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# NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



**NEWS**



Secretary Roy A. Cimatu - DENR

# Task Force to Lead Rehabilitation of Marikina River

**I**n the wake of the devastating floods that plunged Marikina City and several other cities of Metro Manila under-water in November last year, the Task Force Build Back Better (TF BBB) announced that it will begin dredging activities in Marikina River last Wednesday, 17 February 2021.

Environment Secretary and TF BBB chair made the announcement following reports that portions of the river have been illegally reclaimed, reducing drastically the ability of the waterway to contain excess rainwater during typhoons.

Cimatu also said that a number of structures have been found occupying easement areas, in violation of Presidential Decree (PD) 1067 or Philippine Water Code.

"Using official land records dating back as far as 1914 and 1961, historical maps, and satellite photos from the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority as basis, the Department of Environment and Natural

Resources (DENR) - National Capital Region conducted aerial and ground verification surveys that confirm encroachments made not only in the river itself but in the designated legal easements as well", Cimatu said.

Article 51 of PD 1067 explicitly prohibits the construction of any permanent structure along three meters of the banks of rivers and streams and shores of seas and lakes in urban areas like Metro Manila, as these areas are reserved "for public use".

Based on existing land records too, 25 lot parcels with a total area of 271,625 square meters (27 hectares) were reclaimed without necessary permits, either partially or completely encroaching into the Marikina River.

Eight of these parcels covering 12,039 square meters have been placed under Category 1 or parcels of land found to be reclaimed but with no titles nor claimants.

Placed under Category 2,

meanwhile, are five titled lots which partially encroaches on 10,418 square meters of the river.

Under Category 3 are 16 titled properties measuring 22,467 square meters, are in the river itself.

"The widening of Marikina River to its original width is but the start of the series of activities the Task Force has identified to address the perennial problem of flooding within the Marikina River Basin," Cimatu added.

The DENR chief also said that the restored riverbanks will be planted with bamboo to help prevent riverbank erosion and siltation, one of the strategies that TF BBB has adopted in the rehabilitation of Cagayan River.

"We will have to show our political will here and sustain our efforts to rehabilitate Marikina River and other waterways. This is just a prelude to the bigger one," Cimatu said, referring to the tasks that await the TF BBB in

downstream portions of the river, particularly in Pasig area where the riverbank is narrower due to the reclamations and presence of illegal permanent structures.

Cimatu noted that the width of the river in the upstream portion is about 90 meters wide, then narrows down to 80 meters at the boundary of the Marikina-Pasig boundary and becomes uneven, varying from anywhere to 46 meters to 78 meters.

"It is like traffic. From a three-lane highway, the river becomes a single lane highway once it reaches Pasig," Cimatu explained, citing figures from the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Records also show that it is not only the width of the river that has considerably dropped but its depth as well as the upstream portions measures about eight meters deep but only three to five meters deep by the time it merges with Pasig River.



# DENR welcomes impending approval of a proposed bill removing deadline on agricultural free patent application

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By [TDI](#) [@tribunephil](#)



Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy A. Cimatu welcomed the impending approval of a proposed measure removing the deadline on agricultural free patent applications.

Senate Bill (SB) 1931 was approved by the Senate on second and third reading on 15 December 2020, and will now go through bicameral proceedings to reconcile with the House Bill (HB) 7440, the counterpart version of House of Representatives.

President Rodrigo Duterte has certified the measure as urgent.

The Land Management Bureau (LMB) under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) – together with the DENR Legislative Affairs group and public advocacy organization, Foundation for Economic Freedom, lobbied for the passage of the measure to hasten land titling process in the country.

“We are elated that the Senate recognizes the importance of the passage of this bill. It has always been the desire of LMB to accelerate titling in the country and help our farmers secure their land titles,” Cimatu said.

The bill calls for amendments of some provisions under the Presidential Decree No. 1529, otherwise known as the Property Registration Decree, Commonwealth Act 141, also known as the Public Land Act, and Republic Act 9176 to ease and improve land titling application processes for alienable and disposable agricultural lands.

“We encourage farmers to file applications over their untitled lands as soon as the bill is approved by the President. This is an opportunity to uplift their lives through land productivity,” LMB Director Emelyne Talabis said.

The filing of agricultural free patent application halted last 31 December 2020. The DENR said it will resume accepting agricultural free patent applications once the said bill is signed into law.

SB 1931 aims to remove the deadline for agricultural land title applications.

In the judicial confirmation of imperfect title, the required period of possession is from 12 June 1945 or earlier.

The bill seeks to reduced it to 30 years preceding the filing of petition for land registration.

Moreover, the bill provides a period of 120 days for the processing of the free patent applications.

Talabis welcomed the impending enactment of the bill citing the large number of untitled agricultural lands in the country.

She said the country has an estimated 300,000 hectares of untitled agricultural lands, which may still increase due to newly released/classified lands.



Further, she said the LMB continues to gather more accurate land data using the Rapid Land Tenure Appraisal inventory approach of the DENR.

Senator Richard Gordon, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights, sponsored the measure that consolidated legislative proposals authored by him and Senator Sonny Angara.

On the other hand, HB 7440 is sponsored by Vicente “Ching” S. E. Veloso III, Chairperson of the House Committee on Justice.



# DENR-LMB umaasa sa pagsasabatas ng bill na nagtatanggal sa agricultural free patent application deadline

March 20, 2021



*Press Release*

Umaasa si Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy A. Cimatu na maisasabatas ang bill na humihiling na matanggal ang deadline para sa agricultural free patent application.

Ang Senate Bill (SB) 1931 na pumasa sa ikalawa at ikatlong pagbasa sa Senado noong Disyembre 15, 2020 ay isasailalim sa bicameral proceedings upang maisaayos ang ilang probisyon sa pagitan ng House of Representative counterpart measure House Bill (HB) 7440 at sa Senate version ng bill.

Ito ay pumasa din sa huli na pagbasa ng parehas na petsa matapos sertipikahan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte na ito ay "urgent."

Hinikayat ng Land Management Bureau (LMB) ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) kasama ng DENR Legislative Affairs group at public advocacy organization na Foundation for Economic Freedom na ito ay maipasa upang mapadali ang pagproseso ng land titling sa bansa.

"We are elated that the Senate recognizes the importance of the passage of this bill. It has always been the desire of LMB to accelerate titling in the country and help our farmers secure their land titles," saad ni Cimatu.

Ang bill ay humihiling ng mga pagbabago sa ilang probisyon ng Presidential Decree No. 1529 o ang Property Registration Decree, Commonwealth Act 141 na mas kilala rin sa Public Land Act at Republic Act 9176 upang mapadali at masaayos ang proseso sa land titling application para sa alienable at disposable agricultural lands.

"We encourage farmers to file applications over their untitled lands as soon as the bill is approved by the President. This is an opportunity to uplift their lives through land productivity," sabi ni LMB Director Emelyne Talabis.

