

The Blue Ridge Parkway runs through Virginia and North Carolina, spanning 469 miles across State lines. Known as "America's Favorite Drive," it connects Shenandoah National Park with Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Blue Ridge Parkway has some of the highest numbers of visitors of all NPS sites. Hurricane Helene made landfall in the area in September 2024, causing widespread treefall, erosion, trail, and culvert damage. It severely damaged many historic and non-historic structures and compromised critical drainage features that support public infrastructure and significant cultural and natural landscapes. The hurricane caused extensive road damage with 57 landslides across approximately 200 miles of the parkway in North Carolina; the highest concentration of damage occurred from the Linville Falls area near milepost 317 south to Mount Mitchell State Park near milepost 349 (see Figure 3). In addition to the destruction of park facilities near Linville Falls—including the visitor center, picnic area comfort stations, and portions of the campground—NPS documented more than four dozen landslides and other storm-related natural and cultural resources damaged along more than 30 miles of parkway alone.

Figure 3: Landslide Damage to Gooch Gap at Milepost 336

Source: NPS.

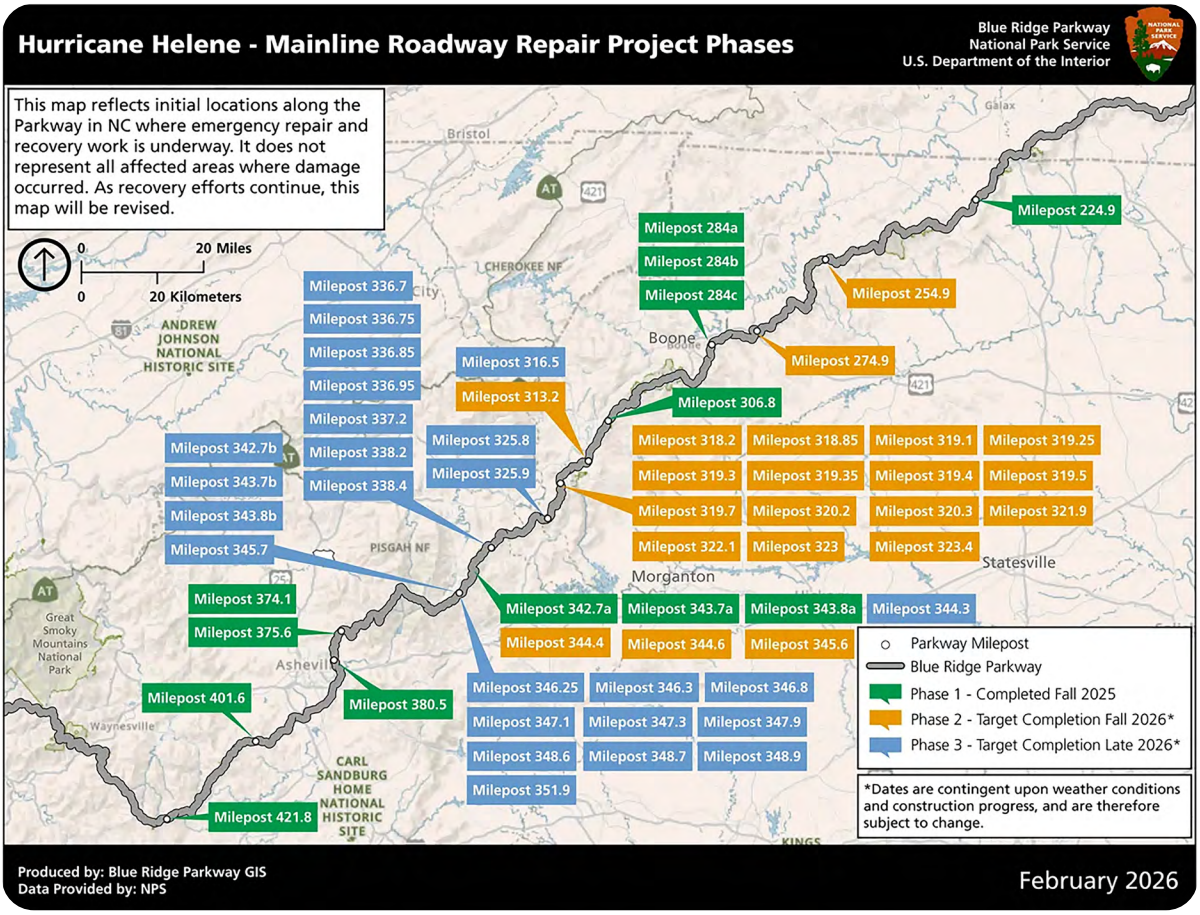
Bureau Spending Approach

In 2025, NPS allocated $1.6 billion to the parkway for disaster relief and designated over 50 projects for recovery and restoration. These projects include relevant disaster mitigation tasks such as mainline road and trail repairs; slide stabilization; parkway reconstruction;[3] stream, pond, and habitat restoration; and park facility and structure repairs. NPS is completing these projects in three planned phases (see Figure 4 for a map of these project locations by phase):

- Phase 1 included repairs in 13 locations, resulting in reopening 48 miles of the parkway. According to NPS' September 2025 Status Report, this is complete.[4]
- Phase 2 will focus on repairing 21 landslide areas within a five-mile radius south of the Linville Falls milepost. According to NPS,[5] as of September 2025, project managers are currently working on these projects.
- Phase 3 will restore damage at multiple sites involving slope, road, and infrastructure repairs.

NPS' target completion date for all parkway projects is fall 2026.

Figure 4: NPS Map of Hurricane Helene Project Phases Along Blue Ridge Parkway



Source: NPS, https://www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/helene-recovery-projects-at-a-glance.htm.

