

Opinion: Federal lands need to be in public domain

By Nicholas Kristof, New York Times

This will make me sound grouchy and misanthropic, but I sometimes wonder if what makes America great isn't so much its people as its trees and mountains.

In contrast to many advanced countries, we have a vast and spectacular publicly owned wilderness, mostly free and available to all. In an age of inequality, the affluent have gated neighborhoods, private schools, backup generators and greater influence on elected officials. But our most awe-inspiring wild places have remained largely a public good to be shared by all, a bastion of equality.

My family and I have been backpacking on the Pacific Crest Trail through the Sierra north of Donner Pass, enjoying magnificent splendor that no billionaire is allowed to fence off. We all have equal access, at no charge: If you can hold your own against mosquitoes and bears, the spot is yours for the night.

Read the whole story