

March 10, 2026

The Honorable James E. Risch  
Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
483 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
506 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen,

On behalf of our organizations and the millions of members and supporters we represent, we write to express our opposition to the nomination of Wesley Brooks as Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. If confirmed, Mr. Brooks would be in charge of overseeing U.S. leadership on ocean management, biodiversity protection, illegal fishing, wildlife trafficking, and global environmental cooperation. Such a critical role demands sound judgment, scientific literacy, and a demonstrated commitment to environmental stewardship – qualifications Mr. Brooks has not merely failed to demonstrate but appears to fundamentally misunderstand.

For example, during his confirmation hearing, Mr. Brooks repeatedly framed the office's mission as ensuring that the United States corners the market on deep-sea mining and plastics negotiations. He described his priority as essentially clearing the diplomatic runway for American companies to extract ocean resources, rather than protecting the ecosystems that sustain them. This extraction-focused, industry-first agenda is not just misguided — it is fundamentally at odds with a role charged with safeguarding marine ecosystems and strengthening international environmental protections.

Despite the United States being among the world's largest generators of plastic waste and a leading contributor to ocean plastic pollution, Mr. Brooks downplayed the need to address this crisis, arguing that the United States manages plastic waste "effectively" and should instead prioritize protecting domestic industry. That is not responsible management; it is an abdication of environmental leadership that shifts the burden of pollution onto communities and future generations.

At a time when ocean ecosystems face unprecedented stress from pollution, overexploitation, and climate change, the United States cannot afford a leader who ignores the scope of the problem or dismisses the need for meaningful international cooperation. This position requires a nominee who recognizes both the scientific realities and the diplomatic responsibilities inherent in global environmental governance.

For these reasons, we urge Congress to reject the nomination of Wesley Brooks and to insist upon a candidate who is committed to protecting our oceans, advancing credible science, and restoring American leadership in international environmental affairs.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity

Earthworks

Food & Water Watch

Friends of the Earth

Greenpeace USA

Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket (MMAN)

Ocean Conservation Research

Partnership for Policy Integrity

Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists SEAS

Turtle Island Restoration Network