

Another national park idea the Trump Administration had recently was [to offload hundreds of national parks to states and local governments](#), in order [to trim \\$900 million](#) from the Park Service budget. [The proposal is sparse on details](#), only calling for the “transfer [of] certain properties to State-level management.” Secretary of the Interior Burgum stated [that only about 60 “crown jewel” parks would be off of the list](#) for potential transfer. As the article notes, most states seem uninterested in taking on the additional cost and responsibility of managing national parks, and in any case, national park status generally is a plus in terms of getting tourists to visit a site.

But as with [Alcatraz](#), it’s important to remember there is law here. And that law probably means that any major change in operations of national parks will have to come through Congress. First, direct transfer of the ownership of these parks to states, local governments, or tribes would almost certainly require an act of Congress. Congress created these parks, and thus Congress really is the entity that can dissolve them. More generally, courts tend to be [skeptical](#) of executive efforts to divest federal lands without Congressional approval.

What about transferring management of the parks over to state or local governments or tribes, but keeping ownership with the federal government? There may be limits as to how much the executive branch can delegate decisionmaking to third parties – [one case out of Nebraska](#) held that the Park Service could not delegate major management decisions to outside entities, at least without retaining ultimate control, or changing the relevant statutory authority.

So this is another Trump Administration idea that is probably not going far soon. But I will note a small bit of irony here – in the Biden Administration, there was a [lot of effort put into joint management agreements for federal public lands with federally recognized Indian tribes](#). There’s obviously a lot of differences between that approach and what the Trump Administration is doing, but there are parallels as well.