Energy
Virginia’s Department of Environmental Quality has developed draft regulations to reduce carbon emissions from power plants. The regulation would enable Virginia to link to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative beginning in 2020, with emissions reductions of 30% between 2020 and 2030. Governor Northam signed the Grid Transformation and Security Act in March of 2018 to overhaul Virginia’s energy regulatory landscape. The legislation will enable Virginia’s electric utilities to modernize the grid with an emphasis on investments in clean energy technology. This will increase the amount of utility-scale solar from the previous level of 500 megawatts to 5,000 megawatts over ten years, with 3,000 megawatts coming in the first four years.

Energy Efficiency
Virginia has a goal of reducing state government electricity consumption by 15% (from 2010 levels). Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) has been a valuable tool for state agencies to take a comprehensive approach to reduce energy consumption in state buildings. Currently, Virginia has achieved 38% of the goal through. These efforts have resulted in the reduction of nearly 43 million kilowatt hours of electricity and the avoidance of 31,219 metric tons of CO₂ emissions annually. The Grid Transformation and Security Act requires Virginia electric utilities to propose $1 billion in energy efficiency projects over the next decade.

Transportation
Virginia expanded the scope for the use of federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) funds to include use by localities located in air quality non-attainment areas of Virginia. Through 2020, $9 million in CMAQ funding will be made available for state and local use to cover the incremental costs of purchasing or converting a vehicle to alternative fuels. The Virginia Electric Vehicle Initiative will work to incentivize and fund the installation of public-access, Direct Current fast-charging stations. The Initiative will leverage the funding provided to the states under the Volkswagen Settlement, from which Virginia recently announced a $14 million contract with EVgo to begin building an EV charging network in the Commonwealth.

Resilience
In the 2018 Budget passed by the state legislature, funding was allocated to hire a Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Resilience. Once hired, that person will work to create a statewide resilience and natural hazard mitigation program.

Climate Finance
The Commonwealth’s first statewide Green Community Program is funded through the reauthorization of Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds (QECBs). VirginiaSAVES, has provided nearly $65 million in financing support for energy efficiency projects in Virginia since September of 2015. The projects funded will annually save over 18 million kilowatt hours of electricity and more than 22 million gallons of water while avoiding 18,675 tons of carbon emissions each year.

Natural and Working Lands
Governor Northam recently revealed his core land conservation initiative, which will use data and mapping tools to identify high-value lands for conservation purposes. One goal is to align conservation goals with the achievement of broader targets, including climate change and resiliency. Virginia’s natural resource agencies have developed tools to prioritize land conservation based on the best available climate and sea level rise data so we may better address concerns such as coastal lands soon to be flooded, wetland migration areas, as well as planning for existing and future infrastructure.