



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam

Report to Governor Ralph S. Northam on Executive Order Number Twenty-Two
Secretary of Natural Resources Matthew J. Strickler
April 27, 2020

I. Introduction

On October 4, 2018, Governor Ralph Northam signed Executive Order Number Twenty-Two (EO-22): *Establishment of the Governor’s Conservation Cabinet: A United Effort to Protect and Conserve Virginia’s Natural Resources*. The purpose of Executive Order 22 was to protect Virginia’s natural resources and to improve environmental quality through systemic coordination across state government to ensure that state-sponsored or permitted activities do not harm the environment, and to maximize the benefits of the environment to Virginia’s economy and quality of life. Members of the Conservation Cabinet have visibility over many of the state agencies and programs that have the potential to impact our natural resources both positively and negatively, and also have direct access to the Governor. Coordination at this high level has allowed the Conservation Cabinet to identify and act on conservation-related opportunities that cut across traditional administrative boundaries.

The Conservation Cabinet first met in November 2018, and has convened five times since then. Meetings included the secretaries or deputy secretaries of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Forestry, Commerce and Trade, Finance, and Transportation. The offices of the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection, and the First Lady of Virginia also participated. As required by Executive Order 22, this report summarizes collaboration across state government on conservation issues achieved as a result of Conservation Cabinet deliberations.

II. Topics & Discussion

Environmental Review and Permitting

State Agencies have been working together for years to review newly acquired state properties, properties donated to the state, and easements, including roads, new construction, and other types

of infrastructure. We are seeking to make Virginia a state that welcomes people and attracts businesses, while protecting our unique natural environment.

Conservation Cabinet meetings have allowed the secretaries overseeing agencies responsible for both issuing and obtaining environmental permits to ensure better coordination, compliance, and understanding. In the Cabinet, secretaries discussed the importance of ensuring that all projects, large and small, are receiving satisfactory review, comply with state and federal law, and are adapting to address emerging issues such as climate change, sea level rise, and environmental justice.

Coordination and communication through the Conservation Cabinet has created a process that protects natural and cultural resources starting at the initial design phases. This has led to better environmental protection and in some cases a smoother and shortened permitting process.

In the past, economic development projects may have been conceived and broken ground without having considered environmental impact or permitting in a thorough or timely manner. Thanks in part to coordination fostered by the Conservation Cabinet, now all projects are reviewed beforehand and necessary permits are identified and necessary conditions understood before economic development announcements are made.

Similarly, The Secretary of Natural Resources and related agencies work with the Department of General Services (DGS) on environmental and cultural heritage reviews of sites for state owned buildings. Recent coordination has facilitated the development of a new headquarters for Virginia Alcohol and Beverage Control (ABC) while avoiding harm to important cultural resources.

When the Trump Administration changed the interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) to no longer protect birds from incidental take, the Secretaries of Natural Resources and Transportation worked to address this issue with regard to the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel expansion project. Close coordination between the two secretariats has led to a number of actions to protect the birds and backstop the MBTA. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) have worked together to provide additional short-term nesting habitat, and are working with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission on a long term habitat solution. In addition, DGIF is working to issue a state-level regulation for incidental take of migratory birds. VDOT has agreed to apply for this once it is finalized.

Another cross-secretariat initiative discussed by the Conservation Cabinet is amending current state regulations governing permits by rule for small solar projects. In 2012, DEQ adopted a regulation called "Permit by Rule" (PBR). The PBR allows solar projects of 150 MW or less to receive approval from the DEQ to construct and operate the solar project through an expedited permitting process, rather than obtaining approval from the Virginia State Corporation Commission. Through the Solar PBR workgroup, agencies within the Commerce and Trade and Natural Resources secretariats are collaborating to create a new PBR that will enhance protections for important wildlife habitat during the construction and operation of solar farms.

Chesapeake Bay Restoration and Water Quality

The Chesapeake Bay is the world's greatest estuary and one of our nation's most significant natural resources. Not only is it ecologically and culturally important, the Bay supports a fishing industry that is worth more than \$3 billion a year in Virginia and Maryland alone, and keeping the Bay healthy is critical to Virginia's tourism economy.

In 2019, Bay states were responsible for finalizing their work plans to restore Bay water quality - known as Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans (WIP) - as well as working towards two-year milestones to improve water quality in accordance with the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). These milestones are a part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) accountability framework designed to ensure, with confidence, that the nitrogen, phosphorous, and sediment allocations of the TMDL will be met.

Meeting these Bay cleanup goals requires the work of many secretariats and agencies. The secretariats of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Forestry, Health and Human Resources and Transportation each address major pollution sources. The Conservation Cabinet was one of several venues to discuss this cross-cutting work and ensure alignment. These conversations led to a strong final WIP submission in August 2019, as well as several pieces of legislation directed by the Governor to help accomplish those goals. These included multiple budget investments in restoration projects and critical agency staff as well as SB704, HB1422, and SB849.

The Conservation Cabinet will continue to discuss this topic as Virginia implements the Phase III WIP and works to develop 2020-2021 milestones.

Tackling Failing Septic in Distressed Communities

Even today, communities across the United States as well as the Commonwealth continue to suffer economic, environmental, and human health stress from failed or inadequate sewage treatment. These communities, coined wastewater islands, occur from far Southwest Virginia to the Eastern Shore, where straight pipes, privies, and aged septic or community systems continue to put the health of underserved Virginians at risk.

Local leaders and stakeholders have fought to tackle these persistent problems and, in 2019, the Secretaries of Natural Resources, Health and Human Resources, and Commerce and Trade directed their agencies to determine what actions the administration could take to advance comprehensive solutions. To assist their investigation, the Center for Coastal Resources Management at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) is mapping septic failures throughout coastal Virginia to identify "hot spots." VIMS has also teamed up with local Health Districts to develop an on-line portal for collecting and mapping wastewater problems across the Commonwealth. [In addition, the Governor proposed and the General Assembly approved additional funding and staff support for septic system oversight.](#)

Wastewater islands demand increased and consistent attention to quantify funding needs, empower interagency collaboration, and direct limited resources to implement solutions. The Conservation Cabinet will continue its work on this topic.

Improving Resilience Against Flooding, Sea Level Rise and other Natural Hazards

Sea level rise, land subsidence, higher average temperatures, more frequent and intense weather events, severe drought, and land development, continue to increase and exacerbate risk from natural hazards across the country and Commonwealth of Virginia. There has been a 250 percent increase in federally declared disasters over the past 20 years, including declarations for flooding, hurricanes, severe storms, and wildfire.

The best available science predicts this trend will continue to worsen. A recent report from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states the world is likely to experience dramatic increases in coastal flooding and severe weather events. Additional studies show that water levels in the Hampton Roads region are now 18 inches higher than they were a century ago, and that they are expected to gain up to five more feet, while the land sinks as much as 7.5 inches, by 2100. That combined rise is faster than anywhere else on the East Coast. The most recent National Climate Assessment reported the intensity, frequency, and duration of North Atlantic hurricanes, as well as the frequency of the strongest hurricanes, have all increased.

This increase in extreme weather events and natural disasters will continue to have a profound impact on Virginia. It threatens public health and safety, our environment and natural resources, and the economic wellbeing of the Commonwealth, including our ports, military installations, transportation infrastructure, tourism assets, farms, and forests.

To address this growing threat to the Commonwealth, Governor Northam signed Executive Order 24 (EO-24) in 2018 in order to ensure his cabinet and state agencies are working together to reduce risk and protect Virginians against natural hazards. EO-24 requires a number of actions to prepare for risks more effectually. These include the development of a Coastal Virginia Resilience Mater Plan, a review of state pre-disaster mitigation programs, and a review of state compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

The Conservation Cabinet has provided a forum to discuss these issues and advance the various action items required by EO-24. Its members have contributed key information required by EO-24, section 2B, which calls for a report on all state-level pre-disaster hazard mitigation programs. Cabinet members have also contributed to the Secretary of Natural Resources' review of the flood risk associated with state owned buildings. Finally, as the Coastal Master Plan is developed, each secretariat and the agencies they oversee has a role to play and information to contribute. The Conservation Cabinet is an ideal place to promote this crosscutting work.

