January XX, 2025

The Honorable John Boozman

Chairman

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry

328A Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar

Ranking Member

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry

328A Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: Opposition to the Nomination of Brooke Rollins as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture**

Dear Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar,

On behalf of our XX organizations and millions of members and supporters, we strongly urge you to oppose the nomination of Brooke Rollins to be the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture. As the former Director of Domestic Policy Council in the White House under President Trump, Ms. Rollins worked to dismantle critical safeguards for wildlife and wildlife habitat, including weakening protections for the nation’s wetlands and gutting protections for our most endangered animals and plants. She has spent her entire career aligning herself with the fossil fuel industry and has proven to be just another Trump loyalist eagerly championing his every whim. If confirmed, Ms. Rollins will be in charge of overseeing more than 425 endangered species of wildlife and plants that live or depend on our national forests. Her unwavering devotion to Trump’s reckless agenda will undoubtedly result in policies that prioritize special interests over these imperiled species, public health and the environment. For these reasons, outlined in more detail below, we urge you to reject her nomination for Secretary of Agriculture.

In her most recent position as co-founder, president and CEO of the America First Policy Institute — a right-wing think tank that rivals Project 2025 in its extremeness — Ms. Rollins has supported weakening our bedrock environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act, in favor of “economic growth outcomes.”[[1]](#footnote-1) At her recent confirmation hearing, she vowed to “understand the harm” of the Endangered Species Act and work with Congress to “try to solve that for the next four years.” Since its creation in 2021, AFPI has become a haven for former Trump administration cronies like David Bernhardt, an ex-oil lobbyist who as Secretary of the Interior orchestrated some of the most significant rollbacks to the Endangered Species Act in the law’s history.

Prior to her role in the first Trump administration, from 2003 to 2018 Ms. Rollins was the president and CEO of the Texas Public Policy Foundation (“TPPF”) — a conservative think tank that has received huge donations from fossil fuel interests that include Koch Industries, ExxonMobil and Chevron, and whose board of directors is made up mostly of oil industry executives.[[2]](#footnote-2) TPPF has long opposed protections for endangered species, calling the Endangered Species Act “an ineffective regulatory burden.”[[3]](#footnote-3) The group has opposed listing the golden-cheeked warbler, whooping crane, lesser prairie-chicken, as well as the highly endangered dunes sagebrush lizard under the Act.

Perhaps even more alarming, in 2015 under Rollins’ leadership, TPPF filed a lawsuit seeking to remove protections for thousands of federally listed species that are only found within a single state. The case specifically challenged protections for the Bone Cave harvestman — a rare, cave-dwelling arachnid that lives near Austin, Texas and nowhere else on earth — as unconstitutional. Multiple circuit courts, including the Fifth Circuit where this case was filed,[[4]](#footnote-4) as well as the Fourth Circuit, Ninth Circuit, Tenth Circuit, Eleventh Circuit, and D.C. Circuit have repeatedly rejected this line of attack on the Endangered Species Act. The Supreme Court has also declined to revive such frivolous challenges. However, if Ms. Rollins and TPPF had their way, more than 1100 species — over 70% of all listed species — would be stripped of their protections, devastating conservation of this nation’s natural heritage in nearly every state. Every listed plant and animal in Hawaii would lose protections, as well as some of our most iconic species like the Florida panther, Sonoran pronghorn, and Utah prairie dog, and several listed butterflies including the Miami blue butterfly, Bay checkerspot butterfly, and El Segundo blue butterfly.

Ms. Rollins’ nomination continues the Trump administration’s theme of nominating candidates who have a long history of being hostile to the mission of the very agencies they have been appointed to lead. If confirmed, Ms. Rollins would bring a clear bias in favor of industry and is likely to undermine the implementation of our nation’s core environmental laws that the Department of Agriculture is sworn to uphold. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to oppose Ms. Rollins’ nomination for Secretary of Agriculture.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity

GROUPS

1. <https://agenda.americafirstpolicy.com/energy/provide-clean-air-clean-water-and-a-clean-environment-for-all-americans>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://energyandpolicy.org/texas-public-policy-foundation-2/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.texaspolicy.com/the-endangered-species-act-is-an-ineffective-regulatory-burden/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *See* *American Stewards of Liberty, et al. v. Department of Interior, et al.,* USDC No. 1:15-CV-1174. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)