

Calif. counter-attack could stop federal land transfers

By Tay Wiles, High Country News

The morning after the 2016 presidential election, California's legislative leaders issued a message that has set the tone for the state under the new administration, under President Trump. "Today, we woke up feeling like strangers in a foreign land," it said.

Since then, many Californians have pushed back against conservative policies on everything from immigrant rights to the environment. One of those offensives is Senate Bill 50, which, after sailing through committee this spring and summer, aims to stop the federal government from transferring or selling off public lands to corporations.

The Public Lands Protection Act is part of a series of three bills introduced in late February called the "Preserve California" package, meant to preempt any efforts by the Trump administration to weaken environmental laws. The bill would allow California's State Lands Commission first dibs on lands the federal government wants to sell, and would let the state have a say in transferring to a new owner.

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