Governor Northam also issued Executive Order 45 (EO-45), an order to set statewide building height standards for all new construction of state buildings in a flood zone. In addition, EO-45 requires that the Commonwealth set floodplain development standards for state buildings in

localities without a local floodplain ordinance. This is required by federal law. Through the Conservation Cabinet, secretariats are convening a workgroup to create the new standards.

The Conservation Cabinet has identified many other opportunities for coordination in this area. The Secretary of Natural Resources has worked closely with the Secretary of Commerce and Trade on a number of important initiatives related to resilience. In February 2020, federal, state, and local partners broke ground on the Ohio Creek Watershed Project. The project is a collaborative effort to address the impacts of sea level rise in Hampton Roads. The Ohio Creek Watershed includes two residential, predominantly African American neighborhoods with civic leagues and a strong community identity. Historic Chesterfield Heights has over 400 houses on the National Historic Register, and Grandy Village includes a public housing community with more than 300 homes. A new park, to be named Resilience Park, will connect the Grandy Village and Chesterfield Heights neighborhoods and include a flood berm, a restored tidal creek and wetland, as well as a multi-use sports field and places for community gatherings and recreation.

Last April, Governor Northam announced \$1.5 million in funding for six business winners of the first-ever RISE Coastal Community Resilience Challenge. The winners will each receive between \$160,000 and \$310,000 to develop innovative products, services, and workforce development programs to help coastal communities adapt to climate change. These approaches will be demonstrated in the Hampton Roads region with the goal of building economically viable businesses and solutions that are scalable to other communities. Again, the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Secretary of Commerce and Trade coordinated on choosing winners and administering this program.

Perhaps most importantly, Natural Resources and Commerce and Trade worked together to ensure legislation recently passed by the General Assembly provided necessary resilience funding along with funding for energy efficiency. The legislation will dictate how funds collected from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) will be allocated. Thanks to close coordination with the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, 45 percent of revenues collected will be put into the Commonwealth's Community Flood Preparedness Fund and 50 percent will be used to improve energy efficiency for low income residents.

The Secretary of Natural Resources and the Secretary of Transportation worked out a joint agreement to fund an ongoing study regarding the interactions of infrastructure and natural Resources. VDOT and Virginia's Chief Resiliency Officer (currently the Secretary of Natural Resources) commissioned VIMS to study interactions among transportation infrastructure, migratory birds and other wildlife, and climate change in coastal Virginia.

Land Conservation

Conserving and protecting natural areas and open space provides myriad benefits to the Commonwealth and its citizens. Protecting land does much more than slow development. If done properly, land conservation can create wildlife habitat and healthy ecosystems, reduce flooding, reduce pollution to local waterways, provide recreational opportunities, and protect cultural and historic sites. Virginia's array of parks, state forests, natural areas, and outdoor spaces also

provide business opportunities, encourage tourism, increase property values, and improve quality of life.

In April 2019, Governor Northam launched *ConserveVirginia*, a data-driven, statewide, land conservation strategy that identifies high value lands and conservation sites across the Commonwealth. The purpose of the program is to help guide a long-term land conservation strategy for Virginia by guiding and informing state land acquisitions, environmental mitigation projects, Virginia Land Conservation Foundation grants, federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grants and more.

ConserveVirginia is a key tool in guiding those investments, providing a map of Virginia's highest conservation value lands, based on 19 data inputs. The *ConserveVirginia* map includes more than 6 million acres of lands representing top priority conservation values in the following categories: Agriculture & Forestry; Natural Habitat & Ecosystem Diversity; Floodplains & Flooding Resilience; Cultural & Historic Preservation; Scenic Preservation; and Protected Landscapes Resilience.

