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**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**





TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

SATELLITE-AIDED SURVEY

# DENR EYES FULL LAND TITLING IN BAGUIO, CORDILLERA BY 2026

By Vincent Cabreza  
@InqNational

BAGUIO CITY—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) intends to complete land titling in the Cordillera, particularly at the summer capital, by 2026 using satellite-aided technology, the agency's regional chief said on Wednesday.

The sale of lands in Baguio City, which is originally a townsite reservation, is currently being jointly screened by the city government and DENR secretary, said Ralph Pablo, DENR Cordillera director, during a briefing.

Pablo said the systems for processing land patents have been improved and have sped up the inspection, verification and approval of land surveys.

Also, land management experts now utilize aerial and satellite-fed data that would be part of a cadastral database, he added.

### First land patent

Baguio is covered by the Original Certificate of Title (OCT) No. 1, the country's first land patent, which was issued by the American colonial government in the 57-square-kilometer territory of this city, which is a townsite reservation.

As a townsite, all lands within the 2,920.37-hectare reservation are "alienable and disposable (or can be sold)," except for forest lands and civil and military reservations that were segregated via proclamations.

Townsite sales helped generate funds for the fledgling city when Baguio first opened to migrants seeking a summer sanctuary.

But even as authorities were screening the townsite sales applications (TSA) for Baguio, the lingering "Igorot claims" that have been unresolved since the start of the 20th century, as well as the 1987 Constitution's recognition of ancestral lands, have made land titling in Baguio more complicated.

Apart from overlapping land claims, townsite sales processing was also plagued by anomalies and bureaucratic delays, generating a backlog that dates back to 1990.

### Screening

The DENR did not release how many TSA still need to be cleared and titled. But during a land summit on Sept. 13, 2019, the agency said 13,637 townsite lots (spanning 1,810.07 ha) were cleared during an administrative and judicial screening as of that period.

But many land conflicts need to be untangled by technical experts or have been elevated to local courts, which could make the DENR's 2026 deadline "unattainable," given that it has been taking years for the DENR to resolve cases in its jurisdiction, Councilor Isabelo Cosalan told the Inquirer on Friday.

Baguio should instead put a cap on land sales to solve overpopulation and overdevelopment and to preserve more lands for tree planting, added Councilor Jose Molintas, an Ibaloy human rights lawyer, in a separate interview.

### Exempt

The Baguio city government also identified townsite lands for its own need, which are now being titled by the DENR.

On March 3, the city government became owners of a 182,040-square-meter (18.2 ha) section of the century-old Burnham Park, with the issuance of the OCT No. 2023000017. The city government applied for a land title so after discovering that a third of the historic park was not covered by OCT 1 and could be purchased by private citizens.

Elsewhere in the Cordillera, ancestral land titling has become an option for indigenous Filipino households that are unable to secure titles for settlements that are within 18-degree slopes.

Baguio and Benguet province, as well as Cebu, are exempt from the rule on 18-degree slopes via Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1998 that was issued in 1985.

For the rest of the country, however, the 1975 Forestry Code (PD 705), which covers virtually all highland communities in the mountain region, applies when securing a land title.

The law states that "no land of the public domain eighteen percent in slope or over shall be classified as alienable and disposable, nor any forest land fifty percent in slope or over, as grazing land."

The ban excludes properties "already covered by existing titles or approved public land applications or that were actually occupied openly, continuously, adversely and publicly for a period of not less than thirty years as of the effectiveness of this Code, where the occupant is qualified for a free patent under the Public Land Act." INQ





# Shell, DENR ink deal on nature-based solutions

By MYRNA M. VELASCO

**L**isted firm Shell Pilipinas Corporation (SPC) has inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the advancement of nature-based solutions (NBS) that will aid the company in meeting its mid-century net zero decarbonization goal.

Shell explained that nature-based solutions will delve with initiatives on the protection and enhancement of natural ecosystems, including those on forests, grasslands, wetlands as well as coastal zones.

Additionally, NBS could cover projects "that improve agricultural sustainability to help absorb or prevent the release of greenhouse gases, while also delivering benefits to local communities and enhancing biodiversity of the area."

Shell stipulated that it has been

transforming its business to meet its target by avoiding and reducing emissions from its operations and from the fuels and other energy products it sells to its customers.

The collaborative undertaking is in line with DENR's "national greening program" as underpinned by Executive Order No. 193 that sets forth climate change mitigation and adaptation measures "through the restoration and protection of unproductive, denuded, and degraded forestland in the country."

SPC President and CEO Lorelie Quiambao-Osial noted that the anticipated outcome of the partnership will lean largely "in protecting the environment," stressing that "it's a significant moment where different sectors are coming together to make a positive difference."

Shell and DENR are aligned in developing NBS and focused on the protection, restoration, and regeneration of

the country's environment and natural resources, she said.

So far, the projects as well as endeavors to be pushed under that collaboration, including the timeframes, had not been fleshed out yet by the parties.

It was just universally indicated that "both organizations will explore integrated carbon and development opportunities in the Philippines."

Part of the signed pact will be for the parties to "work together to document processes and activities that the agency can use as a reference to develop programs, policies, and regulations related to NBS carbon projects."

For her part, DENR Secretary Maria Antonio Yulo-Loyzaga, "the collaboration with SPC is significant," as she conveyed that "we all have a stewardship role in terms of protecting our national resources, and we deeply value this opportunity to work together to achieve our goals for a climate and disaster-resilient country and planet."

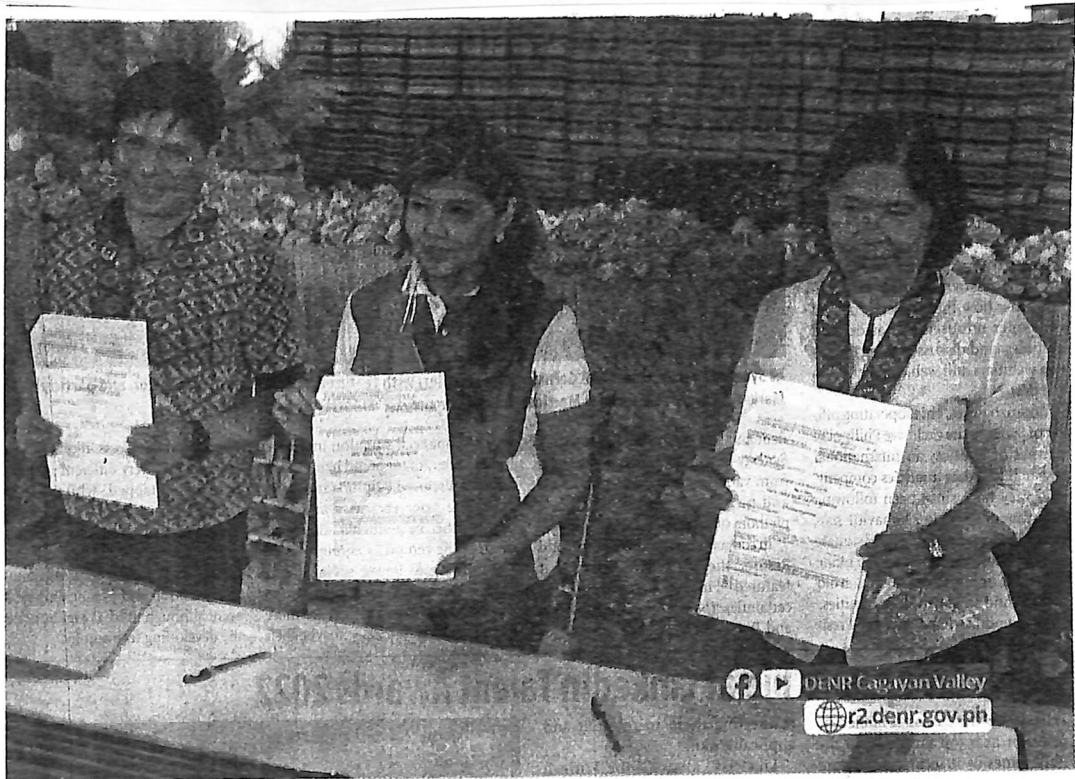




TITLE:

PAGE

DATE



Sen. Maria Imelda Josefa 'Imee' Marcos (center) witnessed the memorandum of agreement signing between Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan (right) of DENR Region 2 and NIA Administrator Eduardo Eddie Guillen. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## Magat watershed forest reserve to be rehabilitated

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

**T**HE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in collaboration with the National Irrigation Administration-Magat River Integrated Irrigation System (NIA-Mariis) will rehabilitate the more than 15,000 hectares of watershed area in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley).