[3] NPS is working closely with the Federal Highway Administration to perform emergency stabilization and repair work at several slide locations near transportation networks.

[4] *Helene Impacts and Recovery*, https://www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/helene-impacts-and-recovery.htm.

[5] *Helene Recovery Projects – At a Glance*, https://www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/helene-recovery-projects-at-a-glance.htm.

Bureau Spending Approach

NPS' phase 2 repairs include implementing the reinforced soil slope process, which involves building a steep slope with an engineered system (resembling a tiered cake) made from gravel and wire mesh. This NPS image shows the three stages of the reinforced soil slope process to repair damage from landslides.

Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park, located in California's Sierra Nevada mountain range, experienced significant snowfall and floodwaters due to a series of storms in winter 2023 (see Figure 5). As a result, the park sustained floodwater and snowfall damage to infrastructure, buildings, and roads. NPS funded 15 recovery projects throughout the park to repair damage to public campgrounds, build resilient employee housing, repair damaged roads and ranger stations, and complete necessary structural repairs to infrastructure. The projects are being planned, are underway, or are completed, with all project completions slated to occur between October 2025 and November 2029.

Figure 5: Yosemite National Park in Early March 2023

Source: NPS.

Historic Preservation Fund

The Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund (ESHPF) program supports the recovery of historic and cultural resources pursuant to the Stafford Act[6] in areas impacted by disasters. The ARA provided $50 million under the ESHPF grant program—$2 million of which is for administrative costs for NPS HPF grants, leaving $48 million for ESHPF grants. As of August 2025, NPS was in the process of reviewing grant applications and had not distributed any funds. An NPS official subsequently stated the grant approval process began in October 2025. In March 2026, we were informed that NPS had awarded 33 grants to 19 States and 2 U.S. territories for a total of over $48 million.

[6] The Stafford Act details the programs and processes by which the Federal Government provides disaster and emergency assistance to local, State, Tribal, territorial, and Insular Area governments; eligible private nonprofit organizations; and individuals affected by a presidentially declared disaster or emergency.

Bureau Spending Approach

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Congress appropriated $500 million to FWS in the ARA, which FWS distributed to 56 sites to repair infrastructure, habitat, and wildlife and fish refuges damaged by a variety of disasters. Disaster response actions at these sites include removing debris; cleaning up hazardous materials; repairing facilities; eradicating invasive species; and repairing roads, bridges, and levees. FWS allocated approximately $82 million to the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, which was damaged by Hurricane Helene and severe storms in Illinois. Additionally, FWS allocated approximately $70 million to the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, which was affected by severe winter storms in California in 2022 and 2023. Figure 6 shows the five FWS sites with the most allocated funding, totaling approximately 53 percent of available FWS funds.

Figure 6: FWS Sites With the Most ARA Allocations

FWS Site	State	Initial Allocation	% of FWS Funds
Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge	IL	$82,199,000	16.4
Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge	CA	$70,460,000	14.1
Guam National Wildlife Refuge	GU	$55,131,000	11
Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge	CA	$29,408,000	5.9
San Diego National Wildlife Refuge	CA	$25,562,000	5.1
Total		**$262,760,000**	**52.5%**

Source: OIG.

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

FWS funded its largest storm damage repair project, totaling $82 million, to repair floodwater impacts to the 44,000-acre Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois. The damage to the refuge stemmed from the Little Grassy Lake Dam flooding in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Program managers found empty spaces (called voids) under the lake's surface where soil and other materials were being lost. Without repairs, these voids could lead to serious damage or even cause the dam to fail. FWS allocated $81.4 million to Crab Orchard to construct resiliency solutions for floodwater impacts, such as dam repair. The refuge is developing an interagency agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work on a dam safety modification study[7] to determine the extent of necessary repairs and defining the design and rehabilitative construction plan. FWS is in the project finalization stage of the dam safety modification study and risk analysis, and it plans on working on design and construction from 2026 to 2028, with the final project being completed by 2032.

In addition to damage from Hurricane Helene, the refuge suffered damage from a series of earlier severe storms within Illinois in spring 2024. FWS used an additional $843,000 of ARA funds to address pipe culverts that were damaged in a spring flood.[8]

[7] Dam safety modification studies are planning studies that evaluate long-term risk reduction actions and alternatives with the goal to formulate alternatives to lower a dam's risk to be within acceptable safety guidelines. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the dam safety modification decision document will present alternatives and a recommended risk management plan.

[8] Pipe culverts are drainage structures that play a vital role in refuge operations by directing water flow beneath roads.

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge

FWS awarded over $70 million for resiliency and recovery projects to Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in San Francisco, California, to address damage from a series of atmospheric river events.[9] The refuge protects critical habitat for threatened and endangered species and provides recreational enjoyment for the community. The same series of storms that damaged Yosemite National Park in California throughout 2023 affected the refuge, causing infrastructure and property damage. FWS disaster relief projects include raising levees by three to five feet, installing riprap to control erosion,[10] and constructing a new water pumping station.

Bureau of Indian Education

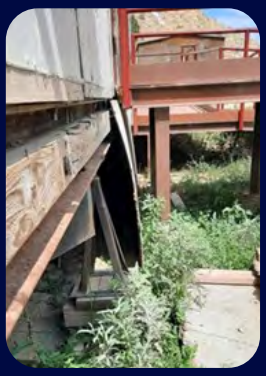
BIE allocated the entirety of its $153 million in ARA funding to the To'Hajiilee Community School (TCS) in New Mexico to construct a new school at a site outside of the flood plain in which the current school is located.

According to BIE, TCS has been working with BIE and BIA on the design of a new school since the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act[11] provided an initial $90 million in funding in December 2022 for necessary expenses related to consequences of flooding at the school. BIE intends to use this funding, combined with the ARA funds, to construct facilities for kindergarten through 12th grade and vocational/technical training.

TCS has experienced regular flooding, resulting in leaks through the roof and flooding in hallways, causing it to shut down at times.