Ang filing ng agricultural free patent application ay nahinto noong Disyembre 31, 2020. Ayon sa DENR, muling tatanggap ng aplikasyon para sa agricultural free patent kapag ganap nang naging batas ang naturang bill.

Layunin ng SB 1931 na tanggalin ang Disyembre 31, 2020 deadline at iba pang ekstensiyon ng deadline ng agricultural land title applications upang ang mga magsasaka ay makapagrehistro anumang petsa.

Base na rin sa judicial confirmation ng imperfect titling, ang kinakailangang "period of possession" ay Hunyo 12, 1945 o mas maaga. Sa ilalim ng bill, binabawasan ito ng 30 taon bago ang filing ng petition for land registration.

Bukod dito, nakasaad sa bill ang 120 days para sa pagproseso ng free patent applications.

Tinatanggap naman ni LMB Director Emelyne Talabis ang hinihintay na pagpasa sa bill upang maisaayos ang malaking bilang ng mga untitled agricultural lands sa bansa.

Ayon pa kay Talabis, mayroong tinatayang 300,000 hectares ng untitled agricultural lands at inaasahan pa na tataas ito dahil na rin sa mga bagong released/classified lands. Aniya, patuloy ang LMB sa pagtipon ng mas maraming "accurate land data" gamit ang Rapid Land Tenure Appraisal inventory approach ng DENR.

Inisponsoran ni Senator Richard Gordon, Chairperson ng Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights ang naturang measure galing sa pinagsama-samang legislative proposals na kanyang inakda at ni Senator Sonny Angara.

Sa kabilang dako, ang HB 7440 ay inisponsoran ni Vicente "Ching" S. E. Veloso III, Chairperson ng House Committee on Justice.



## Farmland titling resuming soon

Good news for farmers seeking to own the land they have been tilling for years, if not for decades.

The government will resume the titling of farmland that was halted last December once a law is passed seeking to discard the agricultural free patent application deadline.

Bicameral proceedings are now reconciling provisions of Senate Bill (SB) 1931 and House Bill 7440, measures approved by both chambers last year on the same day President Rodrigo Duterte certified their passage as urgent.

**The DENR legislative affairs group and LMB, along with the public advocacy organization Foundation for Economic Freedom, lobbied for the measures.**

The measures call for amendments to several laws to ease and improve land titling application processes for alienable and disposable agricultural lands.

The amendments pertain to provisions of Presidential Decree 1529, otherwise known as the Property Registration Decree; Commonwealth Act 141, also known as the Public Land Act; and Republic Act 9176.

Efforts by the Land Management Bureau (LMB) under the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have expedited the passage of the respective measures before the Senate and House.

The DENR legislative affairs group and LMB, along with the public advocacy organization Foundation for Economic Freedom, lobbied for the measures.

"We are elated that the Senate recognizes the importance of the passage of this bill. It has always been the desire of LMB to accelerate titling in the country and help our farmers secure their land titles," DENR Roy Cimatu said.

"We encourage farmers to file applications over their untitled lands as soon as the bill is approved by the President. This is an opportunity to uplift their lives through land productivity," said LMB Director Emelyne Talabis.



# PH has sufficient resources to protect exclusive econ zone

By Priam Nepomuceno March 21, 2021, 12:34 am



Atty. Analiza Rebuelta-Teh, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary for Climate Change and Mining Concerns (*PNA File photo*)

**MANILA** – More funds have been allocated for the research and protection of the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ), an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

This, according to lawyer Analiza Rebuelta-Teh, DENR Undersecretary for Climate Change and Mining Concerns, in a virtual presser on the West Philippine Sea on March 19.

"Now, in terms of resources whether we have sufficient resources to protect our exclusive economic zone and in particular to fully funding the research, of course, as you all know, we always compete with resources with the other sectors which are also equally important. But what is important is, under the present administration especially with the leadership of Secretary (Hermogenes) Esperon of the National Task Force on the West Philippine Sea, we have really increased significantly the budget for the protection of our exclusive economic zone," Rebuelta-Teh said.

She said the country now has a dedicated budget really for the conduct of marine scientific research, the establishment of monitoring stations, and construction of markers.

"So we are actually now more strategic in our approach. In fact, *mayroon pang* (in fact there is now a) budget for acquisition of vessels for marine scientific research. So we are now increasing our investments for the protection of our territory and our resources," she added.

## Diplomatic protests

When asked whether the Philippines has identified the nationalities of intruders encroaching in its EEZ, Rebuelta-Teh said the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine Navy are on top of the situation.

"Of course, the agencies, Coast Guard, Navy are on top of this and they have regular reports regarding the presence of foreign vessels within our exclusive economic zone. And in fact, these reports are being documented for appropriate filing of the diplomatic protest," she added.

The Department of Foreign Affairs, she added, is very keen on ensuring that these are answered.

She said four foreign fishing vessels have been apprehended off the *Pag-asa* Islands in 2020 for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF) violations.

"And in all those cases, the illegal fishing equipment and fish catch were confiscated and poachers were escorted out of the area. So these are the actions that we're doing on the ground in enforcing our marine environmental laws," Rebuelta-Teh said.





She added that 19 fishing Filipino vessels were ordered to leave Bajo De Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) when asked if there have been incidents of harassment against Filipino fishermen in 2020 and 2021. Of the 19, 13 were reported in 2020 and six this year.

"As I mentioned earlier, there were diplomatic protests filed over these incidents," she said.

### **Ocean species decrease**

Rebuelta-Teh said under a "business-as-usual scenario", one research predicted that the ocean species in the West Philippine Sea will decrease by up to 59 percent by 2045 due to climate change.

"The second challenge is ensuring that the management of the environmental resources within the West Philippine Sea is based around the connectivity of the entire marine ecosystem from the reefs to the seagrasses from which much marine life depends and third, strengthening cooperation for marine environmental protection," she added.

Areas of collaboration, she said, should focus on are the creation of policies that will allow the management more productive coastal and marine environment for the benefit of all neighboring countries; identification of areas with different priorities for sustainable use; management and regulation of destructive and pollutive activities and establishment of a haven for migratory species locally and nationally important marines species.

"Managing the marine environment of the West Philippine Sea cannot be based primarily on the overlapping territorial and maritime claims to which the aquatic organisms pay no attention," she said. "Beyond claims of sovereignty, territory and maritime entitlements, the West Philippine Sea faces serious sustainability challenges particularly from the threats of climate and ocean change." **(PNA)**



UP Marine Science Institute director Laura David and Environment Undersecretary Analiza Rebueta-Teh underscored the need for more government support for the protection of areas within the West Philippine Sea during a briefing initiated by the Presidential Communication Operations Office-Global Media Affairs.

CSIS/AMTI via Maxar Technologies

## Experts call for better West Philippine Sea marine and coastal protection

[Christina Mendez](#) (The Philippine Star) - March 21, 2021 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Environmental experts have called for a more comprehensive approach in dealing with issues related to claims by other countries at the West Philippine Sea, while they emphasized the need to boost coastal and marine environmental protection in the area.

UP Marine Science Institute director Laura David and Environment Undersecretary Analiza Rebueta-Teh underscored the need for more government support for the protection of areas within the West Philippine Sea during a briefing initiated by the Presidential Communication Operations Office-Global Media Affairs.

“Managing the marine environment of the West Philippine Sea cannot be based primarily on the overlapping territorial and maritime claims to which the aquatic organisms pay no attention,” Teh said during the forum.

“Beyond claims of sovereignty, territory and maritime entitlements, the West Philippine Sea faces serious sustainability challenges, particularly from the threats of climate and ocean change,” she added.

“Undeniably, the West Philippine Sea narrative is not just about contestation. The Philippines and neighboring countries should retrain the West Philippine Sea narrative from one of contestation to consensus building and cooperation towards protection of the marine environment,” Teh added.

In stressing the need to protect the West Philippine Sea from marine destruction, Teh cited the importance of addressing the threats of ocean and climate change.

Teh, who is undersecretary for climate change and mining concerns, sought to ensure sustainable development of the marine ecosystem and resources in the West Philippine Sea.

She cited a report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which said that the ocean is a carbon sink that absorbs 30 percent of the anthropogenic carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere. The IPCC has highlighted in its fifth assessment report that climate change negatively impacts ocean health in terms of ocean warming, acidification, sea level rise and deoxygenation – putting marine ecosystems, marine biodiversity and fisheries at risk.



“Under a business-as-usual scenario, one research predicted that the ocean species in the West Philippine Sea will decrease by up to 59 percent by 2045 due to climate change,” she said.

Teh also batted for the management of the environmental resources within the West Philippine Sea, which is based around the connectivity of the entire marine ecosystem, from the reefs to the sea grasses on which much marine life depend.

She also pushed for strengthening cooperation for marine environmental protection.

### **Collaboration with China**

Amid the overlapping claims with China, Teh revealed that the Philippines is working with China under the bilateral consultative mechanism for marine environmental protection and marine scientific research.

“And basically, the engagement is on how we can share experts or how we can share capacity development programs,” she said, but that the two countries have yet to commence the conduct of the actual joint marine scientific research until the two parties reach the “proper protocol because the sensitive or crucial issue there is the sharing of information.”

“But basically, we are both supporting collaboration in the sphere of marine environmental protection,” Teh said.

Earlier, Teh said the areas for collaboration should aim to establish policies to manage more productive coastal and marine environment for the benefit of all neighboring countries, identify areas with different priorities for sustainable use and manage and regulate destructive and pollutive activities.

The agreement should also be able to establish areas as havens for migratory species locally, and nationally important marines species, she added.

For her part, David explained that there is a 15-year plan dubbed as National Academic Research Fleet or NAR Fleet, where the concerned sectors will “make use of our resources to also conduct research that will benefit not just the Philippines but the entire region.”

The entire development plan is part of the contribution of the Philippines to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission’s Decade of the Ocean which started this year, 2021, and will continue until 2030. The research will be shared in various universities in the Philippines involved with marine sciences.

David cited the importance of the plan to specifically look at the West Philippine Sea and the Philippine Rise, and to do long-term oceanic monitoring all over the Philippines.

“There are a lot of opportunities surrounding the Philippines... So, expertise on marine engineering, biologists, experts in law of the sea, and so on. So, there are a lot of things that we can develop internally that will actually benefit the Filipino people as well as the global public,” David said.

# La Union river is cleanest in the Philippines

By Joanne Namnama P. Dilim

A whooping score of 93 percent!

That is the highest rating the Naguillian River in La Union province received from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) making it the first place in the Search for the Best R.I.V.E.Rs (Recognizing Individuals/Institutions towards Vibrant and Enhanced Rivers) for Life Award.

The award, which was launched in 2018, aims to raise public awareness on the need to protect and conserve the country's rivers as the lifeblood of the earth.

The concerted efforts of the DENR, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) - La Union, Provincial Government of La Union, and the Local Government of Naguillian made it possible for the Naguillian River System to win over 15 other regions nationwide.

DENR in the Ilocos Regional Executive Director Atty. Crizaldy Barcelo expressed his gratitude to everyone who worked for the achievement of the award which he considers as another feat attributed to the team and collaborative efforts of the regional office and its field offices.



*Atty. Crizaldy Barcelo, DENR in the Ilocos Regional Executive Director, presides over a meeting attended by the executive management of their office.*

"This is another manifestation of an unselfish leadership giving the full trust and confidence to the people you lead and guiding them to maximize their potential in attaining this achievement," he said.

R.I.V.E.Rs for Life Award

In the Philippines, there are 412 river basins in 119 proclaimed watersheds.

Of these, 19 are considered major river basins.

Due to threats from agricultural, domestic, industrial, negligence and mistreatment of the people to the rivers, only a few are considered healthy and sustainable.

Inspired by the success of the Boracay clean-up and commitment to save the Manila Bay, the DENR embarked on another challenge to protect the rivers in the country through the R.I.V.E.Rs for Life Award.



*An aerial shot of the Central Business District of the municipality of Naguillian, La Union.*

"Rivers are essential for humans and nature to survive, so it is our duty to ensure that these bodies of water are not exploited to secure livelihood and the wide-range of benefits that people derive from them," Director Barcelo said.

In order to qualify for the search, a river should meet the following criteria: Aesthetics and Water Quality Improvement - 35 percent; Solid Waste Management - 25 percent; Partnership/Community Mobilization - 25 percent; and Information and Education Campaign - 15 percent.

#### Winning points of Naguillian River System

After careful deliberation and assessment, the Naguillian River System bested other 15 entries all over the country for the 2019 R.I.V.E.Rs for Life Award.

But what made it win?

The river covers a total area of 28, 890 hectares and a total length of 65.9 kilometers.

The bed of the river system has an average width of 118.7 meters, the widest at 225.20 meters.

Based on the 2015 census of the Philippine Statistics Authority, the Naguillian River is the major river that sustains the livelihood and necessities of the Naguillianons.

Fishing communities nearby rely mostly on the river while it supplies most of agricultural lands in the municipality including the sugarcane plantations which is a raw material for the One Town, One Product (OTOP) of Naguillian -- the basi wine.

Dominador Pulmano, pioneer in basi making in Naguillian, shared how helpful the cleanliness of the river is to their community.

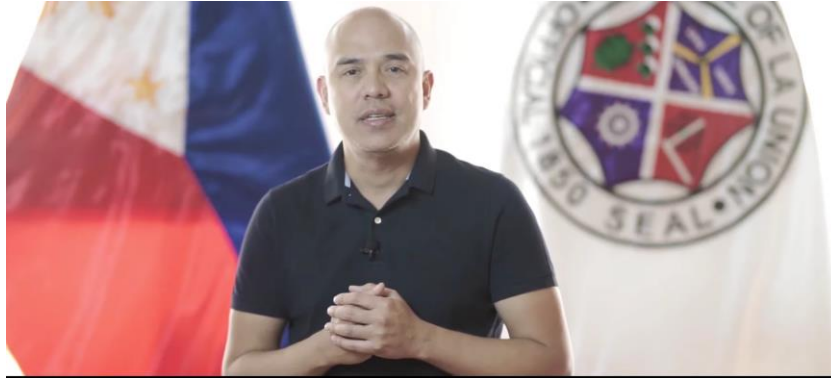
*"Itong Naguillian River ay malaking tulong para sa livelihood ng mga mangingisda. Ito rin ay isa pang pinagmumulan ng irigasyon na siyang ginagamit sa ating pananim gaya ng palay, mais, at lalung-lalo na ang OTOP namin na sugarcane,"* he said.

For her part, Naguillian Mayor Nieri Flores thanked all those that helped them win in the coveted search amid the COVID-19.

"Words are not enough how thankful I am to the various stakeholders who have contributed to this milestone especially to the DENR Office 1," Flores said.

She also shared that despite the threats of the pandemic, the residents poured their collective efforts in order to maintain the cleanliness of the Naguillian River as a series of clean-up drives and inspections were conducted.

Meanwhile, La Union Governor Francisco Emmanuel Ortega III imparted that the provincial government gives utmost importance to raising environmental awareness and strengthening efforts for environmental conservation, protection, rehabilitation, and management.



*La Union Governor Francisco Emmanuel Ortega III undercores the importance of rivers and lauds the DENR for conducting a search in protecting the rivers in the country.*

He likewise recognized the role of rivers in the convergence of natural systems which is a reminder of how important synergy is.

“Just as how the La Union River System converges to keep the water flowing, and to keep life going, we commit to synergize continuously with the DENR to ensure a holistic approach in protecting and managing what we have,” Ortega said.

#### Top 3 National Winners

While the top spot went to Naguillian River in La Union in Ilocos Region, the second prize was given to Bued River in Benguet province, Cordillera Administrative Region, and the third place went to Naga River in Camarines Sur, Bicol Region.

Aside from the recognition, cash prizes of Php100,000.00, Php75,000.00, and Php50,000.00 will be given to the top three winners, accordingly.

#### Legacy of Naguillian town

Naguillian holds a remarkable environmental legacy.

Mayor Flores shared that their town is a Hall of Famer in the Search for the Cleanest, Greenest and Safest Municipality in Region 1 and a two-time national finalist to the R.I.V.E.Rs for Life Award.



*Mayor Nieri Flores assures the continued hard work of the Naguillianons in upkeeping the Naguillian River.*



"The municipal government shall endeavor to relentlessly work hard for the protection and preservation of our very own Naguilian River for this generation and the future generations of Naguilianons," she ended. (JCR/AMB/JPD/PIA La Union)



## An e-waste 'garbage trap'

Experts weigh in on emerging PHL's shift from gas-powered to electric-powered vehicles

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

MARCH 20, 2021



A traditional fossil fuel-dependent tricycle shares the road with its battery-powered counterpart on Boracay island. MANG Rudy was busy one early morning this week fixing a busted taillight of his three-wheeled electric-powered tricycle (e-trike).

Maintaining his e-trike is essential for the retired electrician. He relies on the light transport equipment in going to the market as a service vehicle and bringing his grandchildren from home to the gate of their village and back.



An electric tricycle, or e-trike, touted as a greener alternative to traditional tricycles, ferries passengers on Taft Avenue in Manila.

Electric-powered vehicles (EVs) are slowly but surely gaining use and popularity in the Philippines against the backdrop of an aggressive drive by green groups for an environment-friendly mode of transport to help reduce the country's carbon footprint and fight climate change.

They are easy to maintain and, most of all, do not consume costly fuel, says Mang Rudy, no matter if most, if not all, of the replacement parts of the unit in case of a breakdown are imported.

"Battery charging takes only six hours. It's enough to bring me to the market and back," he said in Filipino.

He would have spent at least P120 every time he goes to the market and back commuting, as drivers of passenger tricycles—his preferred mode of transport amid threats of Covid-19—have been overcharging passengers.

For Mang Rudy, his e-trike is also environment-friendly and it is not as noisy as a car or a conventional motorcycle, which means less annoying noise pollution.





The EV revolution that is catching most developed countries across the globe, however, is barely being felt in the Philippines. Still considered as a nascent transport industry in the country, the EV fever in the Philippines is mostly on e-trikes. Electric-powered cars or trucks are still widely considered as novelty items.

The transition to EVs from motor vehicles powered by internal combustion engines is faced with huge challenges, though. The lack of infrastructure, for one, limits the commercial appeal and mobility of EVs.

But there's a bigger factor that is not yet included in the equation.

Rudy said his e-trike's battery unit is expiring anytime soon. This means he should be ready to shell out at least P1,500 to acquire a brand-new lithium-ion battery to supply power to his vehicle.

"Battery life is three years, the vendor told me. But some I know complained that their battery is no longer useful after two years. I don't know how long mine will last," he said.

## Reshaping the battery value chain

Finland-based Akkurate Oy, a provider of agile battery consulting and engineering services, said that for a long time, batteries have been making peoples' lives easier. The problem is that people are using these in an unsustainable way.

This can become an even bigger problem in the near future with the automotive industry gearing up for a full switch to electricity transport.

New and ambitious climate objectives, hence, require a reshaping of the entire battery value chain.

Citing industry analysts' prediction, not less than 2 million tons per year of EV batteries are reaching the end of their life in 2030, Akkurate said.

Akkurate added that throwing all these means a "colossal" amount of waste, while a large portion can easily be repurposed. The batteries that fail to make the cut may have to undergo recycling process because many valuable raw materials can be reused for new batteries.

"Recycling is the key to reducing the environmental impacts of battery use throughout the life cycle," Akkurate pointed out.

## 'Battery passport'

The European Battery Alliance (EBA) is creating its own competitive and sustainable battery cell manufacturing value chain, proposing a so-called "Battery Passport."

The initiative will bring together leading stakeholders across the entire battery value chain and enable resource efficiency across the battery life cycle.

Manufacturers that reach a certain transparency and traceability threshold will be allowed to carry a seal of quality. And from July 1, 2024, "only rechargeable industrial and electric vehicle batteries for which a carbon footprint declaration has been established can be placed on the market."

Meanwhile, European member states are also proposing their own measures.

A Finnish working group proposes in its National Battery Strategy 2025 seven objectives: growth and renewal of the battery and electrification cluster; growth of investments; promotion of competitiveness; increased international awareness of the strategy, responsibility; definition of key roles in the sector's new value chains; and promotion of circular economy and digital solutions.

## Diagnose tech by Akkurate

Akkurate believes that its Diagnose Technology is one of these digital solutions. It is specifically developed to support a better battery value chain and accelerate sustainable and low-carbon economic growth.



"Its diagnostics provide facts on battery health and performance, allowing companies to plan maintenance or replacement well in advance, and yet preventing potential safety issues. Features like centralized surveillance, better battery performance, lifetime prediction, support in possible quality issues, improved safety and help with recycling and repurposing, all contribute to a holistic battery life cycle management," it said.

Via e-mail, Lauri Pulkkinen, one of the cofounders of Akkurate, said disposing of the e-waste from lithium-ion batteries is difficult, given the sheer volume of batteries that will reach end-of-life.

## Learn and adapt

THE Philippines, Pulkkinen believes, must learn and adapt to the challenge if it is to embrace the transition from fossil fuel-dependent motor vehicles to environment-friendly EVs.

Asked if the Philippines can learn and adapt to the challenge, he said: "Yes, I think that is a global challenge: that everybody needs to adapt and learn."

To be better prepared to prevent the problem of e-waste from electric vehicles, all stakeholders and companies in the battery value chain—from raw materials to cell production, battery usage to recycling—need to start collaborating to make batteries sustainable, he said.

"As we did in Finland, our government launched a national battery strategy that also supports common European climate and sustainable targets," Pulkkinen said.

Pulkkinen said huge volumes of end-of-life EV batteries could be either recycled to collect and reuse valuable materials of lithium-ion batteries or use them in second-life applications—for example, stationary energy storages that could be used to store renewable energy or support EV charging or other possible new business models.

Diagnose Technology, he said, could be utilized as a software platform for holistic battery life cycle management.

## Comprehensive plan, study needed

Greenpeace Philippines campaigner for Energy Transition Khevin Yu said there's a need to study the impact of EVs. He said while the shift to EV appears to be enticing at face value, the transition in the public transport sector, such as from Pinoy jeepney to e-jeepney and tricycles to e-trikes may pose a problem in the future.

Because of that, he said, there's a need for more study on its potential impact.

"There should be a comprehensive plan about this from the Department of Transportation," he said.

Yu added e-waste from discarded batteries of EVs is also something to worry about.

"One of the concerns in the use of EVs is congestion. The e-wastes from EVs are also a cause of concern because we still don't have a recycling facility for these types of battery," Yu pointed out.

## Systems thinking

Renato Redentor Constantino, executive director of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, said while e-waste is certainly a critical issue, it is not the main issue in addressing the transportation problem.

"We need to tackle transport as a systems issue, which requires systems thinking," he said.

"If one merely replaces private cars with electric vehicles, even if done 100 percent, we will address only the needs of the tiny minority. Currently only 12 percent of Metro Manila households own their own cars. This means we need electric public transport, for sure, but maybe we need even more of other means of mobility," he added.

According to Constantino, there's a need to promote active transportation as regular, mainstream options instead of alternatives.

"This means focusing on support for bicycle commuting and pedestrian-centric urban planning and development.

Less energy used, less waste, more efficient means to move people, instead of our decades-long fixation towards moving cars," he said.



## A welcome move but...

GERRY Arances, executive director of the Center for Energy, Ecology and Development, said the sustainable transition in the transport sector and the entry of EVs is a good indication towards a more sustainable transport system.

However, he said, first off, there's a need to prioritize the development of sustainable mass transport system as a primary mode of transportation in the country to not just address sustainability in the sector, but also equity issues, since the majority of the riding public is in the working-class strata of society.

"Secondly, we need to develop policies revolving around the maintenance and disposal, among many others, of EV batteries, to ensure that by pursuing sustainability in this sector we do not create new sustainability problems, especially in the disposal or recycling of waste materials from these batteries, including batteries for solar rooftop PV (photovoltaic) systems which is now expanding as well," he said.

## The huge challenge

EV batteries are expected to add to the already huge amount of e-waste being produced by the Philippines. The Global Environment Report showed that the country generated approximately 3.9 kilograms of e-waste per capita last year. Also in 2019, the Philippines generated a total of 32,664.41 metric tons of waste from electrical and electric equipment (WEEE) based on a report by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

Proper disposal of e-waste remains a huge challenge as these hazardous materials end up in open dumps and landfill facilities, even as the national policy and regulatory framework for the management of electronic waste or e-waste have long been in place.

Proper disposal of e-waste begins with proper waste segregation and the implementation of the so-called 3Rs, which means reduce, reuse and recycle.

The Philippines, apparently, is not effective in reducing its e-waste or in reusing them. Worse, there is still no recycling facility in the Philippines, as far as lithium-ion battery use is concerned.

## National policy

THE EMB under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said that as early as 1990, the Philippines already had a national and regulatory framework on e-waste management with the enactment of Republic Act 6969, or the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Waste Control Act.

The law seeks to regulate the importation, manufacture, processing, handling, storage, transportation, sale, distribution, use, treatment and disposal of toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes that pose risks to human health and the environment.

Two years after the law was enacted, the implementing rules and regulations were issued under DENR Administrative Order 1992-29.

However, like Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, RA 6969 remains poorly implemented. E-waste are often sold as junk and end up in junk shops where they are dismembered to salvage parts before being discarded as ordinary waste.

DENR Undersecretary for Planning, Policy and Foreign-Assisted Projects Jonas R. Leones said there's an ongoing initiative by the EMB in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

A facility in Caloocan City, he said, is now buying e-waste, but these are mostly from electrical appliances and electronic equipment.

"We buy from the recyclers TV and computers and other e-waste, but these do not include lithium-ion batteries from EVs," he said. He admitted that the e-waste from lithium batteries, or similar batteries used in EVs, are not yet on the radar of the DENR.

## EPR

WHILE the Philippines has no facility for recycling lithium-ion batteries yet, Leones said that as a policy, the DENR is now pushing for EPR or extended producer responsibility, which would most likely cover EV batteries.



"We have a principle for EPR or extended producer responsibility, which is part of a circular economy we are pushing in the DENR. Under the principle of EPR, manufacturers or producers will take back their waste," Leones explained.

Asked to weigh in on the issue, Crispian Lao, vice chairman of the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC), said the technology worldwide to viably treat and recycle EV batteries is not on the scale yet, and while the local battery recycling sector (Philippine recyclers) is exploring it, there are no concrete plans in the near future just yet.

He cited a need to develop infrastructure for the batteries of EVs, including waste recycling, and agrees with Leones that one way of addressing the challenge posed by e-waste from the batteries of e-vehicles entering the Philippines in the future, with its limited capacity to deal with e-waste, is the application of EPR.

"I know that the DENR is pushing for extended producer responsibility where the manufacturer or producer has a recovery program for their waste," said Lao, a private-sector representative for recycling in the NSWMC.

Meanwhile, he thinks that government agencies like the Department of Energy, which is aggressively promoting EV, together with the DOTr and the DENR, should also look at the potential problem of EV batteries before going all-out for EVs.

Image credits: [Jackmalipan | Dreamstime.com](#), [Roy Domingo](#)



# A look at wildlife farming in PHL

By [JONATHAN L. MAYUGA](#) MARCH 21, 2021



Hunted in the wild, crocodiles and monkeys are now “thriving” in wildlife farms in the Philippines. The population of saltwater crocodiles like this from the province of Palawan and long-tailed macaques like this in the forests of Tawi-Tawi was on the decline prompting the introduction of wildlife farming of the species. Farming monkeys in the Philippines started in 1984, while farming crocodiles began in 1987.

The Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species (CITES) recently published data for 2019 based on reports of countries in compliance with the international treaty.

Based on the trade data, the Philippines reported the export of 1,053 captive-bred long-tailed macaques for biomedical research to the United States.



The significant increase in the number of exported live monkeys from 140 in 2018 to 1,053 in 2019, a year before the global pandemic, did not escape the attention of animal rights group Action for Primates (AP).

“Prior to 2018, the last recorded export of long-tailed macaques was in 2015 when the Philippines recorded 676, again to Japan,” Sarah Kite, the spokesman for Action for Primates told the BusinessMirror via e-mail on March 3.

## Appeal to authorities

AP has been appealing to countries like the Philippines not to allow the capture of wild long-tailed macaques for captive breeding and eventually, export of their progenies.

Kite said: “The large increase in the number of long-tailed macaques exported from the Philippines for research purposes during 2019 is alarming. It represents greater than a seven-fold increase over the previous year,” Kite said.

She added that there are increasing concerns about the conservation status of this species “which is now considered to be vulnerable, including in the Philippines.”

Because of the “lack of accurate information” on the macaque population in the Philippines, “it is important that the DENR do not allow the capture of macaques from the wild to supply breeding farms,” Kite said.



The group believes that the number of long-tailed macaques exported from the Philippines during 2020 may be even greater.

Although the data have not yet been released, there has been a reported increase in the demand for long-tailed macaques for research purposes, including for Covid-19, Kite said.

This, together with a ban on the export of macaques from China, the largest supplier of monkeys to the US, has apparently caused the research industry to turn to other countries, such as the Philippines, to meet the demand for the animals.

"Our concern is not only for the conservation status of the long-tailed macaque, but also for the extreme suffering and death to which the intelligent and sentient animal will unquestionably be subjected to," she lamented.

## Wildlife farming

The Philippines, through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), issues wildlife collector's permits for various purposes, such as scientific research and captive-breeding in wildlife farms.

Besides monkeys, the Philippines is known to farm other wildlife, such as saltwater crocodiles, an industry which is slowly taking off.

According to the DENR-BMB, other wild animals being farmed in the Philippines are local and exotic parrots, butterfly, hornbill, macaw, cockatoos, lovebird, and exotic reptiles, such as snakes, turtles and tortoise.

## Rationale

Amelita D.J. Ortiz, acting director of the DENR-BMB, cited several reasons on why wildlife farming in the Philippines is being allowed.

It aims to promote sustainable use of resources and to reduce the pressure of hunting/poaching on the wild population, thereby preventing the decimation of the natural population of wildlife species.

More importantly, the DENR-BMB believes that wildlife is consistent with the DENR's mandate to promote the socio-economic well-being of Filipinos.

The DENR-BMB chief believes that wildlife farms could serve as a source of captive-bred animals for the enhancement of the natural population of species with low numbers through the introduction, reintroduction and restocking in the wild.

"Wildlife farming, through appropriate farming technology, is a legitimate strategy for conserving wildlife, enhancing rural livelihoods, and increasing food access," she said.

In commercial breeding, she pointed out, only progenies of the species can be used for commercial purposes, which include the sale of skin, meat and other products derived from the animals being farmed.

## Historical, legal basis

According to the DENR-BMB, while it cannot be ascertained when the wildlife farming begun in the Philippines, it can be safely assumed that attempt to farm wild animals commonly hunted for food happened way back, offering as proof the domestic animal collection, such as native chicken and native pigs which parental origin can be traced from Philippine wild animals.

The regulation of wildlife farming was instituted in 1983, when the Philippines joined CITES, which encourages member countries to promote it as source of stock for the international trade.

A year later, farming for long-tailed maques began.



In 1987 the Crocodile Farming Institute, later renamed as the Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center (PWRCC), was established by the DENR in cooperation with the government of Japan, the DENR-BMB said.

The establishment of PWRCC aims to prevent the further decline of two naturally occurring species of crocodiles in the Philippines—the saltwater crocodile and the endemic Philippine or Mindoro crocodile.

## Authorized selling

Because of the success of crocodile farming, DENR Administrative Order 99-45 dated November 5, 1999, authorized the PWRCC to sell captive-bred saltwater crocodiles to qualified individuals or private entities to use as stocks for leather industry, direct trade and commercial breeding purposes.

The concerned DENR regional offices conduct quarterly monitoring of the wildlife farms within their jurisdiction.

As a policy, captive animals, both the parental stock and progenies, are properly marked. In some, tail cutting, or tattooing, is used. Some are embedded with microchips, while others have leg bands.

Section 17 of Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Act, and its Implementing Rules and Regulation state that only progenies or captive-bred animals are allowed for trade.

The DENR-BMB also requires wildlife farm-permit holders to submit a production report, which serves as reference for the processing of wildlife export-permit applications.

## Arresting declining populations

According to the DENR-BMB, as far as farming monkeys and crocodiles are concerned, wildlife farming serves its purpose well.

Since 1994, after policies were issued prohibiting the collection of animals in the wild, the trade in monkeys was limited to captive-breeding. The measure was in response to the decrease in wild population.

Only a limited number of wild individuals was allowed for collection for use as parental stocks, Ortiz said.

But before this policy, the Philippines was a major exporter of monkeys, supplying half of the global demand for monkeys estimated at 40,000 primates, mostly long-tailed macaques.

According to Ortiz, in 2004, the long-tailed macaque was assessed as near-threatened, citing DENR Administrative Order 2004-15.

“After more than a decade of regulated removal from the wild, the recent assessment [DAO 2019-09] delisted the long-tailed macaque from the national list of threatened species,” she said.

The DENR- BMB is currently receiving reports of increasing incidence of monkey proliferation and infestation in certain localities in the country.

Finally, Ortiz said that farming or commercial breeding of monkeys and crocodiles have contributed to arresting the decline of the population of the two species in the wild.

“Instead of collecting wild individuals for direct trade, the collected individuals are used instead for parental stocks and only progenies produced in the farms are traded,” she said.

In the case of crocodiles, specifically the Philippine crocodile, several of its progenies have been released into the wild several years back.



The DENR-BMB cited the release of 36 progenies of the Philippine crocodile from a crocodile farm in Davao in the Paghungawan Marsh on Siargao Island in March 2013. Another 29 were released in the same area in June 2017.

## Croc farms

There are currently eight crocodile farms in the Philippines, six of which comprise the Crocodylus Porosus Philippines Inc., a nonstock, nonprofit environment nongovernment organization (NGO).

The Philippines is exporting crocodile skins since 2008 to Singapore from these farms.

Crocodile meat, fresh and processed, are now being sold in select stores in areas with crocodile farms, particularly in Palawan, the home of the first crocodile farm in the Philippines, the PWRCC.

As of 2020, about 30,000 raw crocodile skins, the primary product of crocodile farming, were exported, DENR-BMB record show.

## Economic opportunity

Ortiz believes that the profitability of a wildlife farm is dictated by demand, citing the case of the monkey trade. When the global demand for decreased, the closure of some monkey farms ensued.

There are currently two operating monkey farms, DENR-BMB records show. One of the farms have over 2,000 monkeys, including breeders and progenies.

Meanwhile, other wildlife farms for birds and plants, such as orchids, and crocodiles have been in business for decades, the DENR-BMB chief said, indicating that the demand for wildlife and their products is sufficient to keep wildlife farms in operation and profitable.

However, Ortiz believes that the profitability of wildlife farming could be undermined by the illegal wildlife trade.

"The illegal wildlife trade robs wildlife farm operators and legal traders profit by taking a substantial share in the global demand for wildlife products," she said.

## Wildlife laundering

However, Emerson Y. Sy, a wildlife trafficking specialist of the nongovernment group Traffic, believes wildlife farming is basically an economic activity and has no or little contribution to wildlife conservation.

"The primary objective of such facilities [wildlife farms] is 'profit' and not for the conservation and welfare of wildlife," Sy said via Messenger on March 8.

For monkey farming, he said the objective is mainly for export as a laboratory animal and that there is no conservation aspect in the enterprise.

Sy said the DENR should look deeper into the operation of wildlife farms and strictly monitor their activities because they can also be used in "wildlife laundering."

Wildlife laundering happens when wild-caught animals are presented as progenies or animals bred-in captivity, when in fact their origin can be highly dubious, or worse, are actually wild-caught animals using legal export permits as a shield against wildlife trafficking laws

Wildlife farms, he added, can also be buyers of wild-caught animals for the purpose of adding parental stocks to their current number of breeders.

"The DENR should look into it because it has significant implications," he said.

Image credits: [Gregg Yan](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/21/a-look-at-wildlife-farming-in-phl/>





# Sierra Madre deforestation cancels gains of greening program

By: [Jhesset O. Enano](#) - Reporter / [@JhessetEnanoINQ](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:08 AM March 20, 2021



(PNA photo by Oliver Marquez)

Deforestation in the Sierra Madre in northern Luzon has canceled out the gains of the National Greening Program (NGP), according to scientists who observed satellite data in the past two decades to assess the results of the government's massive reforestation project.

Scientists from the University of the Philippines (UP) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) in the United States said continued forest loss amid reforestation efforts highlighted the urgency to implement environmental laws as well as the greater need to protect and conserve the country's remaining forests.

The forest cover in the Philippines has been reduced to less than 10 percent of the original, due to widespread logging and other threats to forest ecosystems.

The scientists' study, published in the journal *Forests*, is the first peer-reviewed paper that assessed the success of the NGP, which was aimed at planting 1.5 billion trees in 1.5 million hectares of land from 2011 to 2016, and creating jobs to address poverty.

Analysis of satellite data of the Sierra Madre, the country's longest mountain range where half of the remaining old-growth forest is located, showed that while forest loss declined from 2011 to 2015, it increased from 2016 to 2018, resulting in "no significant gain" from the NGP.

"While there is an effort to reforest, we saw that deforestation continues and its rate is higher," Dr. Gay Jane Perez, one of the study's authors and the deputy director of the UP Institute for Environmental Science and Meteorology, said in an interview. "Hence, it sort of cancels [the reforestation] out."

## Closed, open forests

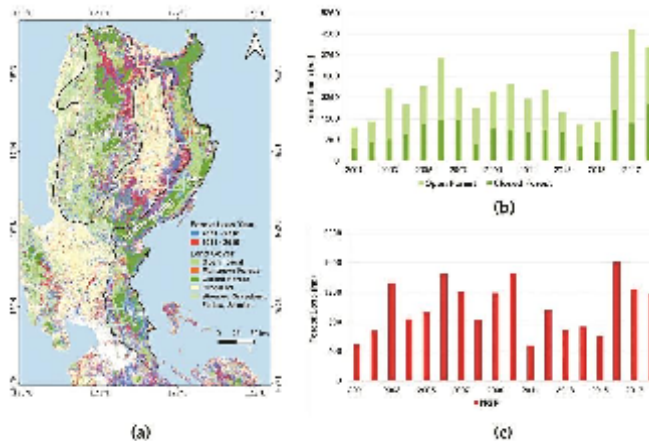
Using satellite data, scientists saw a modest increase in forest loss in 2009 and 2010, followed by a decreasing trend that reached a record low in 2014 at 553 ha in closed forest and 1,246 ha in open forest.

A closed forest is an undisturbed area of the forest; an open forest is accessible to humans and may have roads and communities within it.



The study’s authors said the decline in forest loss occurred concurrently with the beginning of the NGP, indicating public support and awareness of the reforestation project. But in the last year of the program’s first phase in 2016, the losses suddenly increased to 1,795 ha for closed forest and 3,862 ha for open forest.

The losses in tree cover were even higher in 2017 and 2018, and the rate of losses in closed forest was also higher than in open forest, the scientists said.



**DISMAYING DATA** A map of northern Luzon, showing the locations of different land cover types as classified by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, highlights forest losses from 2001 to 2010 and from 2011 to 2018. These areas were identified using data from high-resolution global maps from Hansen et al. Data analyzed by scientists also showed the continuous forest loss in both closed and open forests in the Sierra Madre, as well as forest loss in the sites identified for reforestation under the National Greening Program. —MAPS AND CHARTS FROM THE FORESTS JOURNAL

### Low-budget operators

“These results are disturbing since the goal of a very visible program like [the] NGP that is intended to do reforestation were being negated concurrently by deforestation activities that are likely illegal and executed by unscrupulous entrepreneurs and other entities,” they said.

While the scientists did not examine the drivers of deforestation, satellite data implied that it was being done by both “low-budget operators or farmers” with relatively small-scale activities and large-scale operators that concentrate their activities in specific sections of the forest.

Monitoring of NGP sites using satellite images also showed the varying conditions of the areas: During the reforestation years, some areas became greener while others became barren.

Scientists raised the need to continuously monitor the seedlings being planted under the NGP to ensure their growth and survival, especially with the program’s expansion to the Enhanced NGP, which is aimed at rehabilitating over 7 million ha of forestland up to 2028.

### Implementation

“I think the NGP is an excellent program, but the problem is in its implementation,” said Dr. Josefino Comiso, a senior scientist at Nasa and also a study author. “When you plant trees, you make sure that these grow up and not die in the process. And it’s very important that deforestation issues are addressed.”

Perez said more efforts should also be exerted in conserving areas identified as protected areas under the law.



“Even if you are doing reforestation efforts to offset what you have cut before, what you have lost previously may not really be recovered anymore,” she said. “Especially if you look at old-growth forests, maybe we are taking down trees that are ... hundreds of years old, and you cannot just replace [them] with a new seedling.”

#### DENR efforts

Sought for comment, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources’ (DENR) Forest Management Bureau said it would inspect and evaluate the identified planting sites.

DENR Assistant Secretary Marcial Amaro, who heads the bureau, said natural disasters such as typhoons, landslides and droughts, as well as land conversion, presence of pests and diseases and forest fires may be behind the deforestation in some areas.

“The department intensified its forest protection and anti-illegal logging campaign through the Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System,” Amaro said in a letter to the Inquirer, adding that drones and remote sensing were also being used to monitor and evaluate the established NGP areas.

“Our DENR field offices also conducted enhancement of graduated Enhanced NGP sites with low survival rates through replanting activities,” he said.

Per a report by the Commission on Audit in 2020, the NGP missed 88 percent of its target within the years 2011 to 2019. State auditors said that after eight years of implementation, the forest cover increased by only 177,441 ha, way below the program’s target of 1.5 million ha.



# Journey to a waterworld wonder

By [BERNARD L. SUPETRAN](#) MARCH 21, 2021



*Sarangani Bay*

To beach bums, this body of water is the “Boracay of Mindanao” no less with its sun, sea and sand almost whole year round. Host to the country’s biggest beach party held every summer, it was among Asia’s Top 50 Beaches in 2018 in the prestigious Australia-based Flight Network.

Embraced by General Santos City and six coastal municipalities of Sarangani, its 230-km coastline is a hive of watersports, family recreation, scuba diving, and fishing, among others.



*Bikers at Saranggani Bay*

But for those who look beneath its powdery sand, quite literally, Sarangani Bay is one of the archipelago’s richest yet one of the lesser-known seas, whose wonders are more than meets the eyes. This month, it is marking the silver year of its declaration as a Protected Seascape because of its remarkable marine biodiversity.

The 25-year journey began on March 5, 1996 when then-President Fidel Ramos signed Presidential Proclamation 756 to protect the bay’s aquatic resources.

The 215,950-hectare bay was subsequently listed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources as a Key Marine Biodiversity Area because of its coral resources covering 2,293 hectares, 60 important live hard coral genera, 411 reef species, and 11 species of seagrass.



*Bikers plant mangroves at Sarangani Bay.*



It is also a rich fishing ground, being the breeding ground of arguably the tastiest tuna which has tickled the world's palate and has catapulted General Santos City to being the globe's "tuna capital."

Various species of dolphins, killer whales, dwarf and pygmy sperm whales have been spotted by the DENR's periodic monitoring in recent years, attesting to the health of the bay. Last year's lockdown which drastically limited human activity in the bay has also greatly contributed to the growth of animal life, which can be seen both at the surface and under water.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape, more than 500 bikers rode from General Santos City and planted various species of mangrove propagules in mangrove forests in the coastal towns of Alabel, Malapatan and Glan.

Dubbed Bike and Plant Activity, the 60-km ride pedaled through the alluring countryside of Sarangani to raise public awareness on the need to protect and conserve the bay's ecosystem.



*Pilot whales at Sarangani Bay*

The town of Glan takes pride in being home to several white-sand shores and scenic coves, particularly the mile-long Gumasa Beach which lure sun worshipers and food trippers from all over the south. It is also the site of the Sarangani Bay (SarBay) Festival, a three-day extravaganza which fuses wellness, sports, entertainment, and wraps up with environmental awareness activities such as underwater cleanups, mangrove planting, and release of fish fingerlings, on top of the round-the-clock cleanup for the duration of the event.

But because of the prevailing health crisis, beach lovers will be missing the sought-after beach party for the second straight year. Guests can frolic in the bay and frolic in its crystalline water, though, under health and safety measures prescribed by the municipal government.

According to Sarangani Governor Steve Solon, the biodiversity-rich bay abounds in various species of fish, corals, mangroves, seagrasses, and marine mammals, and there's a need to safeguard it in the next 25 years and beyond.



*Dive assessment at Sarangani Bay*

As vice chairperson of the SBPS Board, he has pledged the support of the provincial government to the initiatives to ensure the bay's sustainability.

A licensed open water diver, he has also worked for the Department of Tourism's declaration of the bay as the scuba diving capital of the Soccsksargen region to boost its emerging dive tourism sector.



The Maasim and Kiamba sections of the bay boast of some of the under-the-radar dive spots with their amazing assemblage of coralline and aquatic life.

While celebratory events have been low-key due to the obtaining pandemic, the message of nurturing the marine resource was never diluted among the stakeholders who consider the bay their source of livelihood, sustenance, and collective pride as communities.

To conclude the celebration, the 68 barangays along the protected seascape held a simultaneous coastal cleanup to rid the shores of solid wastes that will find their way to the sea.

With its lush life under the sea, the enchanting shores on the surface, and colorful cultural communities in between, Sarangani Bay is the proverbial "pound-for-pound" champion among archipelago's bodies of water.



# CCC on Int'l Day of Forests: Restoring forests is the key to recovery and well-being

By Ma. Alaine P. Allanigue Published on March 20, 2021



*Sibalom Natural Park a protected area in the Philippines on the island of Panay in the Municipality of Sibalom, Antique. (Contributed photo)*

QUEZON CITY, March 20 (PIA) -- The Climate Change Commission (CCC) today called on the public to help sustain healthy forests and create a climate-resilient future for all, in celebration of the International Day of Forests.

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly marks March 21 of each year as the International Day of Forests. This year's theme, "Forests: A path to recovery and well-being," aims to increase appreciation on the values, significance, and contributions of all types of forests and to raise awareness on deforestation and other threats they face.

Forests cover about one-third of the Earth's land mass, providing habitat for 80 percent of the terrestrial species of animals and plants. Around 1.6 billion people, including more than 2,000 indigenous cultures, depend on forests for their livelihoods, medicine, fuel, food, and shelter.

Forests support the water cycle on earth, maintaining the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and humidity in the atmosphere; protecting watersheds, which supply fresh water to communities; and preventing soil erosion and global warming. They are the largest storehouses of carbon after oceans, storing carbon in forest biomass, soils, and products equivalent to about 10 percent of carbon emissions projected for the first half of this century.

Despite the ecological, economic, social, and health benefits of forests, global deforestation continues at an alarming rate—with 13 million hectares of forests being destroyed annually, removing vital habitats for plant and animal species, lowering carbon dioxide absorption and oxygen production