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DENR preserves, protects millions of hectares of natural land

Cultures, livelihoods, and the resilience of the Philippines' developing economy rely on the integrity of the country's ecosystems, Environment Secretary Antonia Loyzaga said.

BY PAULA ANTOLIN @tribunephl_phau

Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Antonia Loyzaga has instituted a climate change tagging system in the department's national budget and crafted legislation on the protection of millions of hectares of forests, wetlands, caves, mangroves, and reefs.

Loyzaga said that the DENR has adopted a whole of society and systemic risk-based approach where multilateral development banks and the private sector have a key role in achieving sustainable development, nature-based solutions and climate action, and the valuation of ecosystem services.

Cultures, livelihoods, and the resilience of the Philippines' developing economy rely on the integrity of the country's ecosystems, she emphasized.

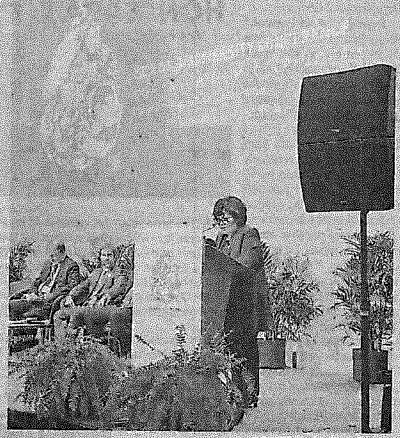
Loyzaga recently reported on the steps being undertaken by the Philippine government to address biodiversity and climate change challenges when she participated at the High-Level Panel on Financing Delivery of the Global Biodiversity Framework upon the invitation of the United Kingdom.

She also highlighted the need to shore up biodiversity investments to establish the adaptive management and capacity of regions and communities during the high-level segment of the 15th Conference

of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in Montreal, Canada.







PHOTOGRAPH COUPTIESY OF DENRI ENVIRONMENT Secretary Antonia Loyzaga during the high-level segment of the 15th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in Montreal, Canada.







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Loyzaga cites DENR personnel's work virtues

By Rio N. Araja

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Antonia Loyzaga on Friday commended officials and employees of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for their hard work and dedication to duty.

Loyzaga also acknowledged the DENR personnel for their solidarity and support that enabled her to "weather the transition" during her first five months in office.

"There has been tremendous work done even in the last five months in setting the foundation towards our goal to make a lasting impact of change towards a resilient Philippines," Loyzaga said.

"Thank you so much for your coop-

eration, collaboration and all the efforts that you have put in order for us to weather the transition from one administration to another." she added.

istration to another," she added.

The Secretary described as "extraordinary example" the commitment, professionalism and solidarity shown by the DENR workers.

She vowed to pursue next year plans to restructure the agency's present setup in order to improve its capability to fulfill its mandate.

"The transformation is underway," she noted.

Loyzaga cited the need to make the most of the pledges of support from stakeholders that took part in the round of consultations designed to help the DENR improve its service delivery to the public, particularly the environment and natural resources sector.

"We already have garnered so many pledges of support from different partners. Let's make the most of it and let's show our public how we really deserve the respect from our partners," the DENR chief said.

The profession as DENR workers lies in the "shared responsibility for protecting our natural resources and also our connection with the spiritual" and called for this creed to be each one's own mantra, she said.

"Our work is not easy, but we can make progress if we work together," she emphasized.



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GREENING PROJECT. The Aboitiz Group renews its partnership with the Philippine Business for Social Progress for the Cebu A-Park's reformation of the 150-hectare Buhisan Watershed Forest Reserve with the Central Cebu Protected Landscape. Joining the ceremony are (from left) Department of Environment and Natural Resources provincial environment and natural resources officer Sandra Lapinid, Visayan Electric Company president and chief operating officer Raul Lucero, Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. first vice president and chief reputation and sustainability officer Ginggay Hotiveros and PBSP head of finance Dennis Vitug. The Aboitiz Group, through its #OneAboitizSustainability program, is committed to mobilizing their resources and expertise to address the environmental challenges of the day.



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DENR receives resilience roadmaps

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) received resilience roadmaps and corresponding investment portfolios for risk resilience (IPRR) of 16 vulnerable areas amid the threat of climate change in the country.

Environment Undersecretary for Finance, Information Systems and Climate Change Analiza Rebuelta-Teh said that this will boost the country's overall effort to address climate change.

Rebuelta-Teh said the roadmaps and IPRR for 12 climatevulnerable provinces and four major urban cities were turned over to the DENR and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Center of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

She said the roadmaps were developed under the Risk Resiliency Program of the Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction.

The roadmaps were deyeloped for the provinces of Siquijor, Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sulu, Lanao del Sur, Apayao, Kalinga, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Catanduanes, as well as the urban centers of Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, Metro Iloilo and Metro Davao, Rebuelta-Teh said.

She added that each roadmap with IPRR contains recommended actions to manage the risks and vulnerabilities in the climate-vulnerable areas in the form of specific resilience measures.

"Key findings and relevant experiences were also presented by the study teams that conducted the risk assessments in the climate-vulnerable areas during the turnover ceremony. These planning documents will definitely help inform both local and national investment programming, resulting in more efficient and climate-responsive programs that make better use of our limited resources," Rebuelta-Teh said.

The initiative is implemented by the NEDA-PPP Center and the DENR under the Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships in the Philippines with support from the Asian Development Bank and the Government of the United Kingdom through its Urban Climate Change Resilience Trust Fund. BELLA CARIASO



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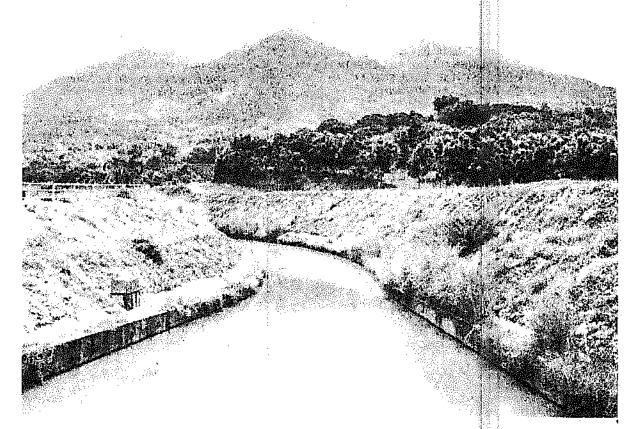
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爾 Photo shows Mt. Arayat in Pampanga that is a protected landscape under Republic Act 11684. PHOTO FROM ME. ARAYAT いる FROM A.R. PARK FACEBOOK PAGE



DENR cites gains in wildlife conservation

BY BELLA CARIASO

Resources (DENR) claims it has made significant strides in its campaign on protected area management, cave and wildlife conservation.

DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Natividad Bernardino underscored the importance of conserving wildlife and their natural habitats.

"While we are treading into the post-pandemic era, the BMB, together with DENR field offices, continues to be at the forefront of protecting, conserving and sustainably managing the country's flora and fauna," Bernardino said.

She added that in 2022, at least seven more protected areas (PAs) under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas) were established, bringing to 248 the total number of protected areas in the country with an aggregate area

of 7.78 million bectares.

Among the seven protected areas include Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape under Republic Act (RA) 11684, Mt. Pulag Protected Landscape (RA 11685), Naga-Kabasatan Protected Landscape (RA 11686), Tirad Pass Protected Landscape Act (RA 11687), Banao Protected Landscape (RA 11688), Tugbo Natural Biotic Area (RA 11806) and Sicogon Island Wildlife Sanctuary (RA 11933),

"The legislation of new protected areas also contributes to the achievement of the Aichi Target II of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls for improvement and increase in the number of protected areas," Bernárding said.

Bernandino said at least 131 protected areas established economism facilities and amenities to promote economism, and at least 171 protected areas established integrated Protected Area Fund pursuant to the Nipas Act.

"For the past five years, an estimated P386.8 million was generated, wherein 75 percent of the amount was retained to the protected areas, which translated to more funds for the sustainable management of these areas," she added.

Bernardino said the DUNR-BMB identified 3,432 caves, of which 292 are within the protected areas.

She said that intensified wildlife protection efforts and the sustainable management of ecosystems brought 12 species to an improved conservation status.

The Asian giant softshell turtle (Pelochelys cantorii) has moved from endangered to other threat-

ened species, while four more species, the Negros horned tree frog (Platymantis negrosensis); Cordilleras cloud frog/Mt. Data Forest frog (Platymantis subtersestis); Mindanao bleeding-heart (Gallicolumba crinigera); and lazon water redstart (Rhyacornisticolor) were moved from endangered to vulnerable species, "Remardino noted.

She said that the country's 1.3 million hectares of corals comprised at least 500 species of corals and 1.763 reef species.

"With this immense valuable fole of our constal and marine resources, we should ensure threats to biodiversity are addressed and polities on conscivation are enforced," Bernardino noted,

She added that the Philippines canked first in the World Risk index 2022, with risks identified tanging from earthquakes, typhoons, floods, drought, sea-level rise, tsunamis and conflict.



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WeGen plants 86,000 trees

WEGEN Energy Philippines planted at least 86,000 trees as part of its commitment to ecological conversion.

WeGen Energy added that as of December 2022, it saved 4,284 tons of carbon dioxide emission with the installation of at least 335 solar energy sites nationwide.

"The world is facing a climate emergency which threatens the future of our children and the rest of humanity. The Philippines is one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world. We don't have much time. We need to act now," WeGen said.

According to WeGen, the solar power installations produced 9,346,774 kilowatt-hour of energy and 6,561 kilowatt-peak of system peak power.

As a next generation renewable energy company, WeGen harnesses the power of the sun and the benefits of solar energy.

WeGen specializes in state-ofthe-art solar photovoltaic systems for homes, infrastructures from small, medium and big business, government buildings, large industrial and commercial properties, resorts, churches, schools and off-grid communities and islands.

WeGen encourages partners and communities to shift to a new source of affordable, reliable, clean and sustainable energy.

"We have to gradually shift to a system of distributed energy resources, anchored on renewable energy if we want our power to be sustainable, reliable and affordable," Charlie Ayco, chairman and president of WeGen Energy Philippines, said.

According to WeGen, it targets to expand access to clean, renewable energy for underserved communities.

"We aim to bring down electricity costs and help communities produce their own electricity which they can also share," it added.

BELLA CARIASO







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CCC gives updates on national climate reports

THE Climate Change Commission (CCC) gathered national government agencies to discuss the progress of the country's national climate reports.

Over 50 participants from 24 national government agencies attended the Coordination and Update Meeting on National Climate Action Monitoring and Reporting that covered the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) 2017-2020 Monitoring Report, 2015 and 2020 National (GHG) Inventory Report (NIR); and the Philippine Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The NCCAP Monitoring 2017-

2020 tracks the progress of the government in concretizing its outputs and outcomes under its seven thematic priorities; food security, water sufficiency, ecological and environmental stability, human security, climate-smart industries and services, sustainable energy, and knowledge and capacity development, in line with the Climate Change Act of 2009.

The 2015 and 2020 NIR measure GHG emission levels to inform evidence-based mitigation policy and planning, and is in line with the Philippine Greenhouse Gas Inventory Management and Reporting System, issued under Executive Order 174 in 2014.

The Philippine BUR is one of three national reports to be submitted to the UNFCCC to assess global progress on climate commitments and mobilize support needs of parties.

"By presenting to all of you today the initiatives and efforts of the national government encapsulated in Climate Reports, we hope to provide a reflection of what we have done so far and how we can scale up our climate actions," said Romell Antonio Cuenca, CCC deputy executive director.

The implementation of National Climate Public Expenditures was also presented to further encourage agencies to tag their climate programs.

Representatives from the Philippine Statistics Authority, Department of Energy and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources also shared their methods and best practices for their respective submissions to the 2015 and 2020 National GHG Inventory Report, GHG stands for greenhouse gas.

As the lead agency in the monitoring and evaluation of national climate change programs, and as the focal point for the Philippines' communications to the UNFCCG, the CCC vows to continue to work with various national government agencies to foster the finalization of the said reports.

BELLA CARIASO







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Asean: Focus on environmental law education

THE 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment held in · Stockholm (Sweden) was the first to recognize the importance of environmental education as essential "in order to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises and communities in protecting and improving the environment into full human dimension." By 1978, the first UNEscap/UNEP Inter-governmental Conference on Environmental Protection Legislation considered such education to be a very important supporting program in environmental law.

At the time, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) had already been in existence since 1967, but it was only in 1981 that itapproved the Manila Declaration on the Environment which formally established the Asean Committee on the Environment, with priorities including environmental education and training." The Manila Declaration became the starting point for active cooperation on environmental law among member countries culminating in the formulation of an Asean Agreement for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Thereafter, Asean soft law instruments were continuously enacted.

Since then, a common recommendation in Asean environmental meetings was the introduction of environmental law as a course in law school. The target is to create a cadre of environmental lawyers uniquely qualified in the field of environ-



mental law as an instrument to solve environmental problems or provide a course of action to environmental issues and concerns.

Environmental law course

A close look at the laws of the Asean member countries will reveal an intricate mosaic of legal systems in existence in the region. This was brought about by the differences in history, territories, population and government. Environmental law, however, suits all legal systems in the light of the present worldwide concern about conservation of natural resources for sustainable development vis-à-vis rising resource consumption and thoughtless demands for economic growth.

By 1992, environmental law became an optional course at the University of the Philippines College of Law followed by the Law Faculty, National University of Singapore in 1994. Two other optional courses were later added in Singapore — international environmental law and marine environmental law — for postgraduates and undergraduates in their third and fourth years.

From an elective course, environmental law became a mandatory/ required subject in the law curricutum of all Philippine law schools in accordance with a directive of the Law Education Board (LEB), an independent government agency responsible for the regulation of legal education in the country.

Be it noted that in 2021, the LEB launched a revised model law curriculum as well as a clinical legal education scheme that would focus on practice readiness by law students instead of concentration on passing the bar exams. The chief justice of the Philippine Supreme Court lamented that the "bar centricity," or the focus on passing the bar instead of on practice readiness, has been the root of the very low percentage of law Bar passers since Philippine independence in 1946.

Almost simultaneously, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia introduced environmental law as a course followed by the rest of Asean countries where law schools exist. And when a legal clinic is maintained, legal consultation on environmental law and even assisted court appearances of law students by members of the Barare provided to the public Applications by law schools to grant masteral degree in environmental law are now under consideration by the Legal Education Board in the Philippines.

Actually, the subject had always been thought of to be embraced in the old natural resources law (forestry, mining, lands, fisheries) which were "use-oriented" compared to the new environmental law which is "resource-oriented." In that connec-

tion, national textbooks setting out the overall relationship between law and the environment are fast becoming available although noticeable is the preference for the use of a syllabus by many professors. Be that as it may, environmental law still has to compete with the basic or bar subjects such as criminal law, civil law, political law, commercial law and remedial law.

In 2022, two environmental law training courses were held in the Philippines. One was the "Greening the Law. Environmental Courts and Tribunals in Asia-Pacific," a webinar organized by the Asian Research Institute for Environmental Law with the LEB. The second was the Philippine Legal Education Board Environmental Law Faculty Training co-organized with the Asian Development Bank with the active involvement and participation of the same Asian Research Institute and the TUCN Academy of Environmental Law.

APCEL set up

In 1996, an Asia-Pacific Center for Environmental Law (APCEL) was set up at the National University of Singapore through the efforts of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Commission on Environmental Law with the support of UNEP and the Asian Development Bank, "...To develop the capabilities of the Asian and Pacific region to deal with the complex legal and regulatory requirements of the environmental order ..."

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Asean: Focus on environmental law education

APCEL's projects include capacity building of legal educators and also the training of government officials with supporting programs like the legal data base and a research project on environmental law in identified countries of the region. Specifically, the objective of the training course is to enable a law instructor to develop a curriculum and apply techniques suitable to the cultures and legal systems of the participant countries in terms of the role of environmental legal education, training and research. Unfortunately, after some years, APCEL's Training the Trainors Course on Capacity Building For Environmental Legal Education was temporarily put on hold for lack of funds

The time is opportune for law schools in the region to examine the state of their countries' environment to determine whether environmental law merits to be taught as a compulsory subject rather than as an optional course.

Access to justice

On the part of the judiciary, a UNEP Judges Program on Environmental Law Education is being implemented in the region "to strengthen the capacity of judges to deal with environmental disputes, especially as they discharge their roles as guardians of the rule of law in torts, criminal and administrative proceedings so that they can be instruments to protect human health and the natural environment. Meetings were held in various Asean capitals as follow-ups to the Global Judges Symposium held in South Africa where they affirmed commitment to combating environmental degradation through the application of environmental law. The Johannesburg Principles adopted at the symposium likewise called for improved environmental education, including the judiciary.

The Asean chief justices also drew up a needs-responsive plan of activities at national and regional levels for capacity building in the area of environmental law. The end in sight is a network among the judiciaries, the legal profession and the university law faculties to share data on environmental law vis-à-visthe important role of the judiciary in realizing effective environmental governance and access to environmental justice with UNEP providing the lead.

In the pursuit of this, national environmental law forums for judges, prosecutors and lawyers were already held in Asean

countries, including Cambodia, Vietnam and Lao People's Democratic Republic. In the Philippines, environmental law is a course in the mandatory continuing legal education program for practicing lawyers. Mention of the proposed International Court for the Environment in those forums elicited genuine interest as there is at present a growing trend for recognition of ecocide, or crimes against the environment as an international crime like piracy and genocide. In that regard, an active information campaign needs to eyolve.

As to access to courts on environmental matters, some Asean countries lead in judicial recognition of the standing of citizens and groups representing public interest. Green courts were identified in the Philippines and a Green Bench was set up in Thailand's Supreme Court. The Philippine Supreme Court likewise came out with rules of procedure for the new writ of kalikasan (nature).

Access to courts, however, should not be limited to cases where participatory rights are infringed. Access should also be granted to affected persons to challenge the substantive legality of an administrative decision for judicial redress. This

should be backed up by a continuing access of citizens to accurate information on the state of the environment.

In all this, the benefits to be derived from the use of devices, laptops, cell phones or any other structured, computerized and publicly accessible database to further popularize the right of access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, including procedural details and guidelines for their effective implementation, should not be lost sight of.

A pioneer in the field of environmental law, the author was consultant to the Working Group of Experts on Environmental Law (Geneva 1981) and the Ad Hoc Meeting of Senior Government Officials Expert in Environmental Law (Montevideo 1981); member, Experts Group on Environmental Law of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission, 1985); contributor, IUCN Draft International Covenant on Environment and Development; member, Global Experts for the Pact (Global Pact for the Environment (2019).









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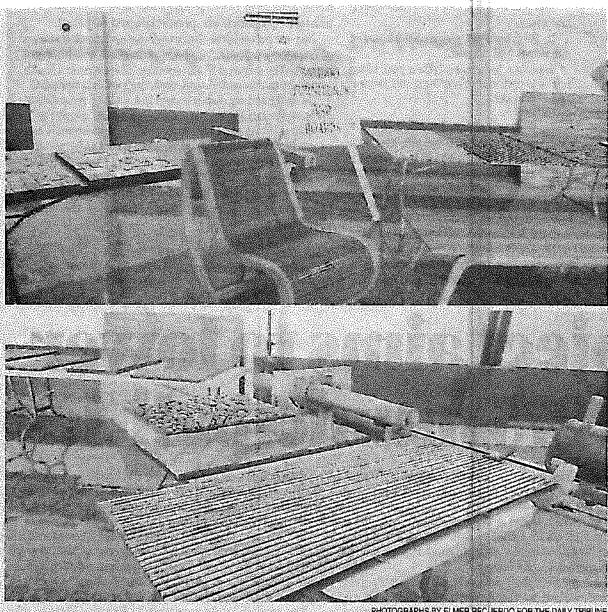
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Energy company to plant 4 million bamboo in Samar protected area



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELMER RECUERDO FOR THE DAILY THIBUNE ENGINEERED bamboo made into furniture is one high-dollar earner for the country and increases the income of people involved in the industry.





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BY ELMER RECUERDO

TACLOBAN CITY — A renewable energy company based in Fastern Samar said it will plant 4 million giant bamboo in Samar island's protected area to provide livelihood to mountain residents and encourage them to do away with slash and burn farming.

Benjie Picardo, president of Taft Hydro Energy Corporation, said the company will start planting the bamboo on February 2023 with 10,000 propagules in 50 hectares within the Samar Island National Park, a 333,300-hectare protected area that straddles the center of the island.

The initiative is part of the company's corporate social responsibility and will be implemented in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources regional office, according to Picardo.

"Bamboo is the most voracious plant in terms of carbon sequestration. I have no idea why we should not be promoting it since it is easy to grow and it spreads quickly," he told Daily Tribune.

Picardo said the bamboo will not only protect watersheds but will also create a huge social impact in terms of the alternate livelihood provided to the hundreds of residents who are cutting trees for charcoal making, which is their main source of livelihood.

He said the plan is to plant 4 million giant bamboo to cover 19,000 hectares of the protected area within the next few years. The company is already undertaking a similar initiative in Bukidnon.

"The beauty of bamboo is it helps reduce global warming while creating a new industry that will give jobs to the people without harming the environment," Picardo said. "They can be harvested in four to five years, and they further spread with new rhizomes even when you harvest them."

THEC is also planning to put up a factory for bamboo processing when the company is done planting two million propagules. Picardo said this will not only generate more employment but will also increase the value of the harvest.

"Engineered bamboo can be used as construction material due to its characteristics; like its high tensile strength," he pointed out.

THEC is running a 16-megawatt hydro power plant in Taft, Eastern Samar and has started the construction of another 14-megawatt hydro power in the same municipality targeted to be completed in September next year.

The company said it will also build an 80-MW solar farm in the same municipality next year.

'The beauty of bamboo is it helps reduce global warming while creating a new industry that will give jobs to the people without harming the environment.'





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Aboitiz, PBSP partmer in forest reserve rehabilitation

BY MARIA ROMERO @tribunephi_mbr

The Aboitiz Group has renewed its partnership with the Philippine Business for Social Progress in support of Cebu A-Park's reformation of the 150-hectare Buhisan Watershed Forest Reserve with the Central Cebu Protected Landscape.

Cebu A-Park is focused on rehabilitating and enriching the forest cover of the Buhisan Watershed Forest Reserve, in support of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Enhanced National Greening Program.

"This project is yet another crucial step towards ensuring continuity in making a positive impact on our national development," Aboitiz Equity Ventures First Vice President and Chief Reputation and Sustainability Officer Ginggay Hontiveros said in a statement.

"Our Group's contribution is part of our commitment to co-create safe, empowered, and sustainable communities. Sustainability is a major part of our Great Transformation to become the Philippines' first techglomerate, and we will continue to do our part to uplift and bring focus on environmentally and socially impactful initiatives for all our stakeholders," Hontiveros added.

The partnership renewal signing was held at the office of Visayan Electric in Cebu.

In 2019, during the first year of the

partnership, nearly 600 Aboitiz team members showed up to volunteer at the Aboitiz Group company-wide tree planting. Additionally, 100 families from the community were mobilized in the plantation establishment and maintenance activities.

Throughout the year, over 50,000 seedlings of native and fruit-bearing trees were planted across 30 hectares.

The ongoing partnership between the Aboitiz Group and PBSP under the Cebu A-Park program will see the continued planting and maintenance of the protected forest to address the threats of the impending water crisis in Metro Cebu.

The planned five-year program will not only focus on rehabilitation but will also enable the families in the community to have access to a sustainable livelihood.









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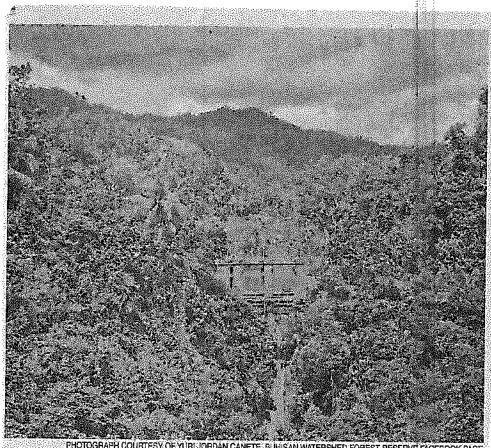
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MATABILITATION



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF YURI JORDAN CANETE, BUHISAN WATERSHED FOREST RESERVE FACEBOOK PAGE THE Aboitiz Group and the Philippine Business for Social Progress have partnered in supporting Cebu A-Park's efforts in rehabilitating and enriching the forest cover of the Buhisan Watershed Forest Reserve, in support of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Enhanced National Greening Program.



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Ayala unit set to handle waste of El Nido resorts

By Jenniffer B. Austria

TEN Knots Phils. Inc., the resorts subsidiary of Ayala Land Inc. in Palawan, tapped AC Logistics Holdings Corp.'s waste management company to handle waste across its El Nido re-

AC Logistics said in a statement Ten Knots signed an agreement with Integrated Waste Management Inc. for the transport, handling and management of hospital and hazardous waste across the island resorts of El Nido.

IWMI is one of the leading waste management companies in the Philippines specializing in the handling of hazardous waste that include industrial and hospital wastes. It serves 40 percent of medical establishments in Metro Manila.

"As our businesses grow and the tourism industry recovers, the challenge of managing different types of waste escalates, too. We at Ten Knots are only too glad to work with IWMI in addressing these challenges and meeting our sustainability objectives." Ayala Land Hotels and Resorts Corp. president and chief executive Javier Hernandez said.

Ten Knots operates four island resorts in Palawan including El Nido Resorts Apulit, Miniloc, Lagen and Pangulasian Islands.

The company said the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in volume of hospital waste like face masks, hazmats, PPEs, vials and syringes, diluents and expired medicines that require proper handling and disposal.

IWMI president Chito Pacheco said the company would collaborate with the group's El Nido Resorts and Lio Beach in exploring innovative solutions and practices that protect El Nido's communities and natural environment.

"Through this partnership, we hope to encourage more organizations to institutionalize proper hazardous waste management and ensure longterm positive impact," Pacheco said.

IWMI is in the forefront in ensuring the responsible handling and disposal of hazardous waste. It has been in the business of collecting and treating infectious and hazardous wastes for more than 30 years.