Flooding at the school in 2018.

Cracks in Building 621.



Support damage to portable school building.

Damage and repairs from a sewer break.

Source: TCS.

[9] An atmospheric river event is a weather pattern where a narrow band of air carries a large amount of moisture over the ocean to land that can fall as heavy rain or snow. These events can cause flooding, high winds, and other storm-related impacts.

[10] Riprap is a construction component consisting of large stones or other durable material used to protect land and/or infrastructure from erosion.

[11] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-328, 136 Stat. 5216 (2022).

TCS, however, experienced delays in constructing the new school. Specifically, according to school staff, it requested multiple deviations to the Space Allocation Agreement[12] with BIE and BIA because TCS and Indian Affairs' Division of Facilities Management and Construction (DFMC) disagreed on the amount of space that would be adequate for educational purposes. For example, TCS requested space for the Family and Children Education Program, but BIE did not approve this space allocation in the Space Allocation Agreement. Instead, according to school staff, DFMC required the Space Allocation Agreement to include new housing for staff even though the school staff did not use the housing at the school's current location, leading it to be converted to classroom and administration space. TCS also experienced delays because of changes in its project management support. Despite these delays, the school expects to begin construction in spring 2026.

Bureau of Reclamation

Congress appropriated $74.5 million to BOR, divided into two different areas in the ARA: $46.5 million for the Aging Infrastructure Account and nearly $28 million to address the consequences of natural disasters. BOR plans to use the Aging Infrastructure funding for repairs to siphon tubes that are more than 100 years old at St. Mary Canal Siphon. A catastrophic failure at the inlet of both siphon tubes led to a powerful water flow that caused the siphons—which were already weakened due to seepage, corrosion, and instability—to break apart. This washed away the concrete structures holding the pipes underneath and caused damage to several BOR facilities. BOR officials stated that the St. Mary Siphon project has been completed as the first step to restoring critical water supply to more than 110,000 acres of farmland and multiple municipalities across north-central Montana.[13]

BOR is using the ARA's natural disaster funding to make repairs to BOR facilities damaged due to various natural disasters, including winter storms, fires, and floods. These facilities are spread throughout Montana, New Mexico, and California; BOR allocated $23 million of the $28 million to the following five projects:

- Delta Division (CA): $1.02 million for roadway repairs at the Delta-Mendota Canal Bridge due to flooding damage caused by the Salado Creek Levee breech, which occurred during the California atmospheric rivers from December 2022 to January 2023.
- American River (CA): $333,000 to (1) repair the American River Water Education Center, which promotes water education about the American River watershed, and (2) replace fish hatchery netting, which protects fish from predatory birds. These sites were both affected by flooding caused by the California atmospheric rivers.
- Friant Division (CA): $14.6 million for several projects related to the Friant-Kern Canal, which began construction in 2021. However, the atmospheric rivers culminated in a storm in March 2023 that caused widespread flooding and damage to the 10-mile project site. These projects include repairing canals and embankments, clearing debris and silt from siphons, repairing temporary haul roads, repairing multiple trailers, and replacing a water truck.

[12] According to the Office of Facilities, Property and Safety Management for Indian Affairs, the Space Allocation Agreement is the basis for the design of the new school; it is developed through input from the school, Tribe, BIE, and BIA and receives final approval from the BIE Director. A Space Allocation Agreement deviation is a formally approved exception that allows BIE to depart from the initial developed Space Allocation Agreement. It provides leadership approval for an alternative approach to the spacing requirements and is intended to ensure that BIA has shown that the deviation was intentional, justified, and authorized.

[13] As summarized above, we did not review whether DOI's use of the ARA funds to date complied with the ARA's requirements. We do note, however, that the Aging Infrastructure Account funding provided in the ARA was to be spent in accordance with certain provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. No. 117-58). We are separately reviewing BOR's use of Aging Infrastructure Account funding provided under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

- Solano Project (CA): $1.95 million for three projects to repair sewage lift stations to prevent sewage overflow; replace buoys, buoy lines, anchors, and hardware at Lake Berryessa; and repair roads and culverts damaged as a result of rain, floods, and winter storms from 2023 to 2024.
- The San Juan Chamba project (NM): $5 million for repairing the Nambe Falls Dam and its storage reservoir, which provide supplemental irrigation for the Pojoaque Valley Irrigation District and the pueblos of San Ildefonso, Nambé, and Pojoaque. The dam and reservoir need sediment to be cleared after the Pacheco Canyon Fire in 2011 and the Medio Fire in 2020. When vegetation that normally holds soil in place is burned during a wildfire, it can turn to sediment that—along with ash and other contaminants—can flush into streams, rivers, and reservoirs and cause erosion.

BOR does not currently have a plan for the remaining $5 million in ARA funding for natural disasters.

Bureau of Land Management

Congress appropriated BLM $58 million in the ARA. BLM plans to use these funds to relocate and rebuild the Glennallen Field Office (GFO) in Alaska, which is located in a floodplain about 190 miles northeast of Anchorage. The GFO manages nearly 4.4 million acres of public lands in south-central and southeast Alaska and serves more than 200,000 visitors annually as well as the rural community of Glennallen and surrounding areas.

The GFO's facilities have flooded three years in a row, with back-to-back flooding in 2023 that caused catastrophic damage and left some facilities unusable. According to BLM, the flooding affected electricity and sewage systems, forcing the site to rely on generators and portable toilets. Flooding is expected to increase as the valley's snow levels over the next 10 years are projected to continue to increase.

Source: BLM.

According to BLM, the rebuild will include a consolidation of office buildings, a new warehouse, a new road, and housing units and will allow the GFO to continue uninterrupted services for surrounding communities, residents, Tribes, commercial interests, and tourists.

Bureau Spending Approach

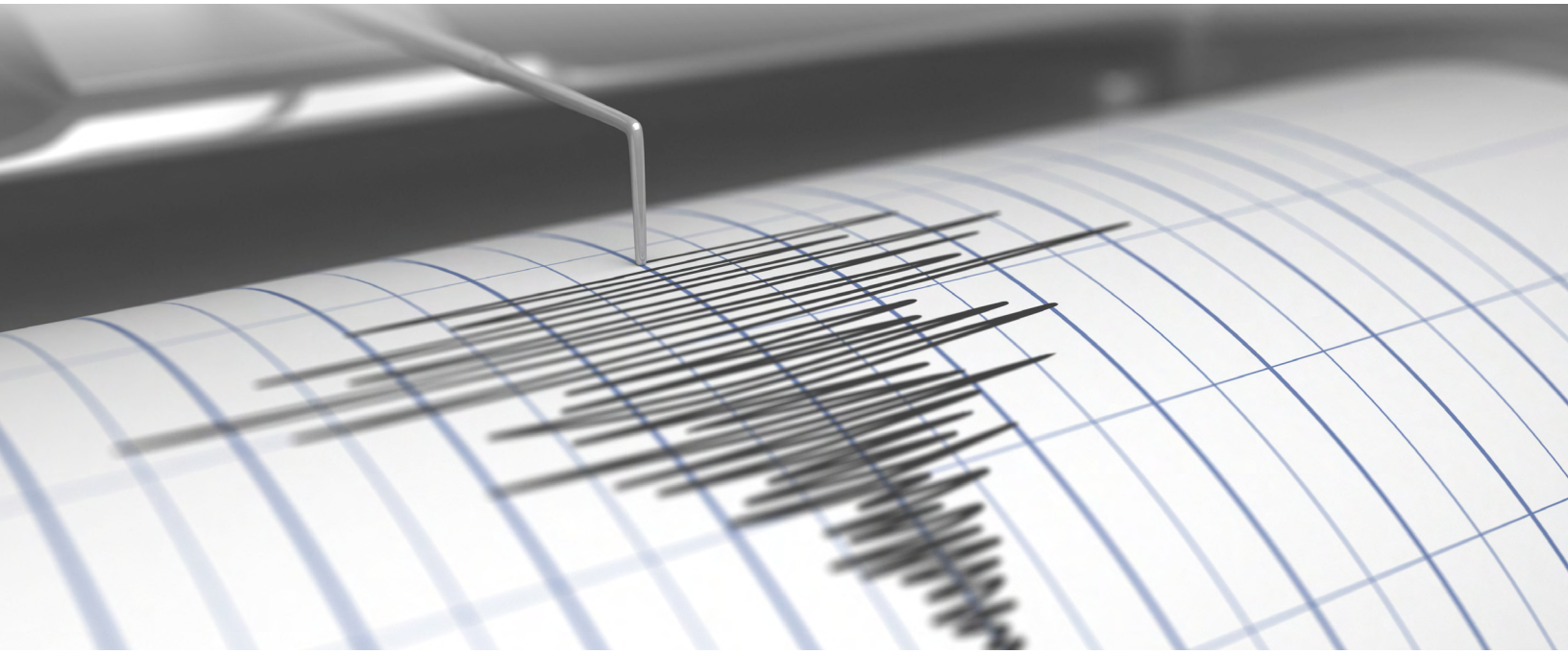
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Congress appropriated BIA $17.77 million in the ARA. BIA is allocating these funds to Tribes for disaster damage repairs through its BIA Office of Emergency Management, which worked to provide supplemental disaster funding after receiving requests from multiple Tribes in the following States:

- Washington: The Yakama Tribe received $2.2 million for home repairs due to a June 2024 fire.
- California: The Manchester Pomo, Hoopa, Yurok, and Cher-Ae Tribes received a total of $11 million to address damage from the California atmospheric rivers from December 2022 to January 2023.
- Nevada: The Walker River Tribe received $4.4 million in funding to replace an irrigation building destroyed in the Colony Fire in 2024.
- Maine: The Passamaquoddy and Mi'kmaq Tribes received a total of $165,000 for food, temporary shelter, emergency and administrative costs, equipment, and repairs to Tribal buildings due to severe storms in January 2024.

U.S. Geological Survey

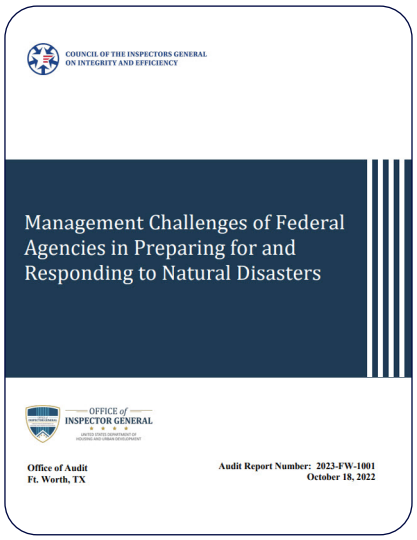
Congress appropriated USGS $2.7 million in the ARA, which USGS is allocating for streamgage and seismic monitoring station[14] repairs and the repair or replacement of related equipment, which had been damaged in flooding and tornadoes caused by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. USGS plans to spend the majority of funding to streamgage projects and over $500,000 to harden seismic monitoring stations that, according to USGS, have "antiquated" equipment. USGS officials stated that, despite a lack of personnel as well as departmental credit card and contracting approval restrictions put in place in 2025, they are still making progress on these repairs; however, they noted it has been "at a slower rate than hoped."



[14] Streamgages are tools that collect data Federal, State, and local agencies use to help design bridges, dams, and levees and conduct risk and vulnerability assessments of irrigation, water, and wastewater treatment systems. Seismic monitoring stations provide earthquake data to USGS.

