

15 April 2023 Saturday



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



■ The first-quarter regional management conference of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) in Santiago City. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Governance critical to ENR management

ENVIRONMENT Undersecretary for Policy Programs and International Affairs Jonas Leones said a commitment to environmental good governance will accelerate sustainable environment and natural resources management.

During the opening of the three-day first-quarter regional management conference of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley), he commended the officials for "raising the bar of excellent performance toward building a sustainable environment" despite the challenges in program implementation.

Raising the bar

Leones noted that strategic planning is important in implementing transparency, accountability and participatory approaches to achieve a greater impact on the environment and climate change resiliency programs. He emphasized the need to institutionalize

information and communication technology to create solutions and formulate policies through database and online management systems.

DENR Region 2 Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan then challenged the region's DENR officials to continue developing new approaches to enhance public service delivery. One path was "to embrace digitization in our office operations to make our work lighter and smarter. Let us transform our existing processes by maximizing digital technologies."

Carolyn Tumamao, DENR Region 2 information officer, noted that DENR Region 2's recent receipt of a bronze award under the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management is evidence of its bracing change for development.

A culture of excellence

Tumamao said the award

was specifically due to the regional office's implementation of online recruitment, selection and placement in the agency, which was the first DENR initiative nationwide.

She echoed Leones' call to continually "raise the bar of performance" which creates "a culture of excellence and quality public service."

Bambalan noted that an online system for land record application was also launched on March 24, 2023 as part of decentralizing the authority of securing simple land record transactions to the field offices.

Recognized during the awards night were the best regional divisions, and provincial and community ENR offices, and best-established forest plantation demonstration areas under the forestland management project.

The conference discussed environmental programs concerning legal easements, urban biodiversity to in-

clude in mining areas and forestland management. Online applications for environmental compliance certificates, forestland areas inventory, implementation plans, concerns from the bureaus, and management and technical services were also discussed.

Research and development experts from the University of the Philippines Los Baños also discussed the water security in Cagayan River Basin and its climate vulnerability assessment.

In Barangay Nagassican in Santiago City, Isabela, a benchmarking activity was conducted to observe and adopt best practices in solid waste management. Under the leadership of village chief Reynante Bautista, Nagassican is a multi-awarded barangay local government unit, recognized as the 2022 regional winner of *barangay* (village) *basura* buster.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO



TITLE :

Manila Water lists water supply system priority projects in 2023

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

THE Manila Water Co. Inc. said it would make “significant” investments in projects that will create alternative water sources, including the Calawis Water Supply System and the East Bay Ph1 Water Supply System initiatives.

The two system initiatives can add 80 million liters a day (MLD) and 50 MLD more capacity, respectively.

The Marikina PTP, other deep wells, and other possible contingency and augmentation measures will be further ramped up, according to the company.

Given the peak water demand during the ongoing drought season and the impending El Niño, Manila Water said these initiatives are given “the utmost importance” because they will reduce dependence on the current water supplies, Angat and La Mesa Dams, and Cardona treatment plant (Laguna Lake).

Along with the projects associated with the two water supply system projects, Manila Water is also preparing the reliability lines through the Novaliches-Balara Aqueduct 4 and the Angat Water Transmission Improvement Project (AWTIP) Tunnel 5 projects to evaluate and fix the existing aqueducts.

Key investments in wastewater have been made to expand wastewater service coverage within the East Zone and to comply with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources environmental protection standards under the Revised General Effluent Standards of 2016 (DAO 2016-08). Manila Water is currently constructing three sewerage treatment plants and sewer networks to serve portions of Mandaluyong, San Juan, Quezon City,

Antipolo, San Mateo, and Rodriguez in Rizal, the San Mateo-Rodriguez Sewerage System, the Hinulugang Tak-tak Sewerage System Project, the Mandaluyong West Sewerage System, and the North and South Pasig Sewerage Systems to name a few.

“To be well-positioned to serve the public even amid the economic challenges, we want to ensure that our capital spending meets both our water supply and sewerage service obligations. After all, it has always been our utmost commitment to provide safe, reliable, and affordable water supply to more than seven million people in the East. This covers more than 1.3 million households and with over 5,000 kilometers of network pipelines,” Manila Water President and CEO JV Emmanuel de Dios said.

“For wastewater, we have invested nearly P40 billion in capital expenditures [capex] over more than 20 years and will ramp up our investments in the following years. Presently, wastewater coverage in the East Zone is now over 30 percent of population served, with nearly 400 kilometers of laid sewer network, allowing us to serve over 2 million Filipinos.”

He said this is a significant increase from only 3 percent coverage when the company took over operations from the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System in 1997. “These milestones would not have been possible without MWSS’ support and guidance.”

The company capped off 2022 with a total capex budget of P20.6 billion, recording the third consecutive highest capex for the company, beating the 2021 performance by almost P7 billion.

Manila Water said it awarded a total of 103 projects in 2022.



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Hike in MM water allocation gets NWRB nod

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) has approved the 52 cubic meters per second (cms) allocation requested by Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System

(MWSS) Administrator Leonor Cleofas announced yesterday.

"Yes, the NWRB has approved the 52 cms," Cleofas told **The STAR**.

She said the additional allocation will be effective until May 2023.

"The additional two cms will go to Maynilad,

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as Manila Water has no problem in the water supply. It even helped Maynilad as it opened five points of its cross boundaries to assist Maynilad," she said.

According to Cleofas, the two water concessionaires will share the 50 cms allocation earlier granted by the NWRB.

Cleofas said the increase in water allocation will address the daily water interruption being experienced by Maynilad customers. MWSS has appealed the decision of the NWRB after it only granted 50 cms allocation instead of the original request of 52 cms.

The NWRB, led by executive director Seville David Jr., met on Thursday to discuss the request of MWSS.

David said the board needed to assess the situation, including the possibility of an El Niño phenomenon in the middle of the year.

Based on latest monitoring of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), as of 6 a.m. yesterday, the level of Angat

Dam was at 198.39 meters compared to its previous level of 198.52 meters on Thursday, or a reduction of 0.13 centimeters.

Despite the drop in the level of Angat Dam, it is still 9.86 meters above its rule curve elevation of 188.53 meters.

According to David, the water allocation will allow the La Mesa Dam and Ipo Dam to recover at a more comfortable level and address some of the water supply issues of Metro Manila.

The MWSS and NWRB have given assurance that Angat Dam will be able to supply the water requirement in Metro Manila and other provinces until December.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides irrigation for 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

At present, Maynilad customers in Manila, Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas and Malabon; the cities of Cavite, Bacoor and Imus and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario in Cavite are experiencing eight to 14 hours of daily water cutoff.



Manila Water reports record ₱20.6-B capex

Manila Water Company reported total capital expenditures worth P20.6 billion last year — its third consecutive highest capex and exceeding the 2021 investment by almost ₱7 billion.

“This reaffirms Manila Water’s full commitment to providing safe, reliable, and affordable water access for Filipinos amid the economic downturns brought about by the pandemic-induced domestic inflation,” the firm said.

In terms of expenditure, Manila Water is preparing for the onset of El Niño this year, as noted by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Manila Water’s significant investments in creating alternative water sources include the Calawis Water Supply System and the East Bay Ph1 Water Supply System initiatives.

The two system initiatives can add 80 MLD and 50 MLD more capacity, respectively. The Marikina PTP, other deep wells, and other possible contingency and augmentation measures will be further ramped up as a result.

Given the peak water demand during the ongoing drought season and the impending El Niño, these initiatives are given the utmost importance because they will reduce dependence on the current water supplies, Angat, La Mesa and Cardona TP (Laguna Lake).

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“To be well-positioned to serve the public even amid the economic challenges, we want to ensure that our capital spending meets both our water supply and sewerage service obligations,” Manila Water President and Chief Executive Officer JV Emmanuel de Dios said.

He added that, “After all, it has always been our utmost commitment to provide safe, reliable, and affordable water supply to more than seven million people in the East. This covers more than 1.3 million households and with over 5,000 kilometers of network pipelines.”

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Presently, wastewater coverage in the East Zone is now over 30 percent of population served, with nearly 400 kilometers of laid sewer network, allowing us to serve over two million Filipinos.

“This is a significant increase from only three percent coverage when we took over operations from MWSS in 1997. These milestones would not have been possible without MWSS’ support and guidance,” de Dios said.

Manila Water has awarded a total of 103 projects in 2022, propelled by its long-standing partnership with local government agencies and a competent pool of contractors—all in full compliance with international industry standards. (James A. Loyola)



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DOT flags breaching of Boracay Island's carrying capacity during Holy Week break

By MA. STELLA F. ARNALDO
Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

THE Department of Tourism (DOT) has called the attention of the Malay local government unit (LGU) after Boracay Island's carrying capacity was breached again during the Holy Week.

This developed as a total of 62,241 holidaymakers traveled to Boracay during the Lenten break this year, from April 2 to 9, according to data from the Municipal Tourism Office of Malay, which governs the popular vacation spot. This was a dramatic surge of 38 percent from the 44,981 tourists who visited the island from April 11 to 17, 2022, which was the Lenten break then.

This year, over 80 percent or 50,015 tourists were locals, while 11,535 were foreigners, and 691 were overseas Filipino workers.

Also, municipal data showed Boracay's carrying capacity was breached on three days, with tourists reaching 25,480 on April 6 (Maundy Thursday); 25,2294 on April 7 (Good Friday); and 23,284

on April 8 (Black Saturday), despite the daily departures on those days. A study by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has determined the island's carrying capacity for tourists at 19,215 at any given time.

Boracay consistently ranks among the most popular islands in the world in surveys conducted by international travel publications and news sites, because of its powdery white sand beach.

'Tug of war'

DOT Director for Region 6 (Western Visayas) Crisanta Marlene P. Rodriguez has "requested the office of the mayor to give due attention to the existing carrying capacity of Boracay," after noting the breaches. Carrying capacity refers to an ecosystem's ability to support people and other living things without negative effects.

Malay Mayor Frolibar Bautista failed to comment on the matter, despite repeated attempts by this paper to contact him.

For his part, Tourism Congress of the Philippines President Roberto "Bob" Zozobrado described

the issue in Boracay as "always a tug of war between profitability and sustainability. I think the DENR study, which pegs the island's carrying capacity at 19,215, is just to put some semblance of control, but if you really look closely, how is it being monitored?"

He told the BUSINESSMIRROR, "I would push for an increase in Boracay's carrying capacity to ensure sustainability of the products and services that the destination offers. Besides, these 'breaches' take place only on a few weekends throughout the year. What happened in the past was the result of decades of neglect not only by the stakeholders themselves, but also by the local government. Now, everybody is conscious of steps they have to take to ensure its sustainability."

'Good for business'

IN a separate interview, a manager of a resort on the island who requested anonymity said, "Breaching [the carrying capacity] is good news to every stakeholder here in the island as it results to more business. I think the national government is amenable, too that

the carrying capacity cannot be implemented fully. We already have the Boracay-Caticlan Sustainable Development Council, which will act as the sort of BI-ATF [Boracay Island Inter-Agency Task Force] for the island and we have discussed two weeks ago regarding the presentation of a higher carrying capacity."

The island's stakeholders have requested for an increase in carrying capacity in the light of infrastructure improvements made by the government. The appeal came on the heels of the breaching of the island's carrying capacity last year, also during Holy Week.

Tourists on the island reached 21,252 on April 14 (Maundy Thursday) and 22,519 on April 15 (Good Friday). The DOT then, which co-chaired the BIATF, informed the DENR and DILG of the breach, requesting stricter measures be taken to prevent any future occurrences as the local government was still under Covid Alert Level 1 status. (See, "Boracay breaches carrying capacity for tourists on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday—DOT," in the *BusinessMirror*.)



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Climate policy in crisis: Germans give up on green energy, fossil fuels here to stay?

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drawn by one reader to a column written by fellow Times columnist Ben Kritz last Sunday (April 9), which
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■ MAKABENTA FROM A1

Climate policy in crisis: Germans give up on green energy, fossil fuels here to stay?

I had not read, and which conversely criticized a column of mine on the climate apocalypse and the biblical apocalypse.

To be consistent with my record as a climate change skeptic and energy realist, I will take the time today to post a quick reply to Kritz.

I will answer in two ways.

First, I will henceforth lobby for the passage of a foreign agents registration law in the country, like the Foreign Agents Registration Act in the United States, so that aliens or foreign residents who presume to engage in policy debates and opinion-making in the media and our public life, if any, will be obliged to disclose to government if they represent or lobby for a foreign government or foreign organizations.

Since there is an explicit constitutional limit of (60-40 percent) on foreign ownership and management of mass media and select industries in this country, there is sound reason to also control or regulate the degree of engagement or participation by foreigners in policymaking and opinion-making in the mass media and our public life.

Additionally, I will propose to the Senate that it call a committee hearing on climate change and the green energy transition, so foreign propagandists like Kritz, as well as skeptics like myself, can be called to testify on their concerns and proposals, and assist our government in writing a sensible and workable Philippine climate policy and in walking our Climate Change Commission.

Speaking for myself, I have a 15-year experience as policy research director and analyst for one Philippine administration, in addition to four decades of work as a journalist, columnist and newspaper editor. I studied and trained for this living.

Secondly, I will continue the discussion of climate change and green energy issues by drawing attention to many new and more incisive articles in international media that place in grave doubt the widely promoted green energy transition.

I will reserve discussion of the proposed Philippine foreign registration law for a later column: for now, I will focus attention on several new articles and studies in international media that point to a burgeoning crisis in the climate policy agenda.

'Green loses its sheen'

The Issues and Insights (I&I) website unveiled this week a revealing package of new articles in various media organi-

zations, which it entitled, "Green loses its sheen: climate policy in crisis." The articles uniformly portray headaches for the climate change movement, and the hoped-for green energy transition.

I&I listed down the following as germinators of a climate policy crisis:

1. "Have we reached peak green?", an article in the Spiked website that contends fossil fuels are here to stay.

2. "Germans have given up on green energy." The Powerline website reported on April 4 that the great majority of Germans have given up on green energy.

3. "Biden bans 53 percent of Americans from buying cars," says *Front Page* magazine (April 11, 2023). The ban will force America to switch to electric cars by 2032. Fifty-three percent of Americans won't be able to afford EVs (electric vehicles).

4. "US, European leaders haven't learned lessons [from] the energy crisis," says the *Washington Times* in an editorial on April 10, 2023.

To this, I will add a major analysis and report on the website of the Manhattan Institute (MI), one of the most influential think tanks in the world. The article is entitled, "The energy transition delusion: a reality reset" written by Mark Mills, an MI senior fellow.

Mills' report is incisive and thorough, it covers all the bases and angles.

Fossil fuels may be here to stay

In the article "Have we reached peak green?" (Spiked, April 4, 2023), Ralph Schoellhammer contends that Joe Biden's climate posturing should be ignored; fossil fuels are here to stay.

He proceeds to show in his article that Biden himself has undermined his message. Shoellhammer wrote:

"Politicians will often boast of their commitment to tackling climate change. Yet their posturing is invariably contradicted by their actions.

US President Joe Biden is perhaps the prime example of this contradictory policymaking. For years, he has been virtue-signaling to the environmental extremists, promising to put an end to the fossil-fuel industry. Yet, while in office, Biden has quietly been undercutting these pledges.

Indeed, last year, the Biden administration sold millions of barrels of oil from the so-called strategic petroleum reserve (SPR) — massive salt domes in Louisiana filled with barrels of crude oil which were

created after the 1973-1974 OPEC oil embargo. On March 13 this year, as part of an effort to replenish these reserves, Biden approved a massive new drilling project in Alaska. This project is set to be delivered by ConocoPhillips, which hopes to bring the first barrels online by 2029 — that is, unless legal action by environmental groups leads to further delays.

So, an administration that has consistently advertised its green, anti-fossil-fuel credentials has just given the green light to a large-scale oil-drilling project. This decision shouldn't surprise anyone. The Biden administration has a history of wanting to have its cake and eat it. Immediately upon taking office, it canceled the Keystone XL pipeline, which would have transported Canadian crude oil to the US, as a concession to the environmental wing of the Democratic Party. At the same time, Biden has been more than willing to draw oil from the SPR to stop gasoline prices from spiraling out of control.

Despite the approval of the Alaska project, far too many influential people still genuinely believe that the end of fossil fuels is nigh — and that they could disappear without any serious consequences for the economy or our standard of living. *The Atlantic*, for example, claims that the US will soon have enough sources of renewable energy to render the Alaska project redundant before it has even produced a single barrel of oil. These climate zealots are in for a rude awakening. As the commodity and finance bloggers on the Doomberg Substack have noted: "For many in the professional environmental class, this approval [of the Alaska project] marks the shattering admission that Biden doesn't believe in Green Energy Santa and they can't wrap their heads around it."

"Elsewhere, there is a growing realization that stringent climate targets are simply not going to be met. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has published a new report that makes it all but explicit that the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold for global warming is out of reach. It would take a massive reduction in global emissions to get there. And global emissions are not a problem that Biden or other Western leaders can even attempt to tackle.

"While the West might have a monopoly on climate activists, it does not have a monopoly on the sources of greenhouse-gas emissions. Seventy-two

percent of all planned coal-fired power plants worldwide are in China. India, Turkey and Indonesia are next on the list of nations with the highest planned coal capacity. None of these countries are willing to jeopardize economic development for the 1.5-degree goal. Especially not when that goal is, as climate-studies professor Roger Pielke Jr. has shown, a political rather than scientific threshold."

Green dream turns into nightmare?

Powerline reported on April 4, 2023:

"The German government continues on a collision course with reality. But Germans have figured out that the green dream is turning into a nightmare. This report is on a survey of Germans done by Forsa:

'An overwhelming majority of the German population is of the opinion that a successful energy transition is not realistic. According to a Forsa survey, 88 percent of respondents share this view.'

"Eighty-eight percent! That is stunning.

"The Germans have less and less confidence in the federal government's plans for the energy transition. Only 10 percent still believe that renewable energy systems such as photovoltaics and wind power can adequately meet the country's energy needs.

"In 2011, 39 percent of respondents were still optimistic and 61 percent skeptical.

"Even among the supporters of the Greens, skepticism now prevails, the survey found.

"A majority of 59 percent of respondents continue to support the use of natural gas as an energy source in Germany; 57 percent are in favor of a continuation of nuclear energy.

"The German government's green dreams promise to destroy that country's economy:

"The industrial unions IG Metall, IG BCE and IG BAU fear hundreds of thousands of job losses and site closures due to the high electricity prices in Germany in international comparison, especially in energy-intensive industries such as the steel, chemical or building materials industry.

"So far, Germany's government is persisting in its green delusions, but a collision with reality is inevitable.

"The question is what will be left of Germany's economy when the green dream is finally abandoned."



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April 21 a holiday to mark Eid'l Fitr

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has declared April 21 a regular holiday in observance of Eid'l Fitr, the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Based on Presidential Proclamation No. 201 dated April 14 and signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, the holiday aims to "bring the religious and cultural significance of the Eid'l Fitr to the fore of national consciousness."

"To allow the entire Filipino nation to join their Muslim brothers and sisters in peace and harmony in the observance and celebration of Eid'l Fitr, it is necessary to declare Friday, April 21, a regular holiday throughout the country," the proclamation read.

Eid'l Fitr, dubbed the "Festival of Breaking the Fast," is one of the

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most important days for Muslims and is an occasion that brings the entire Islamic community together.

During this time, families and friends gather to show gratitude to Allah while celebrating the end of the month-long Ramadan. **Vince Lopez**