The Conservation Cabinet played a key role in the development of *ConserveVirginia*. The model includes inputs related to agriculture and forestry, outdoor recreation and resilience. The Secretariats represented in the Conservation Cabinet provided guidance regarding the model and its methodology and in many cases directly contributed datasets that were built into *ConserveVirginia*. The Conservation Cabinet and related agencies have continued to provide input and guidance, much of which will be reflected in the next version of *ConserveVirginia*, set to launch in spring 2020.

Since its launch, various state agencies have begun to use *ConserveVirginia* to guide acquisitions and grant programs and convening of the Conservation Cabinet make that possible. One result of improved coordination is that DGS, the agency responsible for administering land acquisitions and purchases, has formally incorporated *ConserveVirginia* into the property selection criteria in its "Acquisition Procedures for Natural Area Preserves, State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas."

ConserveVirginia has already played a role in many state land acquisitions since the Conservation Cabinet was formed. A prime example is the joint project between The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOP), and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to permanently protect 22,856 acres of forest land in Russell County in southwest Virginia. This easement, recorded in 2019, is the largest open space easement ever recorded in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In November 2019, Governor Northam announced \$5.89 million in Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) grants, which will fund a total of 19 conservation projects and protect more than 17,000 acres of land across the Commonwealth. Among the projects receiving grants, 89 percent are located within *ConserveVirginia* designated areas.

The Conservation Cabinet will continue to help *ConserveVirginia* achieve as many conservation goals as possible, and to ensure that the *ConserveVirginia* model is accurate and regularly updated.

Climate Change & Carbon Mitigation

Climate change is an urgent and pressing challenge for Virginia. As recent storms, heat waves, and flooding events have reminded us, climate disruption poses potentially devastating risks to lives, private property, and public infrastructure. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Fourth National Climate Assessment makes clear that swift decarbonization and a transition to clean energy is required to prevent the worst impacts of global warming. As such, the Commonwealth has taken several actions to address climate change, reduce greenhouse gas pollution, and ensure a clean energy future for the Commonwealth. Doing so takes a holistic approach, and convening the Conservation Cabinet has been crucial to coordinate the Northam Administration's efforts to reduce pollution and promote clean energy.

In 2019, DEQ finalized a rule to limit greenhouse gas pollution from coal-fired power plants and to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory (RGGI). This action will reduce emissions from power plants in the Commonwealth by 30% over the next 10 years. Legislation developed by Natural Resources and Commerce and Trade this year lifted a restriction on moving forward with this rule, and the groundbreaking Virginia Clean Economy Act set Virginia on a path toward carbon-free energy by 2050. This builds upon Governor Northam's Executive Order 43, directing the Secretary of Commerce and Trade and the Secretary of Natural Resources to develop a plan of action to produce thirty percent of Virginia's electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030 and one hundred percent of Virginia's electricity from carbon-free sources by 2050.

Renewable energy technologies and distributed energy resources such as rooftop solar, smart meters, and battery storage make up an ever-increasing share of our energy system. Increasing the Commonwealth's renewable energy requires permitting and regulations on new systems. The Conservation Cabinet has given all relevant secretariats opportunities to update and receive input on how to decarbonize Virginia and encourage a clean energy economy.

The Conservation Cabinet also discussed how clean energy advancements offer an opportunity to address and prevent energy inequities facing Virginia's most vulnerable populations, including low-income communities and communities of color. Low-income households pay proportionally more than the average household for energy, and often experience negative long-term health impacts as well.

Clean energy innovation and energy efficiency strategies can alleviate this burden, lower energy bills, and provide access to clean energy for all Virginians. No segment of the population should bear disproportionately high or adverse effects from pollution and climate disturbance, and as we increase investments in clean energy, equity must be part of the framework. The U.S. EPA describes equitable development as "an approach for meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant."

