



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor

Executive Order

NUMBER TWENTY-TWO (2018)

**Establishment of the Governor's Conservation Cabinet:
A United Effort to Protect and Conserve Virginia's Natural Resources**

Importance of the Initiative

Conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment are key components of my plan as Governor to ensure that Virginia becomes an even better place to live work, play, start a business, and raise a family. While many of our conservation responsibilities fall under the Secretary of Natural Resources, state agencies overseen by other secretariats play important roles, as well.

Coordination across state government is critical to ensuring that state sponsored or permitted activities do not harm the environment. Systemic coordination is also imperative to identifying and engaging in conservation-related economic development and community enhancement opportunities. Many service or functional areas, like agriculture and forestry, transportation and local infrastructure, energy use and development, and outdoor recreation and tourism, interact with our land, air, water, and related ecosystems. It is up to us to determine what impacts such interactions will have.

Establishment of the Cabinet

Accordingly, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Chief Executive by Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and subject to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby establish Virginia's Conservation Cabinet ("Conservation Cabinet").

The Conservation Cabinet shall be established within the Office of the Governor, to better protect Virginia's natural resources and to improve environmental quality across the Commonwealth. Through increased coordination of Virginia agencies, departments and programs the Conservation Cabinet will work to ensure a healthy environment and continued economic opportunity for all Virginians.

The Conservation Cabinet shall meet on a quarterly basis to discuss conservation issues related to the responsibilities of multiple secretariats, including but not limited to: clean air, clean water, energy, climate change, land conservation, tourism, and sustainable natural resource use. The Secretary of Natural Resources shall be the chair of the Conservation Cabinet, and, in consultation with other members of the Conservation Cabinet, shall develop and deliver to the Governor, no later than June 30th of 2019, a report describing collaboration across state government on conservation issues. Such report shall be made available digitally to the public.

Composition of the Conservation Cabinet

The members of the Conservation Cabinet shall be appointed by the Governor. The Conservation Cabinet shall be comprised of the Secretaries of Agriculture and Forestry, Commerce and Trade, Finance, Natural Resources, and Transportation. The Secretary of Natural Resources shall serve as the Chair of the Cabinet.

The members of the Conservation Cabinet, in addition to discussing topics detailed above, shall share updates on programs, projects and opportunities to protect and improve conservation of Virginia's natural resources, public health, and other relevant topics as they arise.

The Conservation Cabinet shall consult with the Secretary of Health and Human Resources on issues of the environment and public health, particularly with respect to environmental justice and the impacts of air pollution, drinking water contamination, and adverse effects of climate change.

The Conservation Cabinet shall consult with the Secretary of Education on issues related to environmental education and on conservation initiatives at public schools, colleges, and universities to teach environmental sciences and to ensure students have meaningful outdoor experiences.

The Conservation Cabinet will consult with experts and stakeholders within the scientific, economic, and other fields as necessary to carry out its mission.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 4th day of October, 2018.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ralph S. Northam", written over a horizontal line.

Ralph S. Northam, Governor

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kelly Thomasson", written over a horizontal line.

Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth