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DENR

NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR chief cites role of science for healthy marine environment

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA MAY 17, 2021

ENVIRONMENT and Natural Resources Secretary Roy A. Cimatu highlighted the role of ocean science as a key to spurring relevant behavior change towards the marine environment.

“Through science, we learn about the biodiversity that thrives in our oceans, its functions, potentials, risks, and opportunities. The present state of the ocean, the threats to it, and its proper management are all governed by science,” Cimatu said in a statement highlighting the country’s celebration of the “Month of the Ocean” 2021 in May.

The Philippines’s Month of the Ocean is celebrated annually in May by virtue of Presidential Proclamation 57 signed by then-President Joseph Estrada in 1998. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources spearhead its observance.

With this year’s theme “The Science We Need for the Ocean We Want,” the DENR said it takes inspiration from the banner message of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). The message aims to “strengthen the international cooperation needed to develop the scientific research and innovative technologies that can connect ocean science with the needs of society.”

Cimatu acknowledged the significance of a science-based approach to change people’s mindsets for the ocean’s protection and conservation.

“For many years now prior to this global health crisis, our oceans were already under threat. Human action that has resulted in climate change, marine pollution and loss of marine species forces us to make behavior shifts to reverse the ocean’s declining health,” he explained.

The DENR chief noted that scientific knowledge will help understand all these consequences and establish policies to address their impacts.

“The ocean contributes to the air we breathe and the food we eat. It regulates the climate and weather, stores carbon, houses marine biodiversity and provides recreation. As our oceans are under threat now more than ever, it is crucial that we engage on the science of the ocean for us to rethink our ways and save our vibrant seas,” he added.

Spearheading this year’s celebration, the DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau’s (DENR-BMB) Coastal and Marine Division (CMD) has lined up month-long activities and information campaigns to expand awareness on the critical role of scientific information for the protection and conservation of the ocean.

The DENR-BMB kicked off the Month of the Ocean “Online Ocean Jam” in partnership with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) Philippines and Communities Organized for Resource Allocation (CORA).

The activity seeks to raise conservation awareness through music with talks from speakers on the science and academe sector via Facebook live.



Every Friday until May 28, CORA in partnership with DENR-BMB, will host the CORA Ocean School. This aims to impart a deeper understanding on the relationship between the ocean and humans and inspire aspiring 'planeteers' to move towards protecting our seas.



DENR, PCSD begin case buildup vs ‘traders’ of Palawan giant clams



BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA MAY 17, 2021

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is now building a case against unscrupulous individuals behind the illegal trade of giant clams in Johnson Island and Green Island in Roxas, Palawan.

The DENR said the illegal activity involving the harvest of some 300 pieces of giant clam shells in Johnson Island and 150 tons of giant clams in Green Island in March and April, respectively, constitute the crime of illegal wildlife trade. These are a violation of Republic Act (RA) 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2001.

The DENR has appealed to the public to be cautious in dealing with individuals who pose as science researchers to harvest giant clams, listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) because of excessive collection for food, agriculture and the aquarium trade.

The PCSD, an attached agency of the DENR by virtue of Executive Order 734 series of 2008, together with other concerned government agencies seized the giant clam shells from Johnson Island and tons of giant clams in Green Island in March and April, as part of the intensified campaign against illegal wildlife trade.

“Our vast wildlife resources, especially in Palawan, considered as the country’s ‘last ecological frontier,’ should be protected with utmost responsibility from frauds,” Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy A. Cimatu was quoted in a statement as saying. “This is the reason behind the DENR’s stringent laws and policies on wildlife and its scrutiny of individuals who want to gain access or control over these species.

PCSD Executive Director Teodoro Jose S. Matta said he met with a “Dr. Rosalee Tequillo,” who identified herself as the national facilitator of the National Redemption Program for Fossilized Giant Clams and “buyer” of the giant clams for scientific purposes.

“There was an admission on the part of Tequillo that they were engaged in the collection and possession of giant clamshells or ‘taklobo’ (*Tridacna gigas*),” Matta said adding that Tequillo wasn’t able to prove these were for scientific purposes.

“Her mention of the ‘buyer’ has inclined us to believe that it was not truly for scientific or breeding or propagation purpose,” Matta said.

He added that Tequillo failed to provide valid documentary evidence to prove that their activities are legal.

Matta said Tequillo was also unable to present any document from the Office of the President (OP) about the National Redemption Program. He further explained that the only evidence she presented is a document purportedly from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) National Director Commodore Eduardo B. Gongona.

“But upon examination of said document, the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development staff found that it did not and does not, in any way, give Tequillo and her group or any private individual any authority to collect, extract, or possess fossilized giant clam species,” Matta said.



The PCSD warned the group that “the conduct of such undertaking under the guise of possessing legal authority from the OP and the BFAR and misinforming the public, carry the imposition of corresponding sanctions under the law.”

Matta said the PCSD will “remain firm in its commitment to clamp down on illegal wildlife trade in Palawan and ensure a sustainable environment for Palaweños.”



Giant clam nasabat, researcher na scammer nagkalat – DENR

By Abante News Online — Last updated May 16, 2021

NEWS



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Pinag-iingat ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang publiko sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga nagpapanggap na scientific researcher pero ang tanging hangarin pala ay makakuha at ilegal na maibenta ang mga giant clam.

Ginawa ang babala matapos makumpiska ng Palawan Council for Sustainable Development ang 300 piraso ng giant clam sa Johnson Island at 150 tonelada ng giant clam sa Green Island, kapwa matatagpuan sa Roxas, Palawan noong Marso at Abril.

“Our vast wildlife resources, especially in Palawan, considered as the country’s ‘last ecological frontier,’ should be protected with utmost responsibility from frauds,” ani DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu. (Riz Dominguez)

Source: <https://www.abante.com.ph/giant-clam-nasabat-researcher-na-scammer-nagkalat-denr1/>



PH Hawk Eagle rescued in Agusan

Published May 16, 2021, 4:35 PM

by [Mike Crismundo](#)

ROSARIO, Agusan del Sur – A rare and beautiful bird later known as a species of the Philippine Hawk-Eagle was rescued in the wee hours by a member of Manobo tribe in the isolated and mountainous area of Maghilot, Bunawan Brook, Bunawan, Agusan del Sur.

The Manobo tribe member immediately reported and turned over the juvenile male raptor to the head security of the Philsaga Mining Corp. (PMC) Thursday, May 13, for proper disposition.

The chief security reported the incident to PMC president Atty. Raul C. Villanueva who immediately called top officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for the turnover of the wildlife since it cannot be possessed without permit under Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) DAO No. 2019-09 or the “Updated National List of Threatened Philippine Fauna and their Categories.”

The rescued big bird was initially named by Villanueva as “Alpha.” “It’s good that the bird was not harmed when found by our highland farmer/villager,” said the top PMC official.

“Initially, our (company) medical team extended foods (fruits) and we later found the rare bird started kicking,” Villanueva added.

Villanueva personally turned over the rescued Philippine Hawk Eagle (*Nisaetus pinskeri*) to DENR Region 13 Executive Director Nonie M. Tamayo at PMC office in Bayugan 3, Rosario, Agusan del Sur Friday.

“We are happy enough that the bird was found in the company’s good hands,” said Tamayo, who assured the bird will be properly handed over to the agency’s bureau. “There, it can be properly taken cared of,” the region’s top DENR official said.



Manila Bay water quality MoA signed

Published 4 hours ago on May 17, 2021 02:30 AM

By [Cherk Balagtas](#)



The Navotas City local government has sealed an agreement with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) for a partnership to improve water quality in Manila Bay.

Navotas City Mayor Toby Tiangco, DENR-National Capital Region executive director Jacqueline Caancan, and Engr. William Cuñado, DENR–Environmental Management Bureau-NCR Bureau Director and concurrent regional director, signed the memorandum of agreement (MoA).

Also among the signatories were Commodore Charlie Rances, PCG-Coast Guard District-NCR-Central Luzon Commander, and Vice Admiral Eduardo Fabricante, PCG-Maritime Safety Services Commander.

“We welcome this partnership with the DENR and the Coast Guard. Working together is always better than working alone. We are grateful that even with the pandemic, the program to clean and rehabilitate Manila Bay remains a priority,” Tiangco said.

“We hope that through this initiative, we will soon realize our common goal of restoring the waters surrounding the city to a classification fit for fishing, swimming and other recreational water activities,” he added.

Under the MoA, the DENR-EMB-NCR will install water quality monitoring equipment (WQME) with buoy near the coastline of Barangay Tanza 1 to monitor the water quality of the bay.

The agency will also shoulder the cost of the monitoring equipment and installation, as well as the operating expenses of the station.

It will conduct regular inspection of the monitoring station, and share the gathered data with the other parties, if requested. A smart television monitor will be provided for this purpose.

Navotas, on the other hand, will allow the installation of the WQME station and its accessories along the coastline of the barangay, as well as the continuous operation and maintenance of the site by the DENR-EMB-NCR personnel.

The city government will also provide assistance to ensure the security of the monitoring station.

Source: https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2021/05/17/manila-bay-water-quality-moa-signed/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=manila-bay-water-quality-moa-signed



Adopted mangrove

posted May 16, 2021 at 07:56 pm



Bayer Crop Science adopts a degraded mangrove coastal area in Barangay Buayan, General Santos City as a 'Rhizophora' farm to help sustain biodiversity, protect the community from storm surges and generate livelihood and income. An initial 200 seedlings of the variety *Rhizophora mucronata* were planted in the mangrove area by Bayer. The project called 'Adopt a Coastal Special Protection Area' was initiated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Angeles LGU, group to plant 2,000 trees at watershed area



'KASUNDUAN PARA SA TUBIG-KANLUNGAN.' The Abacan River and Angeles Watershed Advocacy Council, Inc, (Araw-ACI) has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the KAPANALIG Angeles, Inc, and Kaunlaran sa Kabundukan Kooperatiba (KKK) for the establishment of a nursery at the Angeles Watershed in Sapangbato. In photo are (L-R) ARAW-ACI Executive Dir. Minerva Zamora-Arceo, Araw-ACI President Renato S. Tayag Jr., KKK president Apolinar M. Garcia, and Kapanalig Angeles, Inc., Vice President Rose Aguilar-Datu. (Photo courtesy of Araw-ACI)

[REYNALDO G. NAVALES](#)

May 16, 2021

THE Abacan River and Angeles Watershed Advocacy Council, Inc. (Araw-ACI), in cooperation with the Angeles City local government, will plant 2,000 trees and bamboos on June 19 as a kick-off activity for the planting season this year.

The activity will be conducted in time with the 160th birth anniversary of Dr. Jose P. Rizal.

Renato S. Tayag, Jr., president of Araw-ACI, said the June 19 activity is just the first leg of a series of tree-planting schedules until the end of the regular rainy season this year.

With the full support of the Angeles City government, Tayag said the works for the rehabilitation of the Angeles Watershed in Barangay Sapangbato have advanced well since last year.

The Angeles Watershed is a 560-hectare former military reservation land administered by the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) as provided for under Republic Act 7227 or the Bases Conversion and Development Act.

The watershed is geographically located in Angeles City. Its rehabilitation is crucial to ensure the sustainable supply of water for Angeles and the Metro Clark area.

Mayor Carmelo "Pogi" Lazatin, Jr., through the City Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro), earlier pledged to provide 1,000 seedlings for the activity.

According to Cenro Officer Archie Lazatin, at least 200 city government employees will also participate in the tree-planting.

As for Araw-ACI, Tayag said the group will generate the remaining 1,000 or more seedlings from the participating private sector groups and Araw-ACI's partner cooperatives.

The seedlings include forest trees, fruit-bearing trees and bamboos. These will be planted in a two-hectare land inside the Angeles Watershed area.

Tayag added that Araw-ACI recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Kapanalig Angeles, Inc. and Kaunlaran sa Kabundukan Kooperatiba (KKK) for the establishment of a nursery in the Angeles Watershed.



The three groups will also work hand-in-hand for the preparation of the two-hectare land where the tree-planting activity is set on June 19.

Members of both Kapanalig Angeles, Inc. and KKK are mostly farmers and land stewards in Barangay Sapangbato.

Araw-ACI, a non-stock non-profit organization registered under the Securities and Exchange Commission, is the lead organization advocating for the rehabilitation of the watershed.

For the past two years, the environmental group has been closely coordinating with the BCDA and Angeles City government so the area will be declared as a forest park and as a national protected area in the future.

“The issue of water is a universal concern. We have been advocating for the rehabilitation and development of the Angeles Watershed since 2009. We value the efforts of the past administrations but we still need to do more and we thank Mayor Lazatin for taking an extra step in supporting our common cause. A study from the Japan International Cooperation Agency or JICA revealed that in 2025, Angeles City is highly at risk of losing water due to excessive pumping from the ground. We need to act fast and more decisively. We call upon all Angelenos to join us,” Tayag said.

Araw-ACI will initiate an information and education campaign in the coming months and will later announce the schedule of the next tree-planting activity after June 19. For those interested to join the event, Tayag said they can call these numbers 0946-604-7481 and 0916-320-9246.



This can't be good: Forest fires near Masungi Georeserve 'accelerating'

Published May 16, 2021, 11:12 PM

by [Ellson Quismorio](#)

The Masungi Georeserve expressed concern on Sunday night, May 16 over the continued forest fires around the wildlife sanctuary, particularly within the protected watershed.

“Since April, there have been fires in the protected watershed around us and they have been accelerating the past few weeks,” it said in a Facebook [post](#), which came with a lone photograph.



(Photo from Masungi Georeserve Facebook page)

“Another patch is burned in what looks like a large-scale consolidation of forest land clearings. There has also been an increase in illegal encroachments and resort development,” the Georeserve said.

It warned that such illegal activities “can spread like an infection in the mountains if they aren’t nipped in the bud”.

“One day we can wake up and the protected area, supposedly free from human exploitation, will be gone,” it further said.

Located in the Southern Sierra Madre range in Baras, Rizal, the Masungi Georeserve is a conservation area in the Philippines. It is centered on the geological formations of Masungi Rock.

It was declared a strict nature reserve and wildlife sanctuary by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) back in 1993.

The Georeserve ended its post by saying, “There is another disease plaguing the Philippines and the world – that of biodiversity and habitat loss especially of tropical forests, on top of the climate emergency. Vigilance of citizens and groups, and action of enforcers, will spell the difference.” The area became a popular tourist destination after it opened to the public in 2015. It is home to massive limestone formations and hundreds of plant and animal species.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/05/16/this-cant-be-good-forest-fires-near-masungi-georeserve-accelerating/>



4 nabbed for illegal coconut logging in Quezon; hot lumber seized

By: [Delfin T. Mallari Jr.](#) - Correspondent / [@dtmallarijrINQ](#)

[Inquirer Southern Luzon](#) / 10:11 AM May 16, 2021

LUCENA CITY — Police arrested four suspected illegal coconut loggers and seized a van loaded with hot lumber in Quezon province on Saturday, police said Sunday.

The Quezon police office in a report said a team of policemen confiscated 548 pieces of freshly sawn coconut lumber while being transported aboard a van in Barangay (village) Pagaguasan in Unisan town around 5:40 p.m.

Police arrested Ronald Villasor and Leonora Almira after they failed to produce documents from the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) giving them authority to cut and transport the coconut lumber.

The seized illegally cut lumber is worth P35,620 in the underground market.

In Gumaca town, police also arrested Lorenzo Rodrigo Jr., 52, and Estelito Benig Jr., 29, while stacking piles of newly sawn coconut lumber in Barangay Buensuceso around 12:30 p.m.

Authorities seized 300 board feet of coconut lumber estimated to be worth P3,000.

The duo also failed to produce valid permits from the PCA.

Under Republic Act No. 8048 or the Coconut Preservation Act of 1995, the cutting of coconut trees is prohibited unless a permit is secured at the local PCA office.

Republic Act 10593, which amends RA 8048, only allows cutting when the tree is “severely disease-infested and beyond rehabilitation” or was “severely damaged” by typhoon or lightning.



The regulator is finalizing the proposed amendments to the Manual of Regulations for Banks on the sustainable finance framework which include an environmental and social risk management framework.

STAR/File

BSP strengthens framework for environmental, social risks

[Lawrence Agcaoili](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 17, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) is set to direct banks and other financial institutions to integrate climate change and other environmental and social risks in their enterprise-wide risk management frameworks.

The regulator is finalizing the proposed amendments to the Manual of Regulations for Banks (MORB) on the sustainable finance framework which include an environmental and social risk management framework.

Under the proposed circular, the board of directors of banks should ensure the integration of sustainability principles in the risk management system, particularly in the bank's risk strategy, risk appetite and risk management policies and procedures.

The board is also told to set strategic environmental and social risk objectives covering short, medium, and long term horizons related to the management of specific risk areas.

Banks should also approve the risk appetite on specific risk areas informed by the level of risk exposures that they are willing and capable to manage, results of stress testing exercises, and assessment of the timing and channels through which environmental and social risks may materialize.

Furthermore, environmental and social risks are now required to be included in stress testing exercises and the results thereof are considered in the Internal Capital Adequacy Assessment Process (ICAAP).

The BSP will also require banks and financial institutions to institutionalize a capacity building program for all officers and personnel to equip them in identifying, measuring, monitoring and controlling environmental and social risks.

For senior management, the regulator said banks should ensure activities that expose the bank to environmental and social risks are aligned with the overall environmental and social strategic objectives and targets.



“Senior management shall facilitate assessment of existing environmental and social risks and implementation of plans to attain strategic objectives and targets,” the BSP said.

Likewise, banks will be mandated to adopt methodologies and tools that will effectively identify, and quantify/measure, monitor and control environmental and social risks.

Furthermore, banks should make sure that policies, procedures, and processes are clearly and effectively communicated across the organization.

The central bank’s policy thrusts are fully supportive of sustainable development goals (SDG) embracing the principles of sustainable development and driving investments to activities that will promote climate-resilient, green, and sustainable growth.

In April last year, the BSP issued Circular 1085 or the sustainable financial framework directing banks to integrate sustainability principles including those covering environmental and social risks areas in the corporate government and risk management frameworks as well as strategic objectives and operations.

The regulator is now crafting more granular expectations in managing climate change and other environment-related risks in relation to key financial risks such as credit, market, liquidity and operational risks.



Groups: Give priority to zero waste strategies to prevent the release of Persistent Organic Pollutants

By EcoWaste Coalition Published on May 16, 2021

QUEZON CITY, May 16 -- Environmental health groups today urged national and local authorities to give priority to zero waste strategies that prevent and reduce the generation of persistent organic pollutants (POPs), a class of highly hazardous synthetic chemicals.

The EcoWaste Coalition, Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability (IDIS) and Mother Earth Foundation (MEF) together made the call in observance of the 17th anniversary of the entry into force of the Stockholm Convention on POPs last May 17, 2004.

The treaty, which counts on the Philippines among its state parties, seeks to protect human health and the environment from POPs through a range of measures aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating their releases to the environment. Among these POPs are unintentionally produced pollutants such as dioxins and furans resulting from combustion and industrial processes, including the open burning of trash, the incineration of municipal, medical and hazardous wastes, and cement kilns firing hazardous waste.

"We call upon the Philippines as party to this treaty addressing global chemical pollution to prioritize zero waste strategies that are proven effective in preventing the formation and release of unintentional POPs, as well as greenhouse gas (GHG) and mercury emissions," said Thony Dizon, Chemical Safety Campaigner, EcoWaste Coalition. "While lauding the concerted multisectoral efforts dealing with POPs polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), we also would like to find out where we are in terms of updating and putting our National Implementation Plan on all POPs into operation as part of the country's strategy toward sustainable development."

"Zero waste strategies, including waste avoidance and reduction, segregation at source, recycling of non-biodegradable discards, composting or digesting of organic materials, reuse and repair, extended producer responsibility, product redesign and clean production, effectively reduce pollution, while conserving energy and resources, creating jobs, and advancing community development," stated Sonia Mendoza, Chairman, MEF.

"In lieu of waste-to-energy incineration that is disturbingly being pushed in both houses of the 18th Congress and in some localities, we appeal to decision makers to divert their attention to mainstreaming zero waste strategies and action plans, with adequate budget support, to counter proposals to construct costly landfills and incinerators for burying or burning wastes," said Atty. Mark Peñalver, Executive Director, IDIS.

Promoting zero waste strategies -- not the repeal of the incineration ban under the Clean Air Act (RA 8749) and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003) -- must form part of nation's priority efforts to recover from the dire impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's health and livelihoods, the groups insisted.

According to the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN), which includes the EcoWaste Coalition, IDIS and MEF among its members, "POPs are recognized as a serious, global threat to



human health and to ecosystems.”

POPs can remain intact in the environment for long periods of time, can travel great distances through air and water, can bio-accumulate in the food chain and can have adverse effects on human health and the environment.

Highly toxic to both humans and wildlife, exposure to POPs has been linked to the disruption of the immune system, neurological disorders, reproductive abnormalities, cancers and other diseases.

A living treaty where new POPs are added following rigorous review procedures, the Stockholm Convention started with an initial list of “dirty dozen” POPs. Currently, there are 30 POPs listed. (EcoWaste Coalition)



A surgical face mask washes up on the shore of so-called Baseco Beach in Manila.
[Philstar.com/EC Toledo IV](https://philstar.com/EC-Toledo-IV)

Green groups: Prioritize zero-waste strategies to arrest release of persistent organic pollutants

(Philstar.com) - May 16, 2021 - 12:22pm

MANILA, Philippines — Environmental health groups on Sunday urged national and local authorities to give priority to zero waste strategies that prevent and reduce the generation of persistent organic pollutants or POPs, a class of highly hazardous synthetic chemicals.

This came on the commemoration of the 17th anniversary of the entry into force of the Stockholm Convention on POPs on May 17, 2004. The treaty, of which the Philippines is a state party, seeks to protect human health and the environment from POPs through a range of measures aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating their release.

In a statement, the EcoWaste Coalition, Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability, and Mother Earth Foundation said that promoting zero waste strategies must be among the nation's priority efforts to recover from the dire impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's health and livelihoods.

They added that the mere repeal of the incineration ban under the Clean Air Act or Republic Act No. 8749 and the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act or Republic Act No. 9003 was not enough.

"We call upon the Philippines as a party to this treaty addressing global chemical pollution to prioritize zero waste strategies that are proven effective in preventing the formation and release of unintentional POPs, as well as greenhouse gas and mercury emissions," said Thony Dizon, chemical safety campaigner at the EcoWaste Coalition.

"While lauding the concerted multisectoral efforts dealing with POPs polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), we also would like to find out where we are in terms of updating and putting our National Implementation Plan on all POPs into operation as part of the country's strategy toward sustainable development."



National priority efforts urged

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“Zero waste strategies, including waste avoidance and reduction, segregation at source, recycling of non-biodegradable discards, composting or digesting of organic materials, reuse and repair, extended producer responsibility, product redesign and clean production, effectively reduce pollution, while conserving energy and resources, creating jobs, and advancing community development,” stated Sonia Mendoza, Chairman, MEF.

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- dioxins and furans resulting from combustion and industrial processes,
- open burning of trash,
- the incineration of municipal, medical and hazardous wastes,
- cement kilns firing hazardous waste.

According to the groups, POPs can remain intact in the environment for long periods of time, can travel great distances through air and water, can bio-accumulate in the food chain, and have adverse effects on human health and the environment.

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Groups weigh in on bill addressing plastic waste

 **BY JOVEE MARIE DE LA CRUZ** MAY 17, 2021

CLIMATE and environmental advocates have pushed for different ways to address the country's plastic pollution problem.

Following the approval of the House Bill 9147 or the Single-Use Plastics Regulation Bill at the Committee on Ecology, Gloria E. Ramos, vice president of Oceana (Philippines) Inc. described the new bill as a "surplusage."

Ramos explained that the regulation and phase-out of single-use plastics are already covered by Republic Act (RA) 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

"What is lacking here is the implementation. We don't need this [new] bill for the agencies to do their job because it's already in RA 9003," she said.

Ramos pointed out that the law mandates the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) to prepare, within one year from the effectivity of the law, the list of non-environmentally acceptable products (NEAPs) to be banned following a phase-out plan that will be developed in consultation with stakeholders.

However, she said 20 years since the law has passed, NSWMC has yet to develop a phase-out plan for NEAPs, which should include single-use plastics.

Ramos also expressed concern about the new bill repealing RA 9003, which includes a provision for citizen suits.

"There is recognition for the rights of citizens to hold accountable public officials, government agencies, private sector, or individuals who are not complying with the provisions of RA 9003," she said.

The bill phases out, within a year, the production, importation, sale, distribution, provision and use of single-use plastic drinking straw, stirrers, candy stick, ballon stick, cotton bud sticks, buntings, confetti, and packaging/bags less than 10 microns thick.

It also phases out within four years tableware, film wrap, packaging or bags less than 50 microns thick, sachets and pouches, oxo-degradable plastic and Styropor food and beverage containers.

The measure penalizes violators with fines ranging from P50,000 up to P500,000 for micro enterprises and 250,000 up to P1 million for larger businesses.

House Bill 9147 was approved at the committee level after the conduct of several technical working group meetings and consultations with stakeholders and experts. It officially consolidated 38 bills and four resolutions seeking to phase out or regulate single-use plastics.

Great start

MEANWHILE, for Climate Reality Leader Janssen Calvelo, Network Organizer for Southeast Asia of the Break Free From Plastic Movement, the bill is a "great start" towards solving the plastic pollution crisis.

"Recycling alone cannot solve this problem. We cannot recycle out of this problem," he said. Calvelo, however, pointed out the need to improve the definition of single-use plastics in the current version of the bill.



“There should be a more encompassing definition of single-use plastics because we have seen in different situations where other companies or the plastic industry in other countries have leveraged on using this other definition of plastics,” Calvelo said, referring to compostable plastics that are made out of biodegradable materials but are coated with plastics or even mixed with chemicals that make them difficult to decompose in a normal environment.

The Climate Reality Project Leader Carlo Delantar, co-chairman of the Global Shapers Climate Action Steering Committee at the World Economic Forum and Circular Economy Pioneer at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, cited the need to ensure a just transition for all sectors that will be affected by the bill.

“I believe we should look into incentivizing micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to be on par with extended producer responsibility schemes,” Delantar said.

“How do we not affect all these taho vendors or sari-sari stores that rely on single-use plastics? We need to create that long-term anti-disruption, especially when we’re looking at the post-pandemic situation,” he added.

Rio Catbagan, chief of the legal services division of the Climate Change Commission, a member agency of the House Technical Working Group on Single-Use Plastics, said that the economic implications of the phase-out have been discussed in Congress.

Catbagan said that it is important to give affected MSMEs and laborers time to innovate and find ways on how they can shift and implement the transition.

The lawyer added that the government could support these segments through financial packages, workforce restructuring and capacity building services.

These comments of climate and environmental advocates were made during the 8th episode of the Klimatotohanan webcast series of “The Climate Reality Project Philippines” titled “What’s SUP? Exploring our Plastics Problem and the Climate Crisis,” which delved into the urgency of solving the plastics problem and the need for policies that will phase out single-use plastics in the country.



'Laguna lake key to NCR water woes'

 **BYJOVEE MARIE DE LA CRUZ** MAY 17, 2021

AS hundreds of thousands of billed customers in Metro Manila reel from recurring water shortages, a lawmaker on Sunday said Laguna Lake is key to 24-hour water supply for all Metro Manila homes.

In a statement, Makati City Rep. Luis Campos Jr., a member of the House Committee on Metro Manila Development, said the water supply problem still has to do with the insufficient raw water coming from Angat Dam in Bulacan.

At present, the solon said Manila Water Co. Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. are drawing only a combined 361 million liters of water per day from Laguna Lake.

In contrast, the MWSS's two private water concessionaires are getting a combined 3.9 billion liters daily from Angat.

"A large number of billed consumers in Metro Manila still have limited water supply. They enjoy running water only for nine to 16 hours daily, while others have it less than eight hours," Campos said.

"In one service area for instance, some 187,000 connections or 1.24 million residents have running water supply anywhere from less than eight hours to no more than 19 hours per day," Campos said, citing figures from the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

The lawmaker said Laguna Lake, as the country's largest inland waterhole, can be tapped to ensure the capital's water security amid rapid consumption growth and recurring dry spells due to harsh climate change.

"This is why Congress has to move fast in declaring Laguna Lake as a primary source of water supply for Metro Manila, alongside Angat," Campos said.

"It makes no sense for us to continue to rely on Angat to supply 90 percent of Metro Manila's water demand, when we have a natural water hoard in Laguna Lake that is three times bigger than Angat," he said.

"Laguna Lake is the key to providing round-the-clock running water to every home in Metro Manila, even if we have another severe drought due to harsh climate change," Campos said.

Campos is co-author of House Bill 737, which seeks to proclaim and harness Laguna Lake as the other main source of sustainable water supply for Metro Manila. Muntinlupa City Rep. Ruffy Biazon originally authored the bill.



Ilocos salt industry losing its savor

By: [Yolanda Sotelo](#) - Correspondent / [@yzsoteloINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:00 AM May 16, 2021



LOSING OUT TO IMPORTS In this file photo, a worker on a salt farm in Alaminos City in Pangasinan province prepares the “kaing” (bamboo hamper) to haul the next batch of harvest from the community’s salt beds. Owners and workers of salt farms in the Ilocos region are seeking government help to save the ailing industry, especially with the bulk of the country’s supply coming from foreign producers. —PHOTO BY WILLIE LOMIBAO

SAN FERNANDO CITY, Pampanga, Philippines — Rene Aruelo, 52, was in his teens in the 1980s when he would rake mud at a fishpond in a village in La Union province facing the Lingayen Gulf.

His family, like most households in their community, would troop to the pond fed by saltwater from the nearby sea at Barangay Ubagan in Sto. Tomas town.

The pond owner allowed residents to scrape the cracked mud every day during the dry season so they can produce salt.

“We start scraping the mud early in the morning, turning them again at noontime to dry them more, and gathering them in the afternoon,” Aruelo told the Inquirer.

But that was just the beginning of the backbreaking work to produce salt.

“We filtered the mud through husk and sand, collecting the brine solution in large earthen jars. If a vial with a pebble inside could float in the brine, it’s ready for cooking,” he recalled.

He added: “For two to three hours straight, we cooked the brine until it turned into wispy white salt.”

But the community-based salt production came to a halt when a state university bought the fishpond in the area and barred residents from extracting the mineral from the ponds. Although salt making was just a small-scale industry in the Ilocos region, it had contributed to the country’s self-sufficiency in salt in the past, according to the workers.

Pangasinan production

In nearby Pangasinan province, the towns of Dasol and Bolinao are known to be major producers of salt. Pangasinan, in fact, owes its name to the mineral as it translates to “where salt is made.”

From March to May, workers in Dasol and Bolinao would be seen raking salt from tile-lined beds called “banigan.”



They would shovel the crystals into the “kaing” (a hamper made of bamboo) hooked to bamboo poles, and lug these to the stockyard.



BACKBREAKING JOB Producing salt is no easy job, with workers, like this man in Dasol town in Pangasinan, spending long hours tending the salt beds, locally known as “banigan.” Salt crystals are collected and manually shoveled into large bamboo baskets and taken to a stockyard before these are cooked and processed. PHOTO BY WILLIE LOMIBAO

Commercial farming

Workers in Pacific Farms Inc. (PFI), a commercial salt farm in Bolinao, also harvest salt from sprawling salt beds in the town.

But unlike in Dasol where manual labor is still common practice, Bolinao workers use machines to scrape the bottom of ponds. They would then transport the muddy crystals through carriages that pass through a rail track straight to the washing area, where a machine using brine water removes the mud from the salt crystals.

PFI, the country’s largest commercial farm, uses different technologies to hasten the evaporation of water and speed salt crystallization, such as increasing the temperature at the salt beds through solar heaters and solar coils.

Dasol’s salt farms have about 10,000 banigan found in 11 villages that produce 18,000 metric tons of salt every year.

PFI alone churns up to 25,000 MT a year from its 473-hectare farm.

But their total production hardly makes a dent in the country’s requirement for salt, which is 600,000 MT a year.

Gerald Khonghun, PFI’s operations manager, said the country used to be self-sufficient in salt 40 years ago.

“But now we are importing 91 to 93 percent of our requirements and we are currently importing 550,000 MT a year,” Khonghun told the Inquirer.

Citing data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, Khonghun said the country imports 70 percent of the local salt requirement from Australia (446,000 MT) and 20 percent (87,000 MT) from China.

The country would need more salt soon because the coconut industry will require 300,000 MT to fertilize 300,000 coconut trees, at 1 kilo a year per tree.



“The total requirement would eventually be 850,000 tons, worth \$42 million,” he said. But PFI’s production has to be stopped soon following the takeover by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) of the company in February.

PFI’s foreshore lease contract had expired on June 22, 2002, or 19 years ago. Several billboards announcing the takeover are placed in different parts of the farm, but salt production continues, with the PFI management asking to complete the salt harvest until June. The sale would pay for the workers’ wages, said Khonghun’s father, Johnny, PFI’s chief executive officer.

The DENR’s takeover of PFI came at a time when the government was finally recognizing the importance of the salt industry, and the need to put it under an agency dedicated to its production and management.

Pangasinan Rep. Ramon Guico III and Ilocos Sur Rep. Deogracias Victor Savellano filed separate resolutions to help the salt industry and its workers.

Savellano filed House Resolution No. 1046 in July 2020 asking various government agencies that provide benefits to fisherfolk to also extend assistance to salt producers, as both are economically linked.

Guico, on the other hand, filed HR 1032 asking the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Science and Technology to provide the needed technology upgrade for salt producers in northern Luzon, as they are part of the fisherfolk sector.

Guico said he was also filing a bill that would create a center to oversee the salt industry.

“We have the agencies that manage different commodities like sugar, tobacco, carabao, fisheries and others. But we do not have [an] agency for salt, which is an important product not only for food but for many sectors. So why shouldn’t there be an agency that would manage the salt industry?” he said.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has been tasked to formulate a road map to put the salt industry on the right track.

During a meeting in March in Bolinao, Nestor Domenden, DA regional director, announced that P100 million was earmarked by the national government to craft the plan for the Ilocos, one of the top salt producers in the country.

Prime commodity

“Salt is a prime commodity. Without it, we will have no bagoong (fish paste), no ‘patis’ (fish sauce). If the local industry dies, we will have to import again, like what we are doing with bangus fry, which we import a big bulk of our need,” Domenden said.

He added: “A problem would arise if the countries from where we import change their policy and won’t sell salt to us anymore. What will we do then?”

Domenden said programs and projects that would be implemented must benefit both farmers and salt workers.



Segundina Rosario Gaerlan, BFAR Ilocos officer in charge, said she was happy that her agency was given the important task to chart the future of the local salt industry.

The initial projects are focused on small-scale salt production, helping the producers to have better storage, hygienic handling, marketing and even laboratory tests, she said.

Gaerlan also said that the Pangasinan State University had proposed to establish the Asin (Advanced Salt Innovation) Center to help the industry and its workers.

According to Gaerlan, it is ironic that the country has to import salt when it has a long coastline where salt can be produced.

Long shoreline

The younger Khonghun said the country's shoreline spans 36,000 kilometers and salt could easily be produced even if the government would tap only 69 km of this span.

"The Ilocos region alone has 845 km of shoreline, and only 8 percent of that would make us self-sufficient," he said.

"Producing what the country needs would involve only 12,000 to 13,000 ha of shoreline and the technology is available, very economically and sustainably. The PFI has the technology and we want to share that," said Khonghun, who had trained in China on salt farm operation and salt production.

Salt, he said, has 14,000 uses in food, agriculture, chemical, pharmaceutical and manufacturing industries.

"You need salt production. Self-sufficiency in salt will contribute to the industrialization of the Philippines. It is a natural food security issue. If we do not have salt, the Philippines is vulnerable to a full supply chain crisis," Khonghun said.



New lizard species found in Mindanao named after Filipino scientist

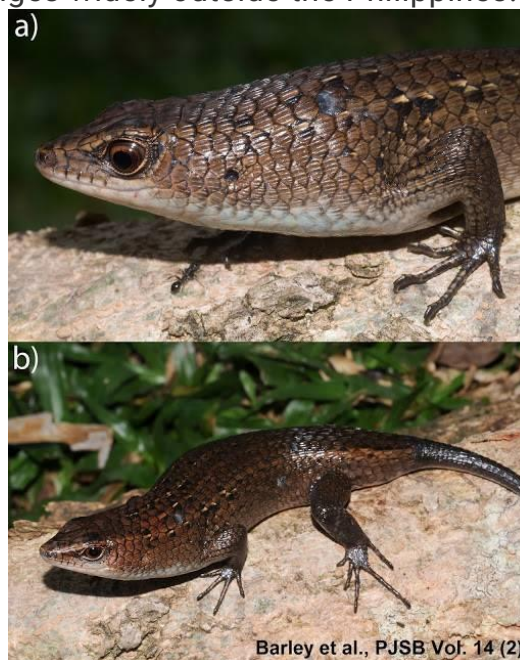
Published May 16, 2021, 5:18 PM

by [Jhon Aldrin Casinas](#)

A newly discovered species of lizard found in the southwestern tip of Zamboanga Peninsula has been named after National Scientist Angel C. Alcala.

The description of the new species named *Eutropis alcalai* was published in the Philippine Journal of Systematic Biology (PJSB) in May 2021.

Scientists Anthony J. Barley, Marites B. Sanguila, and Rafe M. Brown said *Eutropis alcalai* is a new species of sun skink related to *Eutropis rugifera*, which was described as “a secretive, forest-adapted skink that ranges widely outside the Philippines.”



Photos by Rafe M. Brown via PJSB

“We take great pleasure in naming this distinctive new species for our colleague Angel C. Alcala, in recognition of his numerous foundational contributions to the natural history, systematics, ecology, and conservation of Philippine lizards of the family Scincidae,” the researchers said.

The new species has been given common names “Alcala’s Quinque-carinate (five-keeled) Sun Skink,” or “Alcala’s Rough-scaled Sun Skink.”

Alcala is a Filipino biologist who is known for his work in establishing protective sanctuaries and in promoting biodiversity in the aquatic ecosystems of the country.

He was named as one of the country’s national scientists in 2014 in recognition of his seminal and original research on the systematic, ecology, and diversity of Philippine amphibians and reptiles, and, marine biodiversity, reef fishes and conservation.

According to the study, the newly discovered species is related to *Eutropis rugifera*, a type of skink that is not commonly found in the Philippines.

“The discovery of a new, morphologically distinct, and genetically highly divergent Sun Skink lineage in the low elevation forests of Zamboanga Peninsula creates a puzzling disjunct geographic distribution,” the researchers said.



Experts believe that “the colonization by the new species may have been facilitated by pre-Pleistocene overseas long-distance dispersal, saltatory range expansion and subsequent contraction/extinction in the Sulu Archipelago, and/or possibly paleotransport on the ancient crustal fragment of Zamboanga.”

“The new species is known only from Zamboanga City’s primary surface water supply catchment at the lowest elevations inside the boundaries of Pasonanca Natural Park, despite the fact that there have been historical surveys of herpetological diversity at multiple sites to the northeast (Zamboanga, western Mindanao) and to the southwest (Sulu Archipelago),” the researchers noted.

“The new species, thus, may be limited to just the tip of the Zamboanga Peninsula, possibly rendering Pasonanca’s low elevation forests its most critical habitat resource for long term persistence and survival of the species,” they added.



US climate envoy meets with pope

By [Associated Press](#)

May 17, 2021

VATICAN CITY: [John Kerry](#), President [Joe Biden](#)'s climate envoy, met privately with Pope Francis on Saturday, afterward calling the pope a "compelling moral authority on the subject of the climate crisis" who has been "ahead of the curve."

The former US Secretary of State told [Vatican News](#) that the pope's embrace of climate issues "hopefully can push people to greater ambition to get the job done."

Kerry is visiting European capitals to strengthen cooperation on climate change ahead of the next round of United Nations climate talks in Glasgow this November.



Pope Francis and John Kerry talk during their meeting at the Vatican, Saturday, May 15, 2021. Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, currently President Biden's envoy on the climate, met in private audience with Pope Francis on Saturday, afterward calling the pope "a compelling moral authority on the subject of the climate crisis" who has been "ahead of the curve." Kerry told Vatican News in an interview that the pope speaks with "unique authority, compelling moral authority, that hopeful can push people to greater ambition to get the job done. Vatican Media via AP

Kerry said [United States](#), the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases after [China](#), must take a lead in cutting emissions and be joined by other big emitting countries.

"Everybody shares an obligation here. No one country can get this job done. If the United States was at zero emissions tomorrow, we'd still have crisis," Kerry said.

The United States, which is responsible for 11 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, has set a target under Biden of reducing emissions over the next decade by 50 percent to 52 percent, Kerry said.

Another 20 developed countries are responsible for 73.75 percent of emissions, he added.

"We need other big emitting countries to step up and also offer some reductions. You can't just keep going along with a coal-fired power plant or with more coal coming online and really be the part of the solution that we need," Kerry said.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/05/17/news/world/us-climate-envoy-meets-with-pope/873538/>

17 MAY 2021, MONDAY



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

COVID-19 NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



This photo taken on April 6, 2021 shows a man wearing personal protective equipment walking into a makeshift ward built for COVID-19 patients at a hospital in Manila. More contagious variants of the coronavirus have been blamed for a record surge in infections in Metro Manila that has overwhelmed hospitals and sent the national capital region into lockdown.

AFP/Jam Sta. Rosa

DOH logs 5,790 new COVID-19 cases

(Philstar.com) - May 16, 2021 - 4:01pm

MANILA, Philippines — Authorities on Sunday reported 5,790 new coronavirus cases, pushing the country's total to 1,143,963.

Today's additional cases are still above 5,000. Government relaxed restrictions in 'NCR Plus' until the end of May despite the [positivity rate](#) in the quarantine bubble still above WHO standards for reopening.

The Department of Health said too that six laboratories did not turn in testing results.

- Active cases: 54,904 or 4.8% of the total
- Recoveries: 7,541, bringing the number to 1,069,868
- Deaths: 140, or now 19,191 in total

What's new today?

- Authorities reported an additional 43,504 COVID-19 cases last week, or from May 9 to May 15.
- The Philippine General Hospital, one of the country's biggest COVID-19 referral facility, was hit by a [fire](#) early this morning. An official said no casualties or injuries were reported, and COVID-19 patients as well as vaccines are safe.
- Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte hit the Department of Social Welfare and Development's "[tedious process](#)" in distributing financial aid for residents affected by the pandemic-related curbs.



PH COVID-19 cases nadagdagan ng higit 5K; total cases 1,143,963

By **Bombo Christian Yosores** - May 16, 2021 | 5:43 PM

MANILA – Umakyat pa sa 1,143,963 ang kabuuang bilang ng mga naitalang kaso ng COVID-19 sa Pilipinas.

Kasunod ito ng nadagdag na 5,790 na bagong kaso ng sakit, ayon sa Department of Health.

Ayon sa ahensya, lahat naman ng laboratoryo ay nag-operate kahapon, pero may anim na hindi nakapag-sumite ng mga datos.

“Ang mababang bilang ng kaso ngayong araw ay dulot ng mababang testing output ng mga laboratoryo noong Biyernes (14 May 2021).”

Sa ngayon nasa 54,904 pa ang mga active cases o hindi pa gumagaling sa COVID-19 infection.

Mula rito, nasa 93.3% ang mild cases, 2.1% asymptomatic cases, 1.4% critical cases, 1.9% severe, at 1.23% moderate cases.

Nadagdagan din ng 7,541 ang total recoveries na ngayon ay nasa 1,069,868 na.

Habang 140 ang naitalang bagong namatay para sa 19,191 na total deaths.

“14 duplicates were removed from the total case count. Of these, 10 are recoveries.”

‘Moreover, 90 cases that were previously tagged as recoveries were reclassified as deaths after final validation.’”



Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said modules might be distributed to inform the public about the importance of COVID-19 preventive measures.

STAR/File

IATF to ensure health protocols followed in barangays

[Alexis Romero](#) (The Philippine Star) - May 17, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — The government yesterday vowed to ensure that COVID-19 safety protocols are followed at the barangay level to contain the pandemic despite the relaxing of quarantine measures in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said modules might be distributed to inform the public about the importance of COVID-19 preventive measures.

Nograles, who co-chairs the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF), noted that President Duterte himself has reminded local executives to enforce more strictly the preventive protocols like physical distancing, wearing of face masks and face shields, and frequent hand washing.

“Our next step is to drill down to the barangay level... We are coordinating with barangays. We are creating modules and we are really coordinating with the barangays down to the sub-villages so our modules on prevention and detection can reach them,” he said over dzBB.

He added that the modules would contain information about the Coordinated Operations to Defeat Epidemic or CODE protocol, which seeks to find COVID-19 active cases through coordination between health officials and local communities.

“It’s really in the hands of our countrymen. Regardless of the guidelines we formulate... even if we enforce them but people make excuses not to follow them, we would have a problem,” he stressed.

Nograles said cases are being filed against establishments that violated safety protocols and local officials who fail to enforce them. – **Mayen Jaymalin**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/05/17/2098759/iatf-ensure-health-protocols-followed-barangays>

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