Finally, last spring the Virginia Department of Health hosted the Public Health Impacts of Climate Change Summit with attendance from state leadership, local and national subject matter experts, state researchers, and public health specialists to assess the evidence of climate change and need for public health intervention. Participants engaged in discussions outlining opportunities for collaboration to improve public health data, programs, policies, and methods to identify and mitigate the public health risks associated with climate and weather. Again, cross-cutting discussions facilitated by the Conservation Cabinet played a role in the focus on this issue and the development of the Summit.

Virginia is well positioned to be a center of economic activity for this clean energy transition, which will help us capture the economic and health benefits from the clean economy for all Virginians. The clean energy sector has the power to create new business opportunities, expand customer access to renewable energy, and spark the high-demand jobs of the 21st century.

Transportation Climate Initiative

In 2018, the Secretaries of Natural Resources, Commerce & Trade and Transportation wrote a joint letter to the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) joining Virginia to the collaboration of mid-Atlantic and Northeast states working together toward regional solutions to transportation gridlock and climate change. TCI is currently working on developing a regional cap and invest program to cut transportation related carbon pollution and generate proceeds to invest in carbon free transportation choices.

In 2017, Virginia was designated a beneficiary in the Volkswagen Diesel Emissions Mitigation Settlement and was awarded \$93.6 million to invest in electric vehicle infrastructure and in replacing old diesel vehicles with cleaner models. In addition to a \$14 million partnership with EVgo to build a statewide high-speed electric vehicle-charging network, the Conservation Cabinet also collaborated on two other Settlement-funded programs launched in 2019. The Department of Environmental Quality worked closely with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation to direct \$19 million in state and federal dollars – including \$9 million in Settlement funding – toward new battery electric transit buses for three transit agencies in Virginia. Additionally, DEQ and the Department of Education are in the final stages of program design for a \$20 million Settlement-funded clean school bus program. For both of these projects, close coordination with DGS was instrumental in ensuring new electric bus options were available on the state contract for purchase by local agencies. Coordination across Secretariats has been crucial to successfully implementing these initiatives.

Equity Issues

Environmental justice as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

In addition to the energy equity issues outlined above, Governor Northam has established environmental justice as a priority of his administration. In 2018, Governor Northam established the Governor's Virginia Council on Environmental Justice.

Working through the Conservation Cabinet, the Secretary of Natural Resources was able to coordinate participation of multiple state agencies in Council meetings. Interagency collaboration led to legislation signed by Governor Northam to establish a permanent environmental justice council during the 2020 General Assembly session.

This past legislative session, the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry worked together with stakeholders to pass legislation to protect heirs property rights. Heirs property is land that is owned "in common" by all of the heirs, because no will or other official transfer from the previous owner was ever recorded. When any heir chooses to sell his or her share, often the others are forced to sell as well. This is the leading cause of involuntary land loss for African-American farmers. The legislation is designed to protect heirs who may be unaware of their property rights and their vulnerability as co-tenants to partition.

Virginia Office of Outdoor Recreation

Virginia has seen a boom in outdoor recreation in the past few years. Our many rivers, mountains, and outdoor spaces are the perfect place to recreate with family and friends. It has contributed to a new economy in southwest Virginia, where abandoned mines have been revitalized and turned into spaces where Virginians can enjoy the outdoors.

In July of 2019, Governor Northam created the Office of Outdoor Recreation through the Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade. The purpose of this office is to lead an effort to grow the outdoor industry in Virginia through industry promotion, coordination, and recruitment. The outdoor recreation industry contributes nearly \$22 billion annually to the Virginia economy, and employs more than 197,000 Virginians.

The Secretary of Natural Resources and the Secretary of Commerce and Trade work closely to grow the outdoor recreation industry and to promote, restore, and protect Virginia's natural landscapes and environment.

The outdoor industry benefits from the expansion of outdoor recreation opportunities, more conserved, publicly accessible lands, and increased participation. Through a cross-secretariat partnership, the Conservation Cabinet is able to support this new office and provide new opportunities for the outdoor industry and all Virginians. The Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Department of Conservation and Recreation and Department of Game and Inland Fisheries meet regularly to grow and advance this office. This multi-agency, cross-Secretariat coordination has been integral to the launch of this initiative.

Last year, the offices of the Secretary of Natural Resources and The Secretary of Commerce and Trade collaborated with the James River Association, to successfully nominate the James River for the 2019 Thiess International River prize. This achievement is awarded biennially by the International River Foundation to recognize remarkable outcomes for rivers, river basins and

their communities. The prize is considered the most coveted award of river and watershed restoration and is based on accomplishments in integrated river basin management. This award for the James River will benefit outdoor recreation and tourism along the James River.

Environmental Literacy

A goal of the Commonwealth is to teach the importance of responsible stewardship of the planet and the climate. Natural and wild places in the Commonwealth are slowly diminishing, and all members of the Conservation Cabinet's work have an impact. One way to protect them is through teaching the next generation how to safely and respectfully interact with the outdoors and with wildlife, inspiring as many as possible to get a lifetime of enjoyment from nature, and possibly pursue a career in conservation or science.

At the 2018 Chesapeake Executive Council meeting, Governor Northam requested that Virginia host the 2019 Chesapeake Bay Program's inaugural environmental education summit. The Secretary of Natural Resources and the Office of the First Lady collaborated to plan and host the summit in partnership with the Bay Program. First Lady Pam Northam, a science teacher and environmental advocate, proposed a focus on addressing access gaps and inequities in the environmental education resources and opportunities for students. The summit brought together hundreds of experts, decision-makers, and leaders from across the Bay watershed at George Mason University's Potomac Science Center in Woodbridge to highlight challenges and explore possible solutions.

Mrs. Northam served as the keynote speaker for the day. Representatives from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Choose Clean Water Coalition, National Aquarium, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Chesapeake Bay Office, Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center, Potomac Valley Audubon Society and Virginia Resource Use Education Council shared their perspectives on using environmental literacy to address inequities in our education system and discussed strategies for how to overall increase diversity into the environmental movement. Students representing schools from around the Chesapeake Bay watershed shared their own testimonials on the importance of Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEs).

Because of the importance of environmental literacy, the Secretary of Natural Resources was also included in Governor Northam's STEM Plan and Commission, created by Executive Order 36. The Secretary of Education worked with Natural Resources to identify and engage leaders and experts in this area. Governor Northam appointed an environmental coordinator and representative of the Virginia Association for Environmental Education to serve on the STEM Commission. The STEM Commission also held their winter meeting at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Brock Environmental Center.

Session 2020 Cross Cutting Issues and Secretariat Updates

The Conservation Cabinet is an ideal venue for Secretariats to share individual agendas and to coordinate to ensure that all legislation minimizes negative environmental impacts and increases positive ones. Secretaries have been able to plan legislation and work together to create

legislation that is beneficial for the Cabinet as a whole. These regular meetings have been a tool to synergize and harmonize what each secretariat does during session to complete many goals of the Cabinet.

III. Conclusion

The Conservation Cabinet has shown significant progress in coordination across secretariats to protect Virginia's natural resources and environment. The Secretary of Natural Resources will continue to convene the Conservation Cabinet for the remainder of the Northam Administration. To further impact growth and reach of the Conservation Cabinet, we will look to expand its membership to include the Secretary of Administration and the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection. The Secretary of Administration and affiliated agencies are responsible for construction, procurement and workplace policies that can have enormous impacts on the environment and public safety. Including the Secretary of Administration will ensure that Virginia state government leads by example and does everything possible to ensure positive environmental outcomes. Similarly, the addition of the Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection will ensure that flooding resilience is a cross-cutting priority across all Secretariats and all of state government.

As the Conservation Cabinet expands its membership and continues to meet, it will continue to ensure a holistic approach to protecting the environment. Over the next year the Conservation Cabinet will work to enact the legislation passed by the General Assembly during the 2020 session, improve resiliency against flooding and natural disasters, green the state government, work to increase renewable energy and slow the impacts of climate change and promote environmentally friendly business and development.