Challenges and Risk Areas

In FY 2023, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency issued a report discussing common disaster-related findings offices of inspectors general reported during prior disasters as well as their conclusions or recommendations to help Federal agencies prepare for and respond to future natural disasters. The report identified a number of challenges that DOI should be aware of and take steps to mitigate to ensure funds are awarded and spent properly—such as human capital management, financial management, and procurement and grant management.[15] The report specifically stated, "Agencies should learn from the results of these reports and implement controls and systems to limit future obstacles to spending disaster funds efficiently and effectively."



While we identified unique challenges each bureau has faced in the "Bureau Spending Approach" section above, we identified overarching challenges and risk areas affecting the efficient and effective use and oversight of disaster relief funds across DOI.

Personnel Challenges

DOI's bureaus have experienced various decreases in staffing from FYs 2024 to 2025 (see Figure 7 on the next page). BOR lost almost 30 percent of its employees during that time period, while BLM, FWS, and USGS lost approximately 20 percent—with some staff from these bureaus leaving DOI altogether and some staff moving under the Office of the Secretary (OS).[16]

We interviewed officials from all bureaus we reviewed. Officials from each bureau reported that personnel shortages posed the single greatest challenge for awarding and expending the funds. Specifically, they stated that, due to recent decreases in available personnel, there are fewer qualified people to perform essential disaster recovery tasks. For example, a USGS official stated that staff attrition at USGS has slowed work for the project implementation teams and the support staff that process acquisitions. An FWS official also stated that FWS has lost personnel in regional and contracting offices, making it difficult to start projects.

[15] Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, Report No. 2023-FW-1001, *Management Challenges of Federal Agencies in Preparing for and Responding to Natural Disasters*, issued Oct. 18, 2022, https://www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/2023-FW-1001.pdf.

[16] In April 2025, Secretary's Order No. 3429, *Consolidation, Unification, and Optimization of Administrative Functions*, announced that responsibilities including human resources, information technology, financial management, training and development, international affairs, contracting, communications, Federal financial assistance, and other administrative functions are in the process of being centralized under OS.

Figure 7: Staffing Changes from October 2024 (FY 2025) to October 2025 (FY 2026)

Bureau/Office	No. Employees Q1 FY 2025	No. to OS	No. Separated	No. Employees Q1 FY 2026	Total % Change	Trendline*
BIA	3,771	0	149	3,622	-3.95	
BIE	3,098	1	219	2,878	-7.10	
BLM	10,982	934	1,190	8,858	-19.34	
BOR	5,761	875	805	4,081	-29.16	
NPS	21,969	1,337	2,421	18,211	-17.11	
FWS	9,094	690	1,164	7,240	-20.39	
USGS	8,442	656	1,129	6,657	-21.14	
OS†	3,335	4,826	442	7,719	+131.45	

* Quarterly trends from the beginning of FY 2025 to beginning of FY 2026. These trendlines are not to scale across all bureaus and offices.

† The OS numbers include employees transferred from all bureaus and offices, including those that were not included in our scope.

Source: OIG analysis of Federal Personnel and Payroll System data.

In addition, a BIA official stated that BIA did not have enough personnel in its Southern and Central California Offices, requiring these offices to combine efforts because they lacked awarding officials to support the more than 150 Tribes these two offices are responsible for assisting. BIA helps the Tribes with the documentation to receive funding (such as the statement of work and budget layout) and provides approving officials to award funds to Tribes—some of these officials can approve nonconstruction grants and contracts while others can award higher level contracts and grants. Officials stated that BIA has not been able to provide necessary in-person assistance to the Manchester Pomo Tribe in California, which is awaiting $800,000 for disaster relief that has been delayed because the statement of work and budget layouts for its planned activities have not been fully completed.

Limited Capacity in Remote Locations and Project Cost Challenges

Bureau officials also stated that another challenge is the limited availability of contractors, skilled labor, equipment, and construction materials in some of the affected areas. Similarly, the remote location of some of the projects can add challenges. This, when combined with recent increases in construction pricing, has the potential for repairs to exceed costs the bureaus initially projected. For example, a BLM official explained project cost concerns for its GFO construction due to the office's remote location; construction and labor costs in Alaska can be 200 to 300 percent higher than in the lower 48 States, and materials shipped from Seattle to Anchorage can take two to three weeks to arrive.

Challenges and Risk Areas

Supplemental Disaster Funding Risks

We have conducted several audits and inspections of disaster relief funds and processes, and we found particular risk areas in DOI and the bureaus' contract and grant oversight. Specifically, we issued 25 reports evaluating contracts and grants DOI awarded using Hurricane Sandy disaster relief supplemental funds. Our body of work identified weaknesses in the pre-award process and contractor/grantee selection, insufficient policies and compliance issues, unsupported or inadequately supported expenses, and inadequate post-award monitoring.

Timely completion of projects is also a critical factor in disaster relief—particularly in locations with a heightened or anticipated risk of similar disasters, such as hurricanes, occurring in the future. As noted, the ARA's disaster supplemental appropriations are available until expended. Although it has been just over one year since the ARA was signed, the funding was provided specifically for expenses related to the consequences of disasters occurring in and prior to 2024. It appears that bureaus are moving forward on a variety of projects, but if these funds are not obligated and expended in a timely manner, DOI's procurement risks increase. Namely, projects started or obligated years after the disasters occurred may include ineligible activities or procurements unrelated to past disasters covered by ARA funds. Furthermore, since repairs are still underway, the risk of subsequent disasters occurring in areas that have not yet been fully repaired can worsen the situation and require more funding and work to address further damage.

Enhanced Oversight Required To Mitigate Challenges and Risks

We have identified the DOI's management of supplemental spending as a significant challenge facing the Department.[17] The significant increase in funding combined with a reduction in staff can put funds at increased risk of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. This combination creates challenges for DOI to effectively oversee its programs, ensure program objectives are achieved, and verify funds are spent properly. For example, in one review, we concluded that program staff were not organized and allocated in a manner proportional to the increase in other supplemental funding, which reduced the staff's ability to expend the funds for their intended purposes, prevent award delays, reduce inefficiencies, and allow for adequate monitoring of the grants.[18] Without appropriate oversight, these issues could hinder DOI's ability to timely rebuild from natural disasters.

[17] *Inspector General's Statement Summarizing the Major Management and Performance Challenges Facing the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fiscal Year 2025*, issued Jan. 2026.

[18] *The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Should Improve Efforts for Expending Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Funds* (Report No. 2023-INF-014), issued Sept. 2024.

Scope and Methodology

We conducted our inspection in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* as put forth by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. To accomplish our objective, we:

- Identified and reviewed total NPS, FWS, BIE, BOR, BLM, BIA, and USGS appropriations, obligations, and expenditures using funding provided through ARA Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations.
- Reviewed relevant laws, regulations, and policies governing the supplemental funding.
- Obtained prior and current oversight related to this funding.
- Gathered data about completed and planned DOI disaster relief projects.
- Identified any challenges or barriers along with successes for DOI to award and spend its disaster relief funding.
- Interviewed officials from NPS, FWS, BIE, BOR, BLM, BIA, and USGS.

Based on the scope of this inspection, we summarized the status of ARA disaster relief funds and a selection of associated NPS, FWS, BIE, BOR, BLM, BIA, and USGS projects, but we did not verify eligibility of projects or evaluate DOI's use of funds. For the purpose of this inspection, we did not report on the obligations and expenditures appropriated to our office for oversight.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our planned oversight efforts of DOI's disaster relief activities may include the following:

- Examining disaster relief appropriations or specific DOI projects in future audits, inspections, or evaluations.
- Reviewing DOI's use of disaster funds for allowability, allocability, and reasonableness.

OFFICE OF
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WHO CAN REPORT?

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