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# This Land was 'Our' Land: Governance Nostalgia and Constitutional Sheriffs

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## Abstract

From Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" to Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry's "Let America be America Again," elites commonly and effectively use nostalgic appeals for a 'better' past to manipulate political behavior. Yet little is known about the conditions that create an electorate responsive to nostalgic appeals. This paper uses the election of Constitutional Sheriffs, who run on platforms emphasizing a return to 'local control' and federal land management change to identify the institutional antecedents of successful elite appeals to nostalgia in the western United States. Specifically, federal land policy promoted indigenous dispossession and then historically privileged locally powerful economic and cultural interests because those interests aligned with powerful organized interests and national preferences. However, federal land management institutions became increasingly visible beginning in the late 1970s— as distributive and ideological conflict over land use intensified at the local level — fomenting grievances against the federal government within the same communities federal agencies historically privileged. As a result, these communities formed preferences for political candidates campaigning to reverse their perceived loss of institutional control. Leveraging exogenous variation in terrain ruggedness and aridity, I demonstrate that historical restrictions on federal land use are associated with contemporary Tea Party support and have persistent, causal effects on the contemporary

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\*The paper was developed in Goleta and at UCSB which are located on unceded Indigenous Chumash ancestral lands and waters. Please consider providing public comment supporting the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary in the [final public comment period](#), financially supporting the Northern Chumash's efforts to preserve their language via their [Nonprofit](#), or find out whose ancestral lands and waters [you work and live on](#).

election of constitutional sheriffs. I supplement these statistical results using historical institutional analysis- analyzing policy sequencing and a set of archival interviews and documents- and conducting a set of contemporary elite interviews in Southern Utah. Together, these analyses demonstrate that policy changes create governance nostalgia - *a longing to restore a locality's perceived ability to influence government processes and outcomes*- within historically privileged groups and this shapes political attitudes and behaviors.

Placeholder

**Keywords:** Governance Nostalgia, Policy Feedback, Group Threat, Historical Institutionalism, Federal Lands

# 1 Introduction

From congressional leaders of the Tea Party Caucus of the early 2010s to The Center for American Progress, organized interest groups and political elites regularly call attention to threats and advocate “restoring” the policies of yesteryear. The reactionary Tea Party movement emphasized threats to “real Americans” or hetero, Christian Middle-class, and White folks and advocated for a return to limited government (Parker and Barreto 2013). On the other side of the aisle, after failing to confirm President Obama’s Supreme Court nominations, CAP highlighted threats to Democrats to inspire political engagement and then used threats to abortion access and calls to restore Roe V Wade to foment women’s grievances and voting (Center for American Progress 2023; Olinsky, Ben and Oyenubi, Grace 2022). Emphasizing threats and grievances is a common contemporary and historical political strategy.

Political elites regularly highlight group threats and grievances because it offers political payoffs. Psychologically, group threat creates emotional reactions that can mobilize individuals and groups. Groups translate threats into collective grievances that are politicized when groups believe that a political solution could ameliorate the grievance.

Sometimes political elites highlight group threats and grievances to create nostalgia. Grievances related to past positionality of the group and perceptions that the current conditions threaten that position together create governance nostalgia. Historically dominant groups protect their position within institutions and via policy. Changes in policy that reduce their control over a policy area create grievances, which can be activated to create governance nostalgia- *a longing to restore a groups’ perceived ability to influence government processes and outcomes*.

This paper assesses whether the conditions that can create governance nostalgia shape political behavior - particularly support for the election of leaders who promise a return to the past. Assessing the causal effects of policy changes and historically informed interactions between institutions and political groups presents a wealth of identification challenges. To address these challenges and uncover causal relationships, I triangulate between methods and data sources.

First, a historical institutional analysis of U.S. federal land management policy using secondary sources and some primary sources, establishes the policy sequencing, critical junctures, and some potential mechanisms linking policy change, historical privilege, governance nostalgia, and anti-establishment behaviors. Specifically, policy sequencing reveals that extractive interest groups influenced national policies and shaped local policy decisions that privileged the land use interests of rural predominantly White, Christian, conservative communities and these preferences aligned with the interests of the national electorate. When the environmental movement emerged in the early 1960s and new federal environmental policies unexpectedly upset the federal land management policy status quo in the late 1960s and early 1970s, conflict over federal land management policy created localized threat perceptions and ultimately local grievances. Political elites leveraged these grievances to create more grievances and stronger political behaviors. Federal land management policies continued shifting towards the preferences of the preservation-focused environmental movement throughout the century and into the 21st century. I hypothesize that places where management priorities shifted away from local control will support candidates who appeal to

nostalgia. I supplement the policy process tracing with new spatial, historical federal land management data and collect original data to fill gaps in the historical record to provide a descriptive, quantitative picture of federal land management change over the last 140 years.

Then I use an instrumental variables approach with land ruggedness and aridity as plausibly exogenous features (Andrews 2020; James M. Turner 2012; James Morton Turner 2009; Wilson 2014) to further substantiate the historical case analysis. These analyses assess the causal relationship between changes in policy that historically privileged certain identity groups or communities and support for candidates who explicitly call for returns to historical governance norms (here, constitutional sheriffs and Tea Party support). I find that for Western counties, every 1 percentage point increase in county land under protective or restrictive federal land management between 1971 and 2014 caused a 0.6 percent increase in the probability that they had a constitutional sheriff representing their county in 2015. While this may seem small, this is a substantively large effect. To upper quartile of Western State counties, experienced policy shifts of greater than 7.45 percentage points which corresponds to a 4.67 percent increase in the probability a CS sheriff was elected in that county. I estimate the effects of those same land management shifts on Tea Party support in the west and a one percentage point increase in protected federal lands in the county is associated<sup>1</sup> or causes a .977 percent increase in Tea Party support within the county and a substantive effect of a greater than 7.01 percentage point increase in county Tea Party support for counties experiencing the upper quartile of policy change.

A host of robustness checks provide substantively similar results- e.g. limiting the policy change treatment time-frame tempers the magnitude, but they remain directionally similar. The process tracing suggests some potential mechanisms underlying these relationships. Specifically, that historically powerful groups that lose control over an issue area, develop grievances that powerful industry and political elites activate for political gains. Groups' perceptions of their past power and policy change creates the governance nostalgia that drives political behavior.

More broadly, historical policy changes can have long-lasting effects on attitudes and behaviors. Feedback between policy changes and historically powerful groups can make communities and groups that believe they have lost power over a policy area, targets for nostalgic appeals from candidates and political elites. This feedback operates at national and highly localized scales and demonstrates that locally salient, land management policy decisions have enduring political effects. Government agencies and institutional actors must consider the historical dynamics between privileged groups and policy changes as they promote new processes and policies because political elites are liable to exploit governance nostalgia inducing stronger anti-establishment behaviors and beliefs.

## 2 Group Threat, Grievances, Policy Feedback, and Governance Nostalgia

In short, historical interactions between institutions and identity groups shape political opinion and behavior. Institutions support specific economic and cultural preferences via their

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<sup>1</sup>see results for discussion regarding cautious interpretation

processes and policies which builds trust and goodwill with privileged groups. Historically dominant identity groups and communities develop governance nostalgia when policy changes lead visible institutions to change the way they weigh group interests. These changes can induce identity group threat and create grievances with institutions. Repeated policy changes away from the historically powerful identity group or communities' interests can strengthen these attitudes. If a historically powerful identity group or community believes their interests were formerly prioritized by the institution, then they will express what I call, governance nostalgia- a longing to restore their perceived ability to influence government processes and outcomes. This new concept helps explain why certain groups of people and places are more likely to express and respond to nostalgic appeals. Mapping these policy area feedbacks better explains contemporary identity group and community attitudes and behaviors.

## 2.1 Identity Group Threat, Attachment, and Interest Homogeneity

Political elites from presidents to mayors highlight identity group<sup>2</sup> threat and grievances to generate political support. Organized interest groups and political elites work to control government authority and protect or promote their economic and cultural interests by winning policy terrain (Hacker and Pierson 2014). Winning policy terrain requires public support to win elections and pass policies. Political elites emphasize identity group threat because it induces specific emotions that help them win elections and build policy support.

Emphasizing threats to identity group interests induces arousal for identity group members (Stephan 2014; Stephan, Ybarra, and Morrison 2016) which political elites work to convert into attitudes and behaviors. Surprisingly, individuals react with more anger, anxiety and arousal when they perceive threats to their identity groups' interests than to their personal interests (Huddy 2013, 2018; A. Jardina 2014). While people are most sensitive to threats to their groups' status and respect they also respond to threats to their groups' economic interests (Almeida 2018; Huddy 2018; Mutz 2018; Schildkraut 2017). Therefore, elites often highlight policies or candidates that threaten these group interests to shape group responses.

Responses to threat also vary based on identity group attachment. Strongly attached individuals respond to threats with stronger ingroup identification and willingness to protect or promote group interests (Branscombe et al. 1999; A. Jardina 2014; Ashley Jardina 2021; Pérez 2015; Phoenix and Arora 2018); in other words, threat strengthens their attitudes and mobilizes their political behavior. In contrast, threats can demobilize or go unrecognized by weakly attached group members (Branscombe et al. 1999; Gutierrez 2021; Junn and Masuoka 2008; Pérez 2015). This is why many interest groups emphasize threat in their communications with group members and why partisan candidates generally target party members threatening rhetoric.

Identity groups and communities with overlapping interests are also attractive targets for political elites emphasizing threat. Threats amplify the emotional responses of individ-

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<sup>2</sup>Social identity groups are organized around a particular characteristic- (e.g. race/ethnicity, religion, political party, or affinity group) and help humans distinguish ingroups and outgroups (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Individuals identify with different identity groups and their degree of attachment varies (Huddy 2018)

uals who identify with multiple groups that share the same threatened interest (Mason and Wronski 2018; Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021; Perez et al. 2021; Pérez 2015; Phoenix and Chan 2021). Similar to cross-pressured politicians, when individuals' group interests' conflict, they respond in proportion to their relative attachments (Weller and Junn 2018).

## 2.2 Turning Threat, Anxiety, and Grievances into Action

Angry, anxious, activated citizens are politically irrelevant unless elites can turn individual responses into collective behaviors. Grievances link identity threat and anxiety to political action. Whereas anger and anxiety are based on current threat perception, identity groups form grievances when they believe a threat diminished their groups relative economic standing, status, or respect (Gurr 1968; Huddy 2013, 2018; Snow 2010). Political elites help create collective grievances by making grievances and threats more salient, while promoting specific political solutions (Huddy 2013, 2018). Appealing to already aggrieved identity groups is an attractive strategy because when those groups perceive threats, it increases the salience of historical grievances and amplifies the threat they perceive currently (Bergstrand 2014; Pinard 2011). This process can politicize identity groups and promote collective action and political attitudes (McClain et al. 2009) which is what political elites need to win policy battles and elections.

Sometimes elites highlight threats and grievances to create collective nostalgia which motivates political beliefs and behaviors. Nostalgia is a sentimental longing for the past that is triggered by discontinuities or discomfort and is strongly associated with political attitudes (Wohl, Stefaniak, and Smeekes 2020) and behaviors (Fetterman, Wildschut, and Sedikides 2021; Sedikides and Wildschut 2018). Discontinuities or discomfort that trigger collective nostalgia also create grievances, but discomfort is based on how a potential threat could diminish group interests while discontinuities are based on belief that a former threat did diminish group economics, status, or respect. Both require evaluating identity groups' current and past positionality which can shape grievances and behavior (Griffin, Kiewiet De Jonge, and Velasco-Guachalla 2021; Gurney and Tierney 1982; Gurr 1968). Thus, if returning to former conditions entails regressing to relatively lower identity group economic, status, or respect, then elite appeals to nostalgia should not sway group members (Elçi 2022; Geurkink et al. 2020; Huddy 2013).

While political elites highlight or try to create identity group threat, grievances, and nostalgia to manufacture political support based on groups' collective responses to these emotions and beliefs, how identity groups and communities become susceptible to these efforts remains a black-box. When and how does emphasizing group threats, grievances, and nostalgia become a useful political strategy for political elites? Given the ubiquity and strong effects of these appeals, the answer will better explain political and social conflicts.

## 2.3 Harbinger of Governance Nostalgia: Powerful Groups Institutionalize Power

My argument begins by tracing how historical interactions between policymakers and interest groups can dramatically increase the political power of certain identity groups and communities under the status quo. Organized interest groups work to control government

authority and protect or promote their economic and cultural interests by winning policy terrain (Hacker and Pierson 2014). The average citizen is not involved in or aware of these policy battles because they happen in technical, opaque spaces designed for experts (Fourinaies and Hall 2018; Stokes 2020, 20; You 2017). Organized, narrow interest groups dominate these technical spaces because these groups often have the most resources (Hacker and Pierson 2002; Smith 2000; Vogel 1989), have an easier time engaging in collective action (Moe 1980; Olson 1965), and have designed institutions that accommodate their interests (Derthick 1985; Lindblom 1982; Pierson 2004). Thus, the policy status quo in most policy areas privileges the interests of historically powerful interest groups.

Historically powerful interest groups are often that way because they draw on shared identities and are aligned with dominant identity groups and communities. Winning policy terrain in democracies requires coalitions so powerful organized emphasize shared group or identity interests to win policy support in technical spaces or with the public (Knutson 2018; D. Nelson and Yackee 2012; Rothschild 2020). This is why interest diverse unions and businesses often draw on shared partisan identities to fight policy battles. Winning policy battles is also easier for interest groups when dominant identity groups support them because they have more political resources like time, money, or civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Thus, policies that organized interest groups support and pass, usually bolster the cultural and economic interests of historically powerful identity groups (Gilens and Page 2014; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012). When government institutions regularly accommodate certain identity groups' interests, members come to expect continued service. For example, government trust is stronger amongst older, wealthier, and Whiter populations who have more years of education (Pew Research Center 2022).

Yet policy environments are not stable over time. What happens when new policy conflicts challenge the status quo that affords privilege to certain identity groups and communities? I argue that those identity groups and communities develop governance nostalgia – a longing to restore a groups' perceived ability to influence government processes and outcomes. When groups challenge privileged identity groups' policy terrain dominance and material, cultural, or ideological conflict emerges, visible conflict creates group threat.

## **2.4 Governance Nostalgia Emerges from Policy Conflict**

Policy changes influence group outcomes so changes can threaten group economics, status, or respect and this induces anxiety and arousal in identity groups and communities (Stephan 2014; Stephan, Ybarra, and Morrison 2016). When a policy change threatens an identity group or community enough that they identify collective grievances, the magnitude and intensity of their grievance is determined by the content and context of the policy change (Branscomb 1999). Mobilizing privileged groups is easier because these groups are already politicized and paying closer attention to policy battles. Groups challenging institutionally privileged groups and communities must expand the scope of conflict because they are not likely to win governance battles within the institution (Schattschneider 1960). Expanding the scope of conflict makes material, cultural, and ideological conflict more visible and increases the threat perceived by dominant groups (Branscombe et al. 1999; A. Jardina 2014; Phoenix and Arora 2018; Stephan, Ybarra, and Morrison 2016).

The threat that groups perceive from policy changes is shaped by both the current policy



change and the groups' historical collective grievances. Historical policy changes, policies, and policy feedback broadly shape individuals' and groups' attitudes and behaviors (Brayne 2014; Cohen 2010; Lerman 2013; Mettler 2002; Soss 1999, 199; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011; Soss and Jacobs 2009). Contemporary threat increases the salience of historical group grievances (Pinard 2011, Bergstrand 2014), so policy changes that threaten groups and communities activate grievances based on earlier policy area changes. This process amplifies contemporary grievances and threats. Identity groups and communities learn and adopt these historical grievances from their parents (Jennings and Niemi 1974; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009), communities (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen 2018), and their social identity groups (Achen and Bartels 2016; Billig and Tajfel 1973; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002) like any other attitude or belief. So, unwanted policy changes can create grievance positive feedback cycles. Together, historical grievances and contemporary grievances shape group threat and historically powerful identity groups and communities are the most likely to construct policy-related grievances because they controlled policy and institutions.

Groups that associate historical policy changes with grievances are prone to developing nostalgia because nostalgia is triggered by discontinuities or discomfort (Fetterman, Wildschut, and Sedikides 2021; Sedikides and Wildschut 2018). Identity groups and communities that oppose a policy change will view the policy as a threat, which induces anxiety or anger, and as a discontinuity. So, while any undesired policy change inducing identity group threat and grievances can create nostalgia for the previous policy status quo, only historically privileged identity groups and communities that controlled the policy status quo will view their former relative positionality favorably. Meaning, they are liable to believe the former policy status quo generated greater relative benefits with respect to group economics, status or respect while other groups and communities will not. This suggests my first hypothesis:

**H1** *Policy changes to issue areas controlled by historically privileged identity groups creates governance nostalgia within those groups*

	Historically Privileged Identity Group, Controls Issue Area
High Policy Change	High Governance Nostalgia
Low Policy Change	Low/No Governance Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a powerful behavioral motivator that political elites leverage (Elçi 2022; Fetterman, Wildschut, and Sedikides 2021; Griffin, Kiewiet De Jonge, and Velasco-Guachalla 2021) and has different effects on different groups (Lammers and Baldwin 2020). The battle for policy terrain and the associated threats, grievances, and nostalgia shapes how identity groups and communities respond to elite appeals to threat and nostalgia. While populist candidates often invoke nostalgia for former policy regimes and specific grievances with government institutions to generate political support (Geurkink et al. 2020; van Prooijen et al. 2022; Wilkinson 2018), members of historically privileged identity groups and communities are much more likely to respond to these appeals.

**H2:** *Groups with higher governance nostalgia respond to elite appeals to nostalgia*

These identity groups and communities designed the institutions and policies and incorporated their group members into the processes. When policies move away from the status

quo- these historically powerful groups react with anger because they lose control over the outcomes and process (Hochschild 2016; Huddy 2013). Losing control of procedures is an even stronger motivator of behavior than losing control over the outcomes (Tyler and Blader 2000). Together, this suggests that groups who believe they have low control over outcomes and procedures are the most likely to react with anger and suggests my final hypothesis that:

**H3:** *Groups with high governance nostalgia that also perceive low current control over an issue area are the most likely to engage in anti-establishment behaviors*

### 3 Measuring Policy Change and Governance Nostalgia: Federal Lands, Constitutional Sheriffs, and Tea Party Support

#### 3.1 Why Federal Land Management? Visible Policy and Change

Federal land management policy is a good issue area to assess governance nostalgia because historical policies clearly privileged certain groups and policies have changed significantly over the last 140 years. The federal government manages 46.4% of the 11 coterminous Western states<sup>3</sup> land in contrast to 4.2% of all other states (Vincent, Hanson, and Argueta 2017) making federal land use decisions salient. While federal land boundaries have remained essentially static since 1900, federal land use policies have shifted towards prioritizing protection and restricting extractive activities. These policy changes and historically privileged groups offer opportunities to test how governance nostalgia and its attendant political behaviors emerge. The map below shows the proportion of county land managed by federal agencies and demonstrates why land policy might matter in the West- land is visible, as are the institutions that manage land and these federal lands are widespread. The second maps document the percent of counties' area under protective federal land management in 1900 and 2020 in the West.

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<sup>3</sup>The 11 coterminous Western states include Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico.

County Area Managed by Federal Agencies Excluding Bureau of Indian Affairs

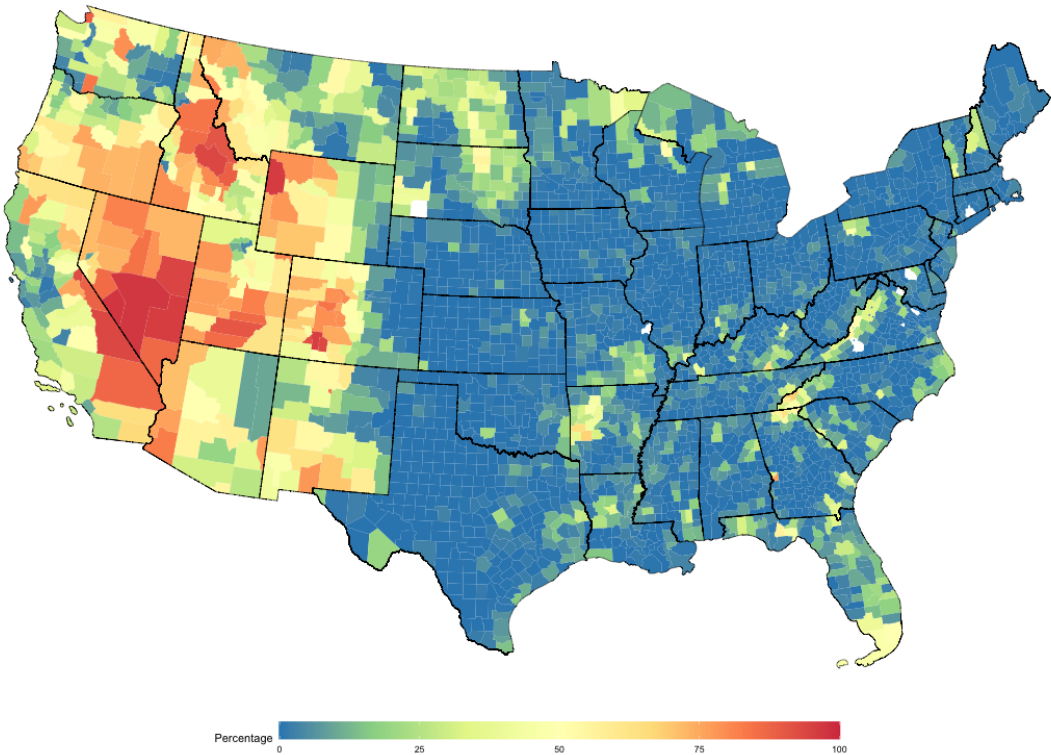


Figure 1: Total County Area Managed by Federal Agencies

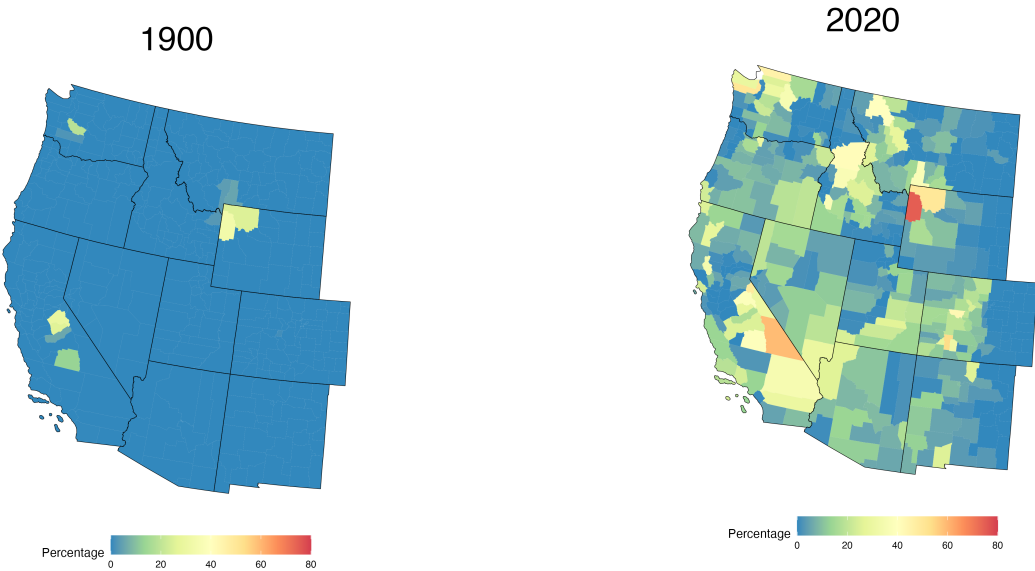


Figure 2: Percent of County Under Federal GAP12 Management

The following section use two approaches to operationalizing concepts and hypothesis testing. First, it builds a historical institutional account of federal land management both

nationally and in the West. The analysis brings together secondary sources- scholarly studies, newspaper articles, federal agencies documents and a few archival primary sources- legislative records and primary accounts that help situate the case in a broader historical context and reconstruct *policy sequencing*. The policy sequencing clarifies *critical junctures* and potential causal mechanisms within the land policy case by showing both the qualitative context and degree of the policy changes. Most importantly, the historical institutional analysis clarifies the relative control different political interests and groups exerted over the federal land management policy terrain historically. Second, I develop and explain a novel quantitative measure of federal land management change and collect missing historical data that help generate the *first systematic quantitative descriptive* evidence of federal land policy change. Then the paper moves to a quantitative analysis and tests the hypotheses by operationalizing loss in policy control (treatment with protective federal land management), governance nostalgia (electing constitutional sheriffs, support for Tea Party) and anti establishment behaviors (electing constitutional sheriffs).

## 3.2 Qualitative Measures and Results

### 3.3 Policy Sequencing

Federal land management in the Western United States is rooted indigenous dispossession, the privileges afforded to historically powerful interest, identity groups, and communities, and, conflict over changing management priorities. Process tracing reveals that federal policies predominantly privileged powerful extractive industries' and rural communities' interests in the West through 1970 at which point policies changed significantly, continuing through today. These policy changes spurred a variety of reactionary, backlash movements that pushed for establishment solutions and exhibit(ed) signs of anti-establishment beliefs and behaviors.

#### 3.3.1 Overview of Policy Change and Historical Power

In the first stage in the 18th and 19th centuries, powerful industries and dominant national preferences backed indigenous dispossession, extraction, and privatization to build the industrialized economy. In the second stage, environmental degradation, conflict between competing industries, and industry concentration spawned a variety of reactionary movements that pushed for land management reform. The major reforms instituted between 1890 and 1906 created more formalized and professional land management institutions that supported some restrictions on extractive activities (National Parks and eventually the national Park Service) and were tasked with managing lands for multiple uses. While certain extractive industries lost power under this arrangement, many industries were happy to codify their interests and build barriers to entry. These industries used their power over the policy process to set up arrangements the dominant local industries in rural areas of the West- which generally benefited the powerful identity groups in those communities- set local federal land use policies. Nationally, preferences for economic development meant that these local arrangements aligned with overarching national interests.

In the third stage, as new public land users emerged in the 1940s-1960s, the preservation focused environmental movement emerged within middle-class, White, college-educated, mostly urban populations. New environmental interest groups used policies in other environmental issue areas and litigation to upset the policy status quo and shift federal land use towards more protection and less extraction. These changes challenged the historically powerful extractive industries and dominant interests within the predominantly White, working-class, Christian, conservative, rural communities across the West. The material, ideological, and cultural conflicts between powerful interest groups (environmental vs industry) created threatened group economics, status, and respect. Local policy decisions continued moving away from both materially and symbolically significant extractive industries and amplified grievances in rural Western communities. Both industry and political elites leveraged these grievances for political gain, emphasizing group threat and framing land use policy changes as the causes of myriad societal ills.

### 3.3.2 Indigenous Dispossession and Gilded Age Exploitation Entrench Privilege

Powerful natural resource interest groups institutionalized land use policies promoting their economic interests in the 18th and 19th centuries and these policies aligned with the interests of dominant identity groups at the time. First, federal policies sought to eradicate Native Americans and privatize formerly communal lands<sup>4</sup> giving land primarily to developers and White, Euro-American, residents from the East.<sup>5</sup> Organized business groups from the Eastern U.S. secured policies that supported railroad construction alongside timber, livestock, mineral, and oil extraction operations and Eastern capital financed the projects (Andrews 2020; Cronon 1992).

By the late 19th century most of the best farmland had been privatized and the remaining lands were more forested, rugged, arid, and generally less attractive for homesteading.<sup>6</sup> Indigenous peoples had been violently restricted to reservations and a host of industries battled for control of overlapping resources and policy control. Laissez-faire capitalism, extreme resource extraction, and eventual environmental collapse in some Western ecosystems precipitated challenges to the federal land management status quo in the mid-late 1800's (Wilson 2014).

The agrarian Populist movement of the 1890s emerged within farming and working class communities and pushed back against concentrated capital, while the urban, Progressive movement emerged within predominantly middle-class and White communities and pushed

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<sup>4</sup>A variety of Land Ordinances in the late 18th and early 19th century along with the Homesteading Act (1862) provided the “legal” framework for taking Native American lands.

<sup>5</sup>While some minoritized groups settled in Western communities- e.g. Chinese and Japanese laborers along railways (Pandaya 2019), Mexican and Mexican-American citizens who either entered the U.S during this period or who became part of the U.S. after it took Mexican territory during and after the Mexican-American Wars (Library of Congress 2020), and pockets of Black communities along rail lines and near mining operations (Public Broadcasting Service 2011) and parts of Kansas, Oklahoma and Colorado (see exodusters (Kansas Historical Society 2011 ) often found near mining operations along rail lines (- these groups rarely held more local political power than the White- Euro-American settlers.

<sup>6</sup>While the General Lands Office was established as an agency for dispensing land, in 1891 the office shifted to managing mineral resources. In the following years, the federal government created a bevy of new land management agencies from the Forest Service in 1905, to the Bureau of Reclamation in 1902, to the Department of Interior and National Park Service in 1916.

for bureaucratic reform and tempering big industry (Phillips 2007, Andrews 2020). With Theodore Roosevelt at the forefront, Progressives challenged the industrial and extractive industry titans' unfettered extraction and wealth concentration (Andrews 2020). The conservationist faction, associated economic interest and Gifford Pinchot, pushed and passed the first federal multi-use policies, regulating water rights, timber extraction, oil and coal leasing, and grazing permits, which mitigated the worst environmental harm (Hays 1959). The preservationist faction, associated with middle-upper class, college-educated scientists, religious figures, racial fears, and John Muir, advocated for preserving charismatic landscapes.

Roosevelt was swayed by both conservationist and preservationist arguments. He created national parks and monuments and the first iteration of the National Park service while reserving lands that had not been given to industry and White settlers, as the public domain. However, the federal lands (public domain) were managed under conservationists' utilitarian, 'greatest good for the greatest number in the long run' principle- which privileged economic use (Hays 1959). Many of the policies were backed by industry and longtime, local extractive resource users who used these new permits and leases to keep competitors out of the market (Hays 1959, Andrews 2020).

### **3.3.3 Privileging Industry and Rural Communities Builds Expectations**

While rural Western communities supported taking certain powers from industrial titans – as demonstrated by union organizing within the mining sector (Lecain 2009) and limiting massive timber operations (Rajala 1998)- many natural resource users interests' were codified by law. In other words, ranchers who had long grazed cattle in particular areas, now could exclude others from that same range or local coal mining operations could lease long term access to specific coal seams (Andrews 2020). So, while some mega-industrialists and natural resource interest groups (e.g. sheep grazers and rail industry) lost power over the late 19th and early 20th centuries, power was generally shuffled between major industries and these industries held sway over regional economies and culture.

Despite the preservationists efforts to build political support, the U.S. public supported prioritizing economic extraction (Andrews 2020). Extractive interests flexed their economic muscle locally and influenced national policy by lobbying or simply becoming the representatives themselves (Foss 1960; C. M. Klyza 1994; C. M. G. Klyza 2001; Phillips 2007). Given their constituents and interest group backers, politicians from Western states secured positions on committees charged with crafting federal land policy while at the local level Bureau of Land Management (BLM) officials deferred to dominant local community interests. From filling cattle grazing boards, setting their own grazing levels, and issuing their own grazing permits to receiving preferential treatment in lumber contracts, staking mining claims, stocking lakes with fish, building campgrounds and hiking trails, or bolstering hunting and game populations- dominant Western local interests often set federal land use practices (Isenberg 2005; C. M. Klyza and Sousa 2013; Layzer 2012b; Rajala 1998). Rural western communities trusted and supported federal land management agencies because they shaped their local land use decisions.

### **3.3.4 Elite Interest Groups Fend Off Early Threats to Institutional Privilege**

Eastern environmental interest group challenges to the livestock industry's sway over grazing policies between 1920 and the mid 1950s demonstrate that rural western communities did not yet hold strong grievances with the federal government. Every time eastern politicians tried to raise grazing fees or reduce permits, the livestock industry used their sway within committees to block the policy changes and even managed to garner extra federal funding for range improvements (Layzer 2012). The first hints of broader grievances with federal land managers came in the late 1950s when the BLM reduced the number of animals allowed on the range and then in the early 1960s started requiring fencing on some parts of the range (American Folklife Center 1978-1982). However, when political elites like Nevada Senator Pat McCarran organized a "Return the Public Lands to the West" campaign to sell federal lands to western states, it fell on deaf ears- rural western communities had no beef with the BLM yet.

### **3.3.5 Environmentalists Leverage New Policies and Activate Threats and Grievances**

Rural western communities started developing grievances when environmental interest groups emerged and non-land management policies destabilized the federal land management status quo. The preservation focused environmental movement emerged out of WWII when economic growth provided White, upper-middle class families with disposable income, automobiles, and a new interstate highway system facilitated tourism (Rome 2001; Sutter 2002; Turner 2012). These activists pushed for preservation and met little resistance- the Wilderness Act of 1964 outlined a process for designating wilderness while the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 expanded the Forest Service's management mandate from sustained production of timber and range to also include water, recreation, and wildlife. It was not until The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) passed in 1969 and The Federal Land Policy Management Act passed in 1976 that these earlier policies were implemented more widely and began changing local federal land policy.

Repeated material and ideological conflicts between rural, extraction focused Western communities and mostly urban, Eastern based environmental interest groups starting in the early 1970s through the 2010s crystallized federal grievances in the rural Western United States. A host of policy changes including, The Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA) of 1978, the FS Wilderness Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE I) in 1972, BLM Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II (RARE II) in 1977 and lawsuits enforcing earlier Wilderness Act, NEPA, and Endangered Species Act provisions, induced conflict and slowly moved local federal land policy towards protection. The Sagebrush rebellion protesting federal land management changes was the first backlash movement, emerging in the late 1960s across rural parts of the West and was based on calls to return authority to the historically powerful resource users. This movement started regionally, was funded by extractive industry groups, and some leaders within the movement even called federal land management restricting rural, predominantly White communities' capacity to shape land use, "federal colonialism" (Thompson 2014). Later, the Wise-use and property rights movements emerged based on similar grievances and nostalgia for past local power over federal land policy (Switzer 1997).

Since 1971 or 1972 when the first wilderness review legislation forced federal agencies to inventory and begin making decisions about wilderness areas, federal land use policies have increasingly favored management for natural services or protection instead of extractive use. Those wilderness area designations, heated public comment codified by NEPA, and various lawsuits over BLM and FS land in the 1980s and 1990s repeatedly reminded rural western communities of their lost clout and further cemented grievances with those federal land management agencies within those communities (Skillen 2020; James M Turner and Isenberg 2018). As nationally powerful environmental interest groups shifted land policy towards protection and away from those historically privileged rural communities, they felt threatened and industry associations (e.g. Cattlemen’s association and mining companies) as well as political elites like Ronald Reagan worked to amplify those threats and collective grievances to create nostalgia and bolster their political support (Switzer 1997). Repeated cultural and material conflicts over policy change and the underlying alignment between identity group interests and powerful organized interest groups created stronger grievances and threat perceptions. Predominantly White, rural, western communities had enjoyed nearly 100-160 years of federal institutional privilege over federal land management and they looked back fondly to their past relationships with those agencies.

### 3.4 Creating A Novel Quantitative Measure of Policy Change

To measure repeated policy changes likely to produce governance nostalgia, a measure of policy change is necessary. Until recently, this would be impossible given limited geospatial and historical agency policy data. However, the most recent and accurate U.S. Geological Survey Protected Areas Database (PAD-US) 3.0 dataset provides (12 m effective resolution) geometries for every parcel of federal land managed by 36 different management agencies in four management categories from 1872 to 2020 (U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Gap Analysis Project (GAP) 2020). The data characterizes each parcel by protection status and by the year it was designated. Even this data had significant missing data- 290 parcels (cases) were missing designation dates. The team used USFS, BLM, NPS websites, archived designation documents, or called local management units to determine the year each of the missing parcels was designated. Each parcel is classified with a level of protection and federal land managed under GAP1 and GAP2 parameters is permanently protected, left in a ‘natural state’, and extractive activities are forbidden.<sup>7</sup>

These restrictive land management categories are what I posit might trigger governance nostalgia since they represent a departure from the historic extractive and locally dominant policy regime-discussed further in the case below. To create the descriptive historical measures and treatment variable, I pre-process the spatial management data.<sup>8</sup> Then, calculating the change in the proportion of county land that is managed for permanent protection from conversion from natural land cover and extractive activities by the three main Western federal land management agencies- Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and National Park Service (NPS) from 1880 to 1976 provides the first quantitative estimates of the localized degree of change in federal land management.<sup>9</sup> The maps below

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<sup>7</sup>see SI for full description of different levels of land protection, available upon request

<sup>8</sup>see SI for details, available upon request

<sup>9</sup>See SI for maps showing decadal shifts, available upon request



show the proportion of county land managed by all federal agencies and the proportion of federal land managed primarily for protection from 1880 to 2020.<sup>10</sup>

The maps below show the proportion of county land managed by federal agencies for protection or under restricted uses from 1880 to 2020. Both the U.S. and West map demonstrates the significant shifts and policy changes over the 140 year period. The process tracing account documented how land management agencies prioritized local vs national interests and preservation vs industry interests in their management decisions. These new data demonstrate the degree and rate of change of these management changes.

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<sup>10</sup>See SI for summary statistics and more information on land policy classification. Including all minor federal land agencies, available on request

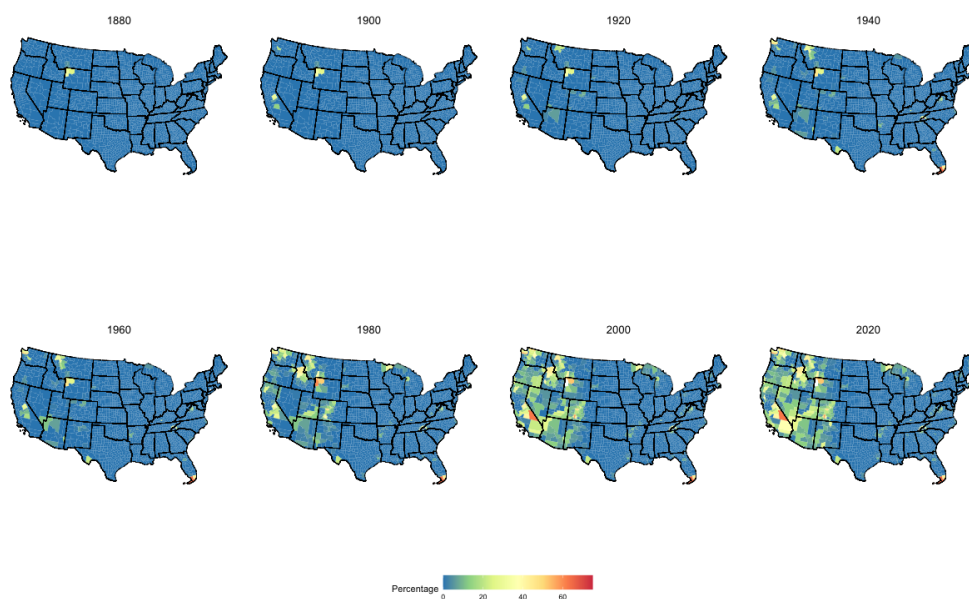


Figure 3: Policy Change 1880-2020, Increasing Protective Management

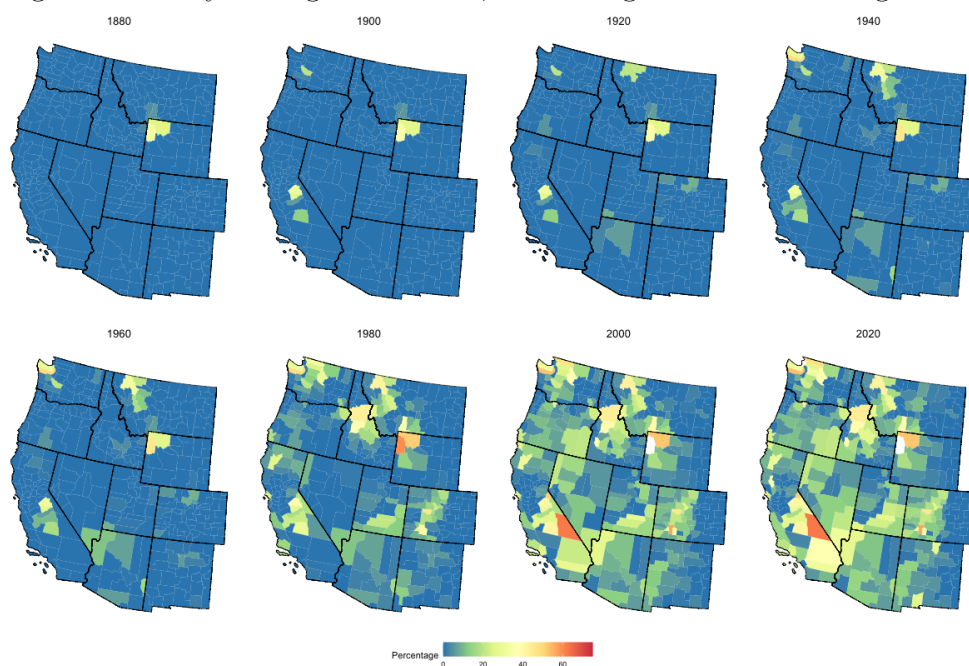


Figure 4: Policy Change 1880-2020, Increasing Protective Management

While national and Western federal land management policies changed between 1880 and 1960, these changes were predominantly centered on national monument (which often later became national parks) or park designations- including places like Glacier, Yosemite, Sequoia, Grand Canyon, Olympic, and Mesa Verde National parks. While these early changes did increase the amount of federal lands under protective or restrictive land management, changes

were fairly minor. In the decades between 1960 and 1980, major changes in federal land use policy emerged and that is clear from the maps. As discussed above, the Wilderness Act of 1964 signaled the coming change, but it was not until the late 1960s that larger, localized federal land use policies start shifting in localities throughout the Western U.S.

## 4 Quantitative Measures, Operationlization, and Research Design

*While the historical institutional analysis identifies critical junctures, the context of policy change, and the relative power different groups had over land use policy, can we quantitatively measure these effects? And, do they shape broader political attitudes and behaviors?* This article uses an instrumental variables approach to identify potential causal effects of federal land use restrictions on support for constitutional sheriffs. Terrain ruggedness and aridity serve as plausibly exogenous instruments to identify the effect of county-level federal land use restrictions on governance nostalgia and anti-establishment behavior- measured by electing constitutional sheriffs. While imperfect, these instruments provide one route for breaking some of the endogeneity characteristic in historical policy feedback analysis. Following the constitutional sheriff analysis, I extend the models to estimate these policy changes effects on support for the Tea Party, another measure of anti-establishment attitudes.

### 4.1 Dependent Variables:

#### 4.1.1 Constitutional Sheriffs and Tea Party Support

Whether a county was represented by a constitutional sheriff (CS) in 2015 (Nemerever 2019)<sup>11</sup> is used to operationalize governance nostalgia, responsiveness to elite appeals to nostalgia, and anti-establishment behaviors. Constitutional sheriffs reject the federal governments' authority and believe that the constitution gives sheriffs and the county the highest law-enforcement authority (CSPOA website, Nemerever 2019). Constitutional sheriffs' campaign platforms explicitly call for a return to the past when counties were the highest authority- which is legally dubious given the long history of federalism (), but invokes a nostalgic appeal for past authority over governance. So, electing a Constitutional sheriff indicates a county receptive to candidates making nostalgic appeals as well as community-level, anti-establishment beliefs and behavior. I use data collected in 2015 by Nemerever that considers a county represented by a constitutional sheriff if the sheriff was on the CSPOA list and held leadership positions within CSPOA. Nemerever checked reports from local newspapers and High Country News to confirm that the sheriffs supported county supremacy. Over-time data on constitutional sheriffs is not available, making a cross-sectional approach necessary. Federal lands are concentrated in the West and constitutional sheriffs are elected at the county level, so the sample includes all counties (n=414) within the 11 coterminous Western

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<sup>11</sup>In 2014, the CSPOA published a list of 485 sheriffs who were allegedly part of the organization. Unfortunately, this list contained false positives, sheriffs who claimed they had never heard of the organization (Nemerever 2019).

states<sup>12</sup> as the units of observation. The figure shows which counties in the 11 Western coterminous states had elected and were represented by a constitutional sheriff in 2015.

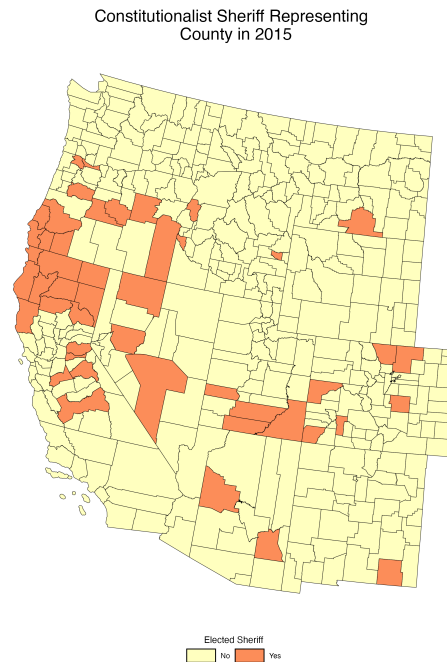


Figure 5

Data collected by Nemerever 2019

#### 4.1.2 County Level Tea Party Support

The Tea party emerged as a reactionary movement against perceived rapid social changes and threat to an idealized historical America- i.e. an America dominated by Christian, middle-class, hetero, male and White identity groups and values (Parker and Barreto 2013) as well as a movement against Federal government power (Arceneaux and Nicholson 2012). The Tea Party organizes around reducing the size and reach of the Federal government and was regularly characterized as both resenting the Federal government and seeking to prevent government function as an organizing tactic (Arceneaux and Nicholson 2012). Support for the Tea Party represents nostalgia for an idealized past. While the Tea Party's calls to restore ingroup control over policy is less explicit than with constitutional sheriffs, the Tea Party does implicitly call to restore the standing or power of certain types of people that are dominant in many rural Western communities. In general, Tea Party support indicates some anti-establishment beliefs and is a good secondary measure of an attitude or opinion associated with governance nostalgia. While Tea party support is associated with conservative ideology and Republican party membership, somewhere between 9 and 20 percent of Tea Party supporters were Democrats in 2010-2012 (Blake 2011).

<sup>12</sup>The 11 coterminous Western states include Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. I exclude Alaska and Hawaii from the sample because both have unique indigenous cultures and histories that are not aligned with the historical institutions and development of the other 11 states.

Estimating public opinion in rural, low population areas is notoriously difficult. However, using a nationally representative sample of Cooperative Election Study (CES) Survey data from 2010-2012 (n=130,085 responses) (Ansolabehere 2010, 2011; Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2012; Schaffner, Ansolabehere, and Luks 2020) to estimate county-level Tea Party support using multi-level regression with post-stratification (MRP) (Park, Gelman, and Ba-fumi 2004) provides the most accurate estimates of regional Tea Party support yet produced. MRP estimates require significant geographic coverage and response numbers to generate accurate estimates. While aggregating the three years may introduce a minor bias if the meaning of supporting the Tea Party changed significantly between each year, the increased precision of estimates is worth aggregating across the three survey waves.

Tea Party support is coded as a dichotomous variable as required by MRP and is estimated to the county geography. The hierarchical regression results are post-stratified using detailed demographic data (gender, education completed, race and ethnicity).<sup>13</sup>

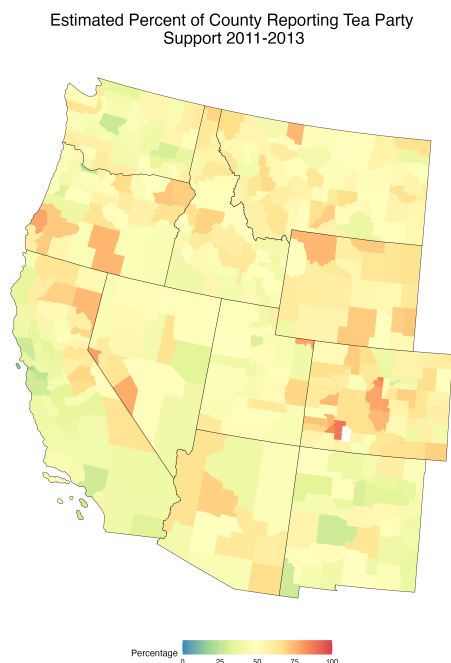


Figure 6

## 4.2 Treatment: Federal Land Management Policy Change

### 4.2.1 Establishing Treatment with Federal Policy Changes, The Status Quo and Critical Junctures

While some might place the 1964 Wilderness Act as the beginning of federal land policy shifting towards protective management across the West, however, the act only established a framework for designating wilderness. Changes in BLM grazing policy-

The changes wrought by FLPMA and FS act etc. suggest that 1976 marks the beginning of conflictual land use policy changes. Counties that had a larger share of their county

<sup>13</sup>Find full details on the MRP estimation procedure in the SI, available on request

under restrictive federal land management in 2014 than in 1976 are the places that are more likely to have experienced repeated, federal land management changes, material and ideological conflict as well as developed grievances and governance nostalgia. Thus, counties with the largest changes in the percent of the county under restrictive or protective federal land management are the most likely to espouse institutional grievances against the federal government and more likely to be represented by constitutional sheriffs.

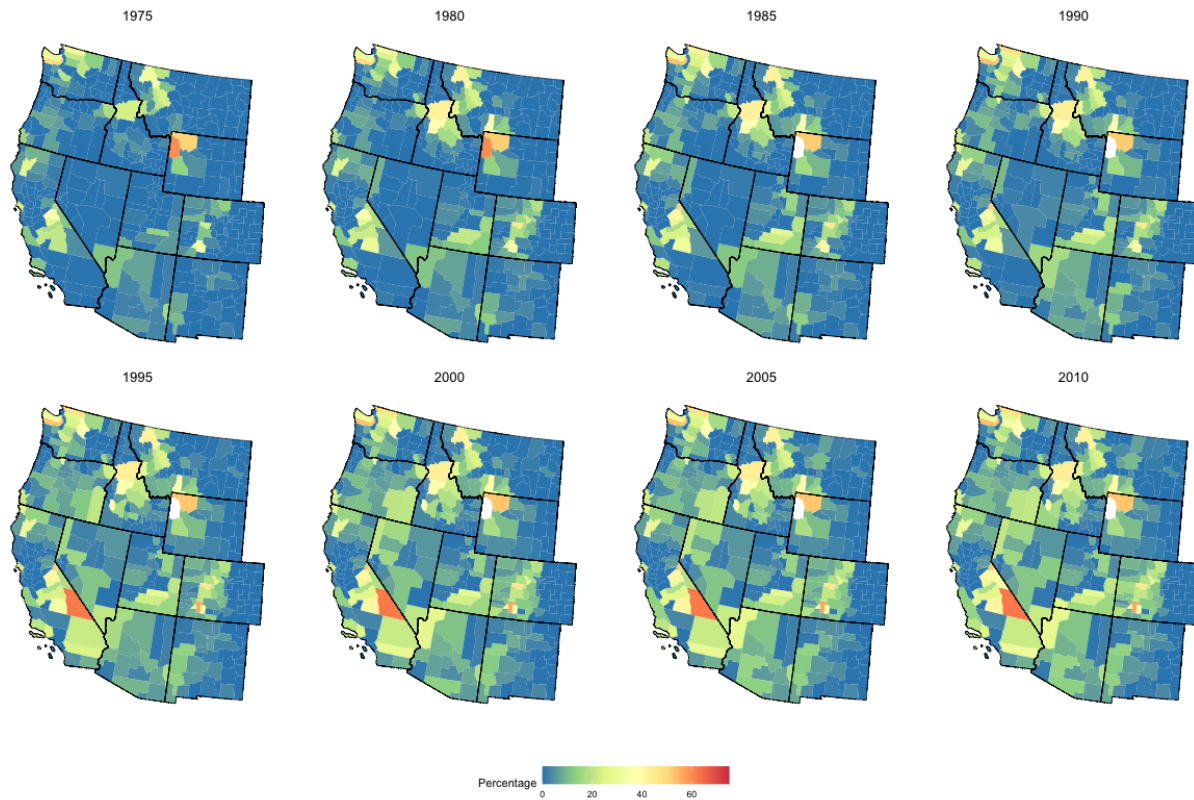


Figure 7: Environmental Decades, 5 Year Changes in Protective or Restrictive Federal Land Management 1975-2010  
2020 U.S. Census County Boundaries

## County Area Treated with Protective or Restrictive Federal Land Management From 1971 to 2014

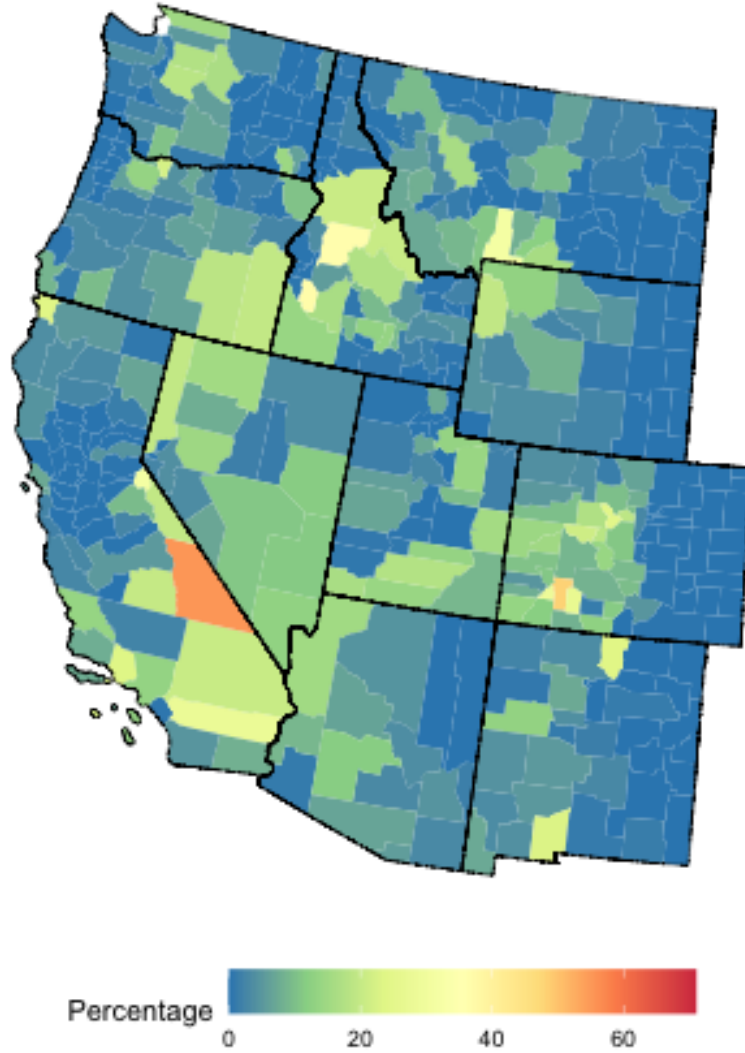


Figure 8: County Treatment with Protective or Restrictive Federal Land Management 1976-2014

### 4.2.2 Identifying the effects

To identify the effects of changes towards restrictive or protective federal land use and management on supporting and electing constitutional sheriffs, I use terrain ruggedness and aridity. Terrain ruggedness is a measure of topographic heterogeneity that assesses the elevation differences between adjacent cells- essentially a measure of how mountainous and rocky land and was initially developed by Riley, DeGloria, and Elliot (1999). I calculate Terrain Ruggedness for every county in the U.S using a geo-referenced, terrain ruggedness and land cover spatial dataset with 1X1 km grid-square level resolution to calculate Terrain



Ruggedness Indices for counties following the procedures outlined by Shaver, Carter and Shawa (2019).

To measure aridity, I use an index of aridity from the Global Aridity Index and Potential Evapo-transpiration (ET0) Database v3. The database provides a high resolution measure (30 arc-seconds) of global aridity between 1970-2000 (Zomer and Trabucco, 2022). They calculate aridity using a generalized function that includes precipitation, temperature, and reference evapo-transpiration (ETO).<sup>14</sup> Aridity is simply a measure of precipitation availability divided by atmospheric water demand- in other words, how humid or dry a particular place is. More arid places are more difficult to farm and are associated with the dry deserts of the American west (Mojave, Sonora, Chihuahua).

Ruggedness and aridity are likely to predict treatment with restrictive federal land management and federal land jurisdiction, yet be otherwise uncorrelated with anti-establishment voting and sympathy for nostalgic appeals. Ruggedness and aridity are associated with both policy and biological factors that make more restrictive and protective management more likely. The Wilderness Act of 1964 stipulates that potential wilderness areas are largely roadless (Wilderness Act 1964), making rugged and arid terrain the most likely to be eligible for wilderness areas and; given rules around public comment and public meetings- the most likely places to have experienced conflict between identity and interest groups over the wilderness designation process. The Endangered Species Act of (1970) requires specific procedural steps, documentation, and management choices and has shaped conflict in a variety of places and policy venues (Alagona 2013; Powell 2016; Sayre 2002). While federally listed endangered species are not always associated with rugged and arid terrain, both are associated with less fragmented habitat which makes it more likely to harbor populations of endangered species who are adapted to that particular environment. The spotted owl and various salmon runs are excellent examples of these factors- with respect to ruggedness- both are far more likely to thrive in rugged terrain (). Rugged regions of the Pacific Northwest and California are the most likely to host populations and the most likely to experience conflict between environmental interests and locally dominant timber interests.

Additionally, bias towards protecting charismatic landscapes, often, mountainous (rugged) and desert (arid) regions means that these regions are often the first places that conservationists, environmentalists, and others have focused on preserving. In the U.S., interstate highways helped connect more upper-middle class, white, urban, environmentalists from the East coast to the mountains and deserts in the West and helped create a strong constituency for the preservation-focused environmental groups like the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and National Wildlife Federation (Louter 2006; Sutter 2002). They funneled their efforts towards protecting and restricting extractive uses on those landscapes first. National Monuments and Parks are disproportionately located in rugged areas compared to grasslands/marshes/swamps/forests and other areas (Turner 2012).

Together, the bias towards charismatic landscape conservation and geographic and biological characteristics associated with protection eligibility and species' presence, makes rugged and arid lands in the West the most likely to receive treatment with more restrictive land management policies via national parks, monuments, conservation areas, and wilderness areas as well as procedurally, with restrictions on the kinds of activities and industries

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<sup>14</sup>See SI for a more detailed description with equations, available upon request



allowed on specific lands. Both help peel back the layers of endogeneity to identify the causal effects of federal land management restrictions on governance nostalgia and support for anti-establishment candidates.

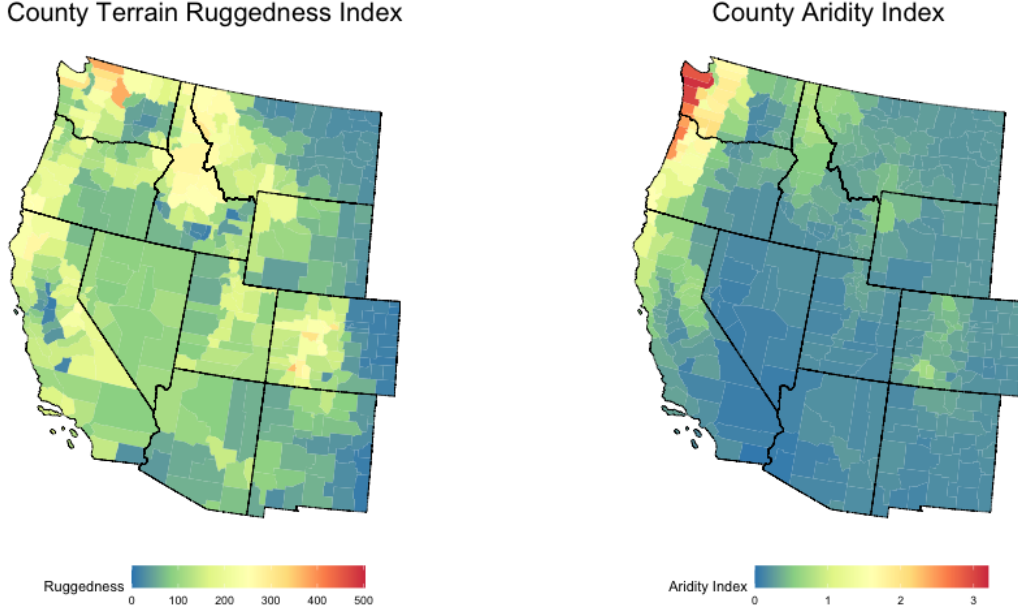


Figure 9: Instruments for Estimating Causal Effects

### 4.2.3 Estimation Strategy

I estimate the causal effect of variations in the percent of county land managed under restrictive or permanent federal protection ( $x_{it}$ ) on whether a county was represented by a constitutional sheriff in 2015 ( $y_{it}$ ), controlling for state fixed effects ( $\theta_s$ ) and a vector of control variables ( $\mathbf{w}_{it}$ ), where  $i$  indexes the county. The control variables include county population density (ppl/sq mile), median household income, percent with a college degree, percent identifying as White, percent Evangelical and Latter Day Saints adherents, and percent Republican candidate vote share in the previous presidential election.

The estimates use two instruments, terrain ruggedness ( $rugged_i$ ) and aridity ( $aridity_i$ ). The instruments are correlated with  $x_i$  but uncorrelated with the error term ( $u_i$ ). The first stage regression is:

$$x_i = \pi_0 + \pi_1 rugged_i + \pi_2 aridity_i + \lambda \mathbf{w}_i + v_i, \quad i = 1, \dots, n \quad (1)$$

where  $v_i$  is the error term in the first stage regression.

The instrumental variable estimate of  $\beta_1$  is given by:

$$\hat{\beta}_{IV} = \frac{\text{Cov}(rugged_i, y_i - \mathbf{w}_i' \gamma - \theta_s - (\pi_0 + \pi_1 rugged_i + \pi_2 aridity_i + \lambda \mathbf{w}_i))}{\text{Cov}(rugged_i, x_i - \pi_0 - \pi_1 rugged_i - \pi_2 aridity_i - \lambda \mathbf{w}_i)} \quad (2)$$

This considers both the influence of ruggedness and aridity on treatment.

#### 4.2.4 Exclusion Restriction: Terrain Ruggedness and Aridity

To identify causal effects, instruments need to satisfy the exclusion restriction. In this case, aridity and terrain ruggedness should only affect communities' response to elite appeals to nostalgia and support for anti-establishment candidates through changes in local federal land policy changes. Given theoretical expectations around what causes threat, grievances, and nostalgia, how might aridity and ruggedness create nostalgia amongst residents of Western counties?

##### **Economic Development and Types of Economies [population density, rural population, median income, distance to major market]**

Both aridity and rugged terrain might make travel, farming, and economic development more difficult. Rugged terrain slows road and rail construction, and farming is harder in hot, dry, mountainous terrain. Rugged, arid areas might develop more slowly, and perceptions of group relative deprivation can create grievances (Gurr 1968). Communities in rugged areas may also struggle to compete or engage in a globalized economy because of transportation and urban agglomeration and wealth concentration related to economies of scale (Moretti 2012). Each of these could lead people living in rugged places towards anti-establishment beliefs and behaviors if they blame the establishment for these economic disadvantages and evidence suggests that rural communities sometimes blame economic hardship on urban or metropolitan communities and can harbor resentment towards urban areas (Cramer 2016; Gest 2016; Jacobs and Munis 2022; Munis 2020; Wuthnow 2018).

Using pretreatment measures, I control for economic development impediments by measuring the distance from the center of a county to the nearest major market and for general development with median household income. Controlling for rural population or population density addresses urban agglomeration and regression results are indistinguishable, so population density is included in the final models (see SI for models with rural population, available upon request). If population density impeded economic development, this ensures similar counties are compared to one another.

Arid and rugged areas are also the places most likely to rely on natural resource extraction and economies that are directly associated with land use. Grazing, timber, mineral and oil extraction, recreation, and are often the main industries in rural Western communities (USDA). Economic hardship produced by downturns in these industries could conceivably operate outside of threat induced by environmental policy changes. However, historical political development suggests that communities blame government institutions as opposed to global economic conditions or industry decisions for these hardships because policy changes are more visible and more likely to be exploited by elites. For example, concerted efforts by conservative activists starting in the late 1970s effectively connected environmental policies and jobs as necessitating a tradeoff (Layzer 2012a). While globalization and mechanization have caused most of the decline in the timber industry in the Pacific Northwest (Timber Wars, 2020), environmentalists and environmental policies (and spotted owls!) are blamed because land management decisions are far more visible (Beda 2021; Layzer 2012a).

##### **Identity Group Distribution**

Aridity and terrain ruggedness shape the geographic distribution of racial and ethnic groups. The federal government took Indigenous lands distributed them almost exclusively to White Euro-Americans and many Western territories and states actively excluded people

of color. Race is undoubtedly a part of governance nostalgia as White populations are much more likely to have controlled local policies. Counties with higher White proportions should should react more strongly to land management changes. These are also the people most likely to react to changes in racially relevant policies related to governance nostalgia. Controlling for race and ethnicity helps control for any threats to identification via racially related policy and the precision of the effects of land management change estimates. While a proxy for pretreatment racism might be useful, few measures exist at the relevant geographic and time scale (county and 1970). For example ANES data might allow for an estimate of state level race sentiments, but not for county level sentiments. State fixed effects already controls for the former, making the exercise a moot point.

### **Migration Patterns**

Alternatively, maybe rural counties in the West simply had an influx of Republican migrants or migrants who held anti-establishment beliefs. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence point against this reality. In robustness checks, I include county-in migration and out-migration and find no effect. Second, the counties with high natural amenities are the most likely see an influx of migration for both retirees and for people seeking outdoor recreation opportunities (Rothman 1996, Culver 2010). If anything, these people are most likely to attenuate the effects we would expect. In other words, these voters are more likely to be Democrats and in support of federal land policy that supports management for protection.

### **Socio-Political Variables [education, party, distance to state capitol]**

Populations that have completed more years of education are more socially mobile and more likely to trust and support institutions (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012). Living in an arid and rugged place could make it more difficult to get an education. Controlling for proportion of the county with an associate’s degree or higher addresses this threat.

Republican party membership and conservatism is associated with greater longing to preserve the status quo and far-right movements frequently call for a return to historical political conditions (Dallek 2023; Parker and Barreto 2013). These people are more likely to express governance nostalgia and respond nostalgic messaging. While political party membership was more evenly distributed geographically historically and ideology varied more by party (Levendusky 2009), rural communities started moving towards the Republican party following WWII (Phillips 2007). Controlling for county Republican presidential candidate vote share addresses this potential threat. Last, aridity and ruggedness may shape political access if state capitols are located in more arable, populated areas. I use a binary indicator of whether the state capitol is in the county and find no effect. Last, states may have unique political cultures and including state fixed effects controls for unobserved and observed confounders at the state level.

## **4.3 Estimating Precision: Controls**

While religion is not clearly affected by aridity and terrain ruggedness, I include it as a control to increase the precision of the estimates. Evangelical Christian and Latter-Day Saints (LDS) church membership is associated with the Republican party and Evangelical Christians with the far right, I include the proportion of the county that identifies as Evangelical or LDS to increase the estimates precision.

## 5 Results:

### 5.1 Constitutional Sheriff

Using the estimatr package and lm\_robust estimation, terrain ruggedness and aridity are strong instruments for treatment with increased federal land use restrictions and protections in a county between 1971 and 2014. Without including any covariates, the F-statistic is 35.3 and significant (p<.0001). Adding state fixed effects and controls reduces the F-statistic, but it remains consistently significant. The table below reports the each result. Of note, both instruments predict treatment across all models and remain consistent. A one unit increase in terrain ruggedness (values range from 12.78 to 502.5), which is measured as an index expressing the amount of elevation difference between adjacent cells in a Digital Elevation Model (DEM), is associated with an 0.054 percent increase in the percent of a county treated with restrictive federal land management use from 1971 to 2014. Substantively, the most rugged counties are 19.5 percentage points more likely to be treated with restrictive or protective land management than the least rugged counties. A one unit increase in aridity index (from most humid, 0.0317, to driest 3.14) is associated with a 3.39 percent increase in the amount of a county treated with restrictive federal land management. Thus, the most arid counties are 11.5 percentage points more likely to be treated with protective or restrictive land management. The effect sizes of all instruments on treatment remain stable and significant across the various specifications.

Table 1: First Stage Results

	Change in County Land w/ Protective Mgmt 1971-2014		
	(a)	(State Fixed Effects)	(Controls and State FE)
Ruggedness	0.054*** (0.006)	0.055*** (0.007)	0.053*** (0.007)
Aridity	3.388*** (0.684)	4.082*** (1.117)	3.705*** (0.977)
Population Density			0.000 (0.000)
Population White			-0.023 (0.032)
Population Evangelical/LDS			-0.072 (0.040)
Median Income			0.000 (0.001)
Population w/Bachelors			-0.023 (0.185)
Potus R-share 1968			19.739** (7.563)
(Intercept)	-2.773** (0.964)	-2.918 (1.624)	-12.374* (6.171)
F-statistic	35.290	8.198	7.865
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.166	0.159	0.185
Num. obs.	414	414	405

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

The next models estimate the causal effects of increased restrictive and protective federal land management between 1971 and 2014 on a counties' likelihood of being represented by a constitutional sheriff in 2015. Again, the table shows the three models- one with treatment

only, one adding state fixed effects and one adding state fixed effects and controls to address threats to the exclusion restriction and increase precision. Estimates were performed with the `estimatr` package using `iv_robust`. The results are promising. First, the sign and magnitude of the estimated effects were consistent across a range of model specifications, with the most parsimonious model presented below.

Table 2: Second Stage Results

	DV: County Represented by Constitutional Sheriff in 2015		
	(a)	(State Fixed Effects)	(Controls and State FE)
County Federal PA Increase	0.007** (0.004)	0.004 (0.004)	0.006* (0.004)
Population Density			-0.000** (0.000)
Population White			-0.001 (0.003)
Population Evangelical/LDS			0.002 (0.002)
Median Income			0.000 (0.000)
Population w/Bachelors			-0.008** (0.004)
Potus R-share 1968			-0.091 (0.173)
(Intercept)	0.079*** (0.023)	0.113 (0.091)	0.215 (0.270)
Weak Instruments Test	p<0.001	p<0.001	p<0.001
Wu-Hausman Test	p<0.2	p<0.5	p<0.25
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-0.015	0.085	0.081
Num. obs.	414	414	405

\*\*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.1$ ; \*  $p < 0.2$

Given the limited number of observations- only 414 counties and 47 counties with CS sheriffs, that these estimates approach conventional significance indicates some solid evidence to reject the null-especially given the qualitative results. Assessing the model with controls and state fixed effects, suggests that every one percentage point increase in a county's land moving from local control to restrictive or protective federal land management from 1971 to 2014 caused a 0.6 percent increase in the probability of a constitutional sheriff representing a county in 2015 . While not statistically significant, the estimate is very close to conventional, wide-bounded significance ( $p = 0.117$ ) and the result is substantively significant. The median change in the proportion of a county under restrictive or protective federal land management was 2.05 percentage points during the treatment period and a quarter of counties in the West experienced shifts of at least 7.45 percentage points. The largest (non-maritime county) shift was in Inyo County California, with a 55.6 percentage point increase in the amount of county land under protective federal land use. These correspond to 1.29, 4.67 and 34.9 percent increases in the probability that a county in the West elected and was represented by a constitutional sheriff in 2015.

## 5.2 Tea Party Support

Estimating Tea Party support using multilevel regression with post-stratification generates significantly more variation in the dependent variable compared to the binary constitutional

sheriff measure. Consequently, the relationship between county federal land policy change and Tea Party support is statistically and substantively significant across a variety of model specifications suggesting we reject the null hypothesis. Specifically, when including all controls and state fixed effects, every one percentage point increase in a county's land moving from local control to restrictive or protective federal land management from 1971 to 2010, is associated with or caused a 0.977 percent increase in MRP estimated county Tea Party support. This estimate is statistically significant at conventional levels ( $p < 0.001$ ) suggesting we reject the null hypothesis that land use policy change has no effect on Tea Party support. This result is substantively significant as well. Federal land policy changes towards protection are associated with or caused increases in predicted county Tea Party support of 1.61, more than 7.01, and up to 47.2 percentage points for counties that experienced the median, greater than upper quartile, and the most federal land policy change between 1971 and 2010, respectively.

Table 3: Second Stage Results

	DV: Estimated County Tea Party Support		
	(a)	(State Fixed Effects)	(Controls and State FE)
County Federal PA Increase	0.009*** (0.002)	0.010*** (0.002)	0.010*** (0.002)
Population Density			-0.000 (0.000)
Population White			0.003*** (0.001)
Population Evangelical/LDS			-0.001** (0.000)
Median Income			-0.000 (0.000)
Population w/Bachelors			-0.006*** (0.002)
Potus R-share 1968			-0.060 (0.075)
(Intercept)	0.479*** (0.010)	0.498*** (0.027)	0.408*** (0.078)
Weak Instruments Test	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$
Wu-Hausman Test	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-0.125	0.014	0.189
Num. obs.	414	414	405

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$

The regression table below demonstrates that the estimates are nearly identical across each specification. This is important because the MRP estimating process uses race, gender, and education to post stratify the results which means that race and education are used on both sides of the estimating equation if covariates are included. However, results are essentially identical whether or not covariates that could bias results are included. These results suggest a tentative causal relationship between increasing protective or restrictive federal land policy change and Tea Party support, independent of other factors like partisan identity. This result should be taken cautiously, but it does accord with both the CS estimates and the qualitative policy process tracing.

## 6 Discussion

**Policy Change, Historical Privilege, and Issue Area Control** The historical institutional policy process tracing provides strong evidence that rural communities in the Western United States controlled local federal land management use policies through the late 1960's. This control was violently enforced by the federal government (via indigenous dispossession), then codified into law in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The reason these communities controlled these policies was because organized industry interest groups held sway over federal policies and shaped local economies while national preferences generally supported extractive interests and privatization. In other words, powerful industry shaped specific policies and the powerful voting public— White, Christian, male supported the land use policy status quo.

Policies in the early 1900s codified multiple use land management, however, economic uses were generally considered the primary or most important use, which again aligned with industry and national interests. In the rural West, these policies supported the economic and cultural activities pushed by powerful local interests and generally included farming, ranching, mining, logging, and oil industries, alongside some recreational interests in hiking, hunting, camping, and fishing. This remained the policy status quo until the early 1960s when new recreational federal land users and the environmental movement began pushing for more land protections and restricting extractive uses.

The qualitative evidence from the historical institutional analysis aligns with the quantitative evidence that shows a marked increase in Federal land policies restricting extractive activities in many counties in the early 1970s. Figure XXX in the quantitative measures section shows that shifts towards protection prior to 1971 were restricted to national parks that were usually proposed by state and local politicians looking to capitalize on the economic benefits associated with Parks and designated by Congress. Similarly, most early national monuments that presidents designated were supported locally and were eventually made into national parks at the bequest of state and local politicians. The various environmental laws passed, and lawsuits won throughout the early 1970s through the mid-2000s created dramatic changes in local federal land management. The map visually demonstrates these changes while the summary statistics suggest that full quarter of all Western counties experienced increases in county area under restrictive federal management of greater than 7.12 percentage points. Counties' federal land moved from predominantly local control to more restrictive or protective management and this change was more pronounced in rural counties.

The qualitative historical evidence demonstrates that dominant interests and local, rural communities controlled local federal land policy historically. In the West, this meant that rural communities were historically privileged in setting and making federal land use policy decisions. These rural counties and places are also the same communities that are most likely to have experienced high policy change given the characteristics of wilderness eligible land and settlement patterns. Western counties where federal land use within the county shifted towards restrictive or protective management the most will have the strongest grievances and are also the most likely to express high governance nostalgia. The qualitative policy process tracing shows that backlash movements- supporting a return to past land policy arrangements consistently emerged in these communities. The Sagebrush Rebellion alongside

the Property Rights and Wise Use movements- each of which features calls for returns to local control of federal land use- emerged and found their strongest support in rural communities. These data provide strong evidence that historical issue area control and policy change created governance nostalgia and anti-establishment behaviors.

**Assessing Governance Nostalgia and Anti-establishment Attitudes and Behaviors** Assessing the effects of historical changes quantitatively is notoriously difficult given concerns of endogeneity. The instrumental variables research design employed here provides one way to estimate the effects of historical policy change and group power on governance nostalgia- especially *when triangulated with qualitative process tracing clarifying policy sequencing and critical junctures*. The estimated effect of policy change on governance nostalgia and anti-establishment behavior, measured by federal land policy change and counties' electing constitutional sheriffs, using the full, parsimonious, state-fixed effects model is on the edge of statistical significance ( $p=0.117$ ). However, the direction and magnitude of this result is remarkably consistent across a range of alternative specifications of the independent variable, using a variety alternative controls and controlling for potential exclusion restrictions like historical economic development, access to political resources, and population density. These instrumental variable analyses suggest that rural communities that historically controlled the federal land use and experienced greater policy change express stronger governance nostalgia, respond to elite appeals to nostalgia, and engage in anti-establishment behaviors, as measured by their support for constitutional sheriffs who campaign on anti-establishment platforms and appeal to nostalgia. Historical power relationships and policy changes have created conditions where rural Western communities are more likely to respond to nostalgic appeals.

The historical institutional analysis also suggests that these rural communities in the West were more supportive of backlash movements calling for returns to local control of federal land use policies. This accords with the quantitative measures of federal land policy changes and increases confidence that historical policy changes are independently affecting political behavior and beliefs in these places. In other words, taken together, the qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests policy changes are an *independent cause of governance nostalgia as well as anti-establishment behaviors and beliefs amongst historically powerful groups*. Importantly, the effects of these policy changes are not minor. Federal policy changes of 7.45 percentage points caused a 4.67 percent increase in the likelihood a county elected a constitutional sheriff- and 100 counties in the West experienced larger policy changes.

Lending further credence to the constitutional sheriff finding, these policy changes are also associated with, and potentially cause, greater predicted Tea Party support. The Tea Party generally advocates for a return to a past dominated by hetero, Christian Middle-class, and White interests, and limited government (Parker and Barreto 2013). Even though the Tea Party does not explicitly advocate for restoring past control nor appeal to nostalgia as directly as constitutional sheriffs, the movement is associated with anti-establishment beliefs and nostalgia for a cultural past. If we take the results as causal, then federal land policy shifts towards protection is associated with or caused more than 7.01 percentage point increases in Tea Party support in nearly 100 counties.

Policy changes that chip away at the historical control rural communities in the Wests appear to cause governance nostalgia and anti-establishment political behavior, independent of alternative explanations. The process tracing makes it clear that these rural communities



view these policy shifts towards protection as threats and grievances against their historical power to control local federal land policy. Powerful extractive industry interest groups dominated the policy terrain in the early years and rural western communities' interests were privileged within land management agencies. When environmental interest groups emerged and upset the policy status quo, some historically privileged rural western communities experienced policy changes towards restrictive and protective management. From 1971 through 2014, some counties went from having 0-1% of county area under protected federal land policies to over 40%. These changes in federal land management brought ideological, symbolic, and identity group conflict to new places. These places developed grievances and nostalgia for their past privilege within federal land management agencies. These new data documenting the changes in land management by year provide a way of understanding how the politics of the West has both affected the national discourse as well as how the institutional structures in the West have specifically modified regional behaviors and beliefs.

## 7 Conclusions

While political elites' efforts to mobilize the electorate by appealing to nostalgia has been widely documented (cite) and nostalgia causes strong behavioral reactions (CITE), the conditions that create an electorate responsive to these appeals is unclear. Analyzing policy feedbacks and the institutional roots of both nostalgia within the electorate provides a clearer picture of what might prime voters to respond to nostalgia. The historical institutional analysis of federal land policy changes over 140 years identifies a set of critical junctures that established interest and identity group privileges in setting policy. Most importantly, the historical perspective demonstrates the cumulative effects of both historical power and policy change. Backlash to contemporary policy changes and responsiveness to appeals to nostalgia are not one-shot interactions between policymakers and the electorate. Rather these policy changes can build upon each-other and historically powerful identity groups and communities develop governance nostalgia when they experience significant policy changes.

In the land management context, this clarifies why candidate Reagan declared that he was a "Sagebrush Rebel" before the 1980 election, while this provides intuition for why Candidates Trump and Kerry used slogans highlighting nostalgia. While candidates can tie generalized nostalgia to cultural changes, when they can tie nostalgia to visible policy changes- like Candidate Reagan did, voters who enjoyed historical institutional privileges within the policy process, are likely to respond with strong behaviors. If those groups believe they have lost considerable power over the policy process over a period of time, they are liable to develop governance nostalgia and react with anti-establishment attitudes and behaviors. This helps explain illegal protests that harmed sacred indigenous sites in Bears Ears National Monument as well as events like the violent January 6th Capitol riots- and why political elites- county officials in Southern Utah and President Trump might sanction these activities.

The quantitative measures of federal land use change over time and county-level Tea Party support are the first aggregate measures of these two variables and the first used to estimate political relationships. While qualitative historical scholarship has documented the relationship between land use policy change and backlash, these estimates are the first

quantitative estimates of this relationship. Governance nostalgia- *a longing to restore a locality's perceived ability to influence government processes and outcomes*- develops within historically privileged groups and is one way that groups become susceptible to political elites who appeal to nostalgia.

Governance nostalgia helps identify the historical and institutional structures that shape different communities and may make certain groups and places, more likely to support anti-establishment behaviors. While path dependent political behavior provides one framework (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen 2016) for explaining how communities pass down beliefs and behaviors from generation to generation, this work demonstrates that these beliefs and behaviors are both modified by repeated interactions with institutions, and that these communities also use perceptions of their groups' past power to inform contemporary behaviors. While path dependent behavior suggests familial and community transmission, the evidence here suggests that policy changes in specific issue areas can have far-reaching effects.

This makes sense because people are embedded in particular communities, shaped by specific policies. Governance nostalgia adds another way to understand the behavioral implications of interactions with institutions which can shape everything from efficacy and trust in government (Brayne 2014; Cohen 2010; Soss 1999a; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011) to civic capacity and involvement (Mettler 2002) to quiescence (Soss 1999b) or even have transformative, alienating effects on political behavior (Brayne 2014; Cohen 2010; Lerman 2013). Policy changes shape more than beliefs and behaviors within single individuals, instead, the conflicts they affect shape groups' relationships with governance.

The increasing prevalence of anti-establishment political rhetoric is often explained by national polarization around divisive social issues or contemporary conflicts. The data, case, and discussion in this paper suggest that historical, structural explanations also explain these trends and can help predict where and why political elites will stoke grievances and threat as well as appeal to nostalgia. Candidates are more likely to appeal to nostalgia and nostalgia for past institutional norms, if their constituents historically controlled a particular issue area. If those institutions are more visible, they are even more likely to leverage governance nostalgia. Government agencies, policy advocates, and reformers must to carefully consider historical privilege, power, and governance nostalgia while making policies to meet contemporary challenges.

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