According to DENR Region 2 Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan, both the DENR and NIA have renewed their commitment to the rehabilitation of the Magat Watershed Forest Reserve (MWFR) covering the provinces of Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya.

A memorandum of agreement (MoA) was recently forged between Bambalan representing the DENR and Administrator Eduardo Eddie Guillen representing the NIA to enhance the Magat watershed governance.

The signing was witnessed by Sen. Maria Imelda Josefa "Imee" Marcos who joined the recently held Stakeholders' Convergence cum Irrigation Associations Congress at the Casa Jardin in Santiago City Isabela.

### Forest management

Carolyn Annang-Tumamao, DENR Region 2 information officer, said the DENR under the MoA shall provide watershed and forest management standards for planning, decision-making and monitoring purposes; facilitate the issuance of appropriate DENR permits and clearance; and lead in the enforcement of forestry laws, rules and regulations.

The DENR shall also issue deputation orders to qualified NIA-Mariis field officers; confiscate and take custody of forestry products illegally cut, harvested and collected; and organize multi-sectoral watershed management council among stakeholders to

provide oversight functions on watershed management planning and implementation in the area.

Annang-Tumamao said the NIA shall be responsible for managing the 15,728.12-hectare watershed area of the MWFR. The agency shall also secure environment clearances and permits when necessary, and identify and recommend priority areas for immediate rehabilitation and development.

The NIA shall also prepare, formulate and implement the Integrated Watershed Management Plans and Programs; and assist the DENR in the enforcement of forestry laws rules and regulations.

During the Multi-Sectoral Convergence Meeting in November 2022, Bambalan proposed to revisit the agreements committed by the DENR and NIA for updating and integration of the stakeholders' roles and mandates to ensure a holistic environmental and climate-responsive partnership.

### Sustainability partnership

In January this year, the two agencies met to set institutional

arrangements among concerned government and private stakeholders to plan rehabilitation and management mechanisms for Magat watershed improvement.

Bambalan recalled the provisions in the agreements crafted in 1980 and 2019 between the DENR and the NIA which are now integrated in the new MoA "to ensure a holistic partnership for the sustainability of the Magat reservoir and protection of the watershed."

"Revisiting the existing MoA signed between the environment and irrigation sectors with the local government on the management and development of all critical watersheds will espouse stronger collaboration and partnership among government agencies and institutions," she said.

On June 26, 1969, the Magat Watershed was declared a Forest Reservation Area by virtue of Presidential Proclamation 573.

In 1980, then-president Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr. issued the Letter of Instruction 1002 authorizing the NIA to manage, protect, develop and rehabilitate over the 15,000-hectare watershed administered by the NIA-Mariis.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# Palawan students lead the charge toward a plastic-free and climate-resilient future



**ELEVENTH  
HOUR**  
THE CLIMATE REALITY  
PROJECT PHILIPPINES

**R**ecognizing the urgent need to address the pressing environmental challenges facing our planet, around 50 students from Palawan State University (PSU) pledged their commitment to creating a low-carbon, plastic-free, and climate-resilient university community.

The pledge was a culmination of the two-day event co-organized by The Climate Reality Project Philippines with the PSU Student Council entitled "Klima Eskwela: Climate Science, Adaptation, Arts, and Action" last May 19-20, 2023 in Puerto Princesa City.

Klima Eskwela is Climate Reality Philippines' knowledge exchange program that provides opportunities

for young climate advocates and other stakeholders to deepen and broaden their understanding of climate science, policy, and governance.

"Time and time again, we underscore the need to provide and enhance opportunities for young people to contribute to addressing the climate crisis and advancing sustainable development," said Nazrin Castro, branch manager of Climate Reality Philippines during the opening of the event.

Castro also recognized the leadership of the local government, local organizations, and the academe in deploying climate and environmental solutions on the ground. "Climate Reality is not here just to cascade what we know and what we want to push for in your community. We are also here to

learn from locally led actions already happening here in your city."

Dr. Ronald Edilberto Ona, dean of the PSU College of Science, underscored the need for multisectoral collaboration in climate action.

"We all know that climate change is a reality. We experienced it here in Palawan when Typhoon Odette hit. We know the consequences of climate change. We need to do something. Climate change is not impossible to combat. What we are doing here with our partners is to take that first step," Ona said.



To cap off the two-day Klima Eskwela session, students recited their pledge of commitment for climate and the environment.

## Thinking globally and acting locally

"Let us act locally but think globally," Ona reminded the organizers and participants of Klima Eskwela.

The first day of the event focused on the discussion of the best available climate science, and climate change-related issues in Puerto Princesa City.

"There is a consensus among scientists throughout the world that climate change is caused by humans and not simply a natural phenomenon. Ninety-nine percent of 88,000 peer-reviewed studies say so," Climate Reality Leader Jonathan Maldupana said as he discussed the basics of climate change, including what causes climate change and how human activities are altering the world's climate systems.

"We are spewing 162 million tons of man-made global warming pollution into the thin shell of our atmosphere every 24 hours — as if it were an open sewer," Maldupana said.

## Youth commitment for climate action

The workshop culminated with the synthesis of the pledge of actions each student made for climate and the environment.

On reducing carbon footprint, students collectively committed to promoting and adopting energy-efficient practices and prioritizing sustainable transportation options.

On eliminating plastic pollution, students pledged to minimize the consumption of single-use plastics and encourage others to do the same. They also committed to promoting and engaging in waste segregation and responsible waste management practices within the university premises.

On climate resilience, students pledged to encourage research and innovation within the university community to develop climate-resilient solutions, technologies, and practices that can contribute to both campus sustainability and the wider community.

The students also pledged to serve as ambassadors of sustainability within the campus and beyond.



Ferth Vandensteeen Manaysay, deputy branch manager and Plastic-Free Reality program lead of The Climate Reality Project Philippines, discussed why the plastic crisis is also a climate change issue.



Nazrin Camille Castro, branch manager of The Climate Reality Project Philippines, and Padmapani Perez, lead strategist for Agam Agenda, turned over copies of 'Harvest Moon: Poems and Stories from the Edge of the Climate Crisis' and 'Not Too Late: Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility' to Dr. Ronald Edilberto Ona, dean of the College of Science, and Dr. Carlos Alfonso Salvador, VP for student affairs and services.





## FCF Minerals advances Runruno mine rehab

It is all systems go for the London-based company's mine rehabilitation for the next 10 years as it prepares for its operation's possible completion in 2027 in its government-sanctioned Runruno Gold-Molybdenum Project (RGMP) in the village of Runruno in Quezon town, Nueva Vizcaya.

"As soon as we find out in the next three years that there is no more area to mine in the area covered by our financial or technical assistance agreement (FTAA), what is left to do for the company is to continue our mine rehabilitation for at least 10 years," said Lorne Harvey, FCF Minerals Corp. general manager for operation.

Under the FTAA, FCF Minerals operates the RGMP under the supervision of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley). Regional Director Mario Ancheta, who heads the bureau, said that "mining will not connote a negative impression if we religiously take actions for it to be done responsibly."

### Completing extraction

Emphasizing the role of multi-partite monitoring teams in the region's extractive industry, Ancheta said site assessments within the mining area to validate the environmental compliance of the permit or FTAA holder are regularly conducted.

"This is to ensure that provisions of DENR Administrative Order 21, Series of 2020, known as the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act 7942 or the 'Philippine Mining Act of 1995' are strictly enforced," he said.

Harvey said the company is now at stage five where they are conducting drilling operations to confirm whether there is more to extract for a few years before they declare their FTAA area as mined-out. Should they find nothing to extract, the company will continue with the mine rehabilitation "which we have started since the time the company entered the area even before the company announced in 2010 the results of the RGMP feasibility study which confirmed the viability of the project," he said.

He added that the company's Mine Environmental Protection and Enhancement Office (Mepeo) will lead the rehabilitation for 10 years or more before the mined area is turned over to the Nueva Vizcaya provincial and the Quezon local government which have political jurisdiction over the said area.

### Mine rehabilitation stages

According to the Mepeo's strategic program, mine rehabilitation involves the restoration of the mined-out and disturbed areas to their intended post-mining land use in consideration of their physical, chemical and biological state.

Harvey described the three-stage progressive, permanent mine rehabilitation process: stage one involves slope stabilization and erosion control measures such as planting of grasses, seed broadcasting, dayami application and hydroseeding technology; stage two involves the planting of pioneering native species such as tibig, hauili, hamindang and anabiong, among others.

"These species in stage three will colonize the area, making it more suitable for later species to be introduced within the area," he said.

Harvey noted that the final or third stage of rehabilitation is designed to emulate the area into a more sustainable ecosystem before its disturbance. During this time, biodiversity is increased by planting and re-introducing climax species of endemic and premium forest tree species and regenerants collected from tree-cutting areas with high conservation value.

### Addressing disturbed areas

According to the company's Mepeo, close to 50 hectares of disturbed areas had been rehabilitated ahead of their schedules.

Harvey said FCF Minerals observes international standards and best practices in environmental protection and enhancement in its RGMP and continues to organize and support various environmental activities.

He said these activities led by the Mepeo in partnership with the local government and stakeholders include seedling nurseries for its reforestation program, slope stabilization and rehabilitation of disturbed areas, and monitoring of environmental resources, as well as waste management.

"Our efforts were also recently acknowledged by winning the Presidential Mineral Industry Environment Award many times, and the Best Mining Forest Program Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association at the Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference held yearly in Baguio City," he added.

**LEANDER C. DOMINGO**





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TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# Preserving Masungi Georeserve helps protect our rare vines

**T**he rare JC's Vine, which has only been recorded in four locations in the Philippines and the world, was spotted along the trails in Masungi Georeserve in Baras, Rizal.

According to scientists, the Masungi Georeserve has the most abundant population of the JC's Vine they observed. As stated by the National Museum of the Philippines in its 2021 Technical Report on the Masungi Georeserve, "Due to its characteristics, karst ecosystems are known to have unique biodiversity, which inhabits endemic flora and fauna species."

The flowering season of this rare vine in Masungi is between the months of

March and May. The first batch has already flowered, and more will bloom next month. It was spotted along the trails, specifically the Discovery Trail and the Legacy Trail inside the Masungi Geopark Project rewilding initiative.

Discovered only in 2015, the JC's Vine (*Strongylodon juangonzalezii*) is

an endemic species notable for its "plagiotropic dense inflorescence with 27 to 31 flowers per cluster on a lateral branch." When young, the flowers are lilac, but as they age, they progressively turn blue. Its morphological traits were not consistent with other species within the genus.

The name of the genus comes from the Greek words "strongylos," which means "round," and "odontos," which means "toothlike," alluding to the calyx's spherical teeth. This woody vine may grow up to 18 meters long and thrives in a disturbed secondary growth forest at 295 meters in altitude, climbing atop a huge tree. The flowers of JC's Vine are denser than those of its cousin the Jade Vine, which is found on the five-peso coin, whose flowers are looser and fewer.

Discovered by Annalee S. Had-sall, Michelle D.R. Alejado, Ariel R. Laron, and Ivy Amor F. Lambio, this vine is named after Dr. Juan Carlos Tecson Gonzalez of the University of the Philippines Los Baños - Museum of Natural History (UPLB-MNH).

This eye-catching vine is one of the species being threatened by destructive activities and developments inside the georeserve. The Masungi Georeserve Foundation continues to call on decision-makers and the public to help protect the ecologically important landscape.

