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[EXTERNAL] Arctic National Wildlife Refuge comment

1 message

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To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Today is Memorial Day. What is the liberty the U.S. has told ourselves we've fought for and won?

Land of the Free by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Archibald MacLeish was published in 1938 amid the Dust Bowl. "For a hundred and fifty years we've been telling ourselves," MacLeish wrote, "We told ourselves we had liberty... We told ourselves we were free because we said so..."

With the land blown away, people starving, having to move, he continues, "Now we don't know./ We're wondering."

"Maybe the constitution assured us our liberties," MacLeish writes, "But tell the six-year cotton-tops in Texas/ Canning the crawfish in ten cent cans—Heading the shrimps because the law can't stop it...tell the cotton choppers..." Tell the Lenape People, the Sioux, the Navajo, the Inupiat, the Gwich'in Nations.

"Maybe we thought," suggests MacLeish, "because the land went on/ Liberty went with the land: there was always liberty:/ There was all outdoors to be liberty...// There was always the forest ahead of us opening on..."

But, now we know, there is an end to the forest, there is an end to fertile soils supporting wheat, there is an end to clean water and a reliable climate, there is an end to Arctic coastal plain, caribou herds and salmon, there is an end to liberty that ends when the land ends along with lands' peoples.

If the BLM stands for the liberty that U.S. soldiers have lived and died for, the BLM must stand for its foundation—for the land, for the coastal plain. The coastal plain of the Refuge is a unique and precious lifescape upon which human lives depend. Healthy land inseparable from a habitable climate is the lifeblood of Gwich'in People. It is their freedom. It is the freedom, in the U.S., we all stand for.