

Opinion: Fed land transfer key to Calif. secession

By Robert H. Nelson, High Country News

Many Californians woke up the night after the presidential election thinking that they were living in a different country. A few felt so alienated that they publicly raised the possibility of seceding from the United States.

There is no constitutional way, however, to do this. But there is a less radical step that would amount to a limited secession and would require only an act of Congress. Forty-five percent of the land in California is administered by the federal government – including 20 percent of the state in national forests and 15 percent under the Bureau of Land Management. Rather than outright secession, California could try to assert full state sovereignty over all this land.

Until Nov. 8, California wouldn't have cared about this, but with the prospect of a Donald Trump administration soon managing almost half the land in the state, Californians may want to rethink their traditional stance. Otherwise, they are likely to face more oil and gas drilling, increased timber harvesting and intensive recreational use and development on federal land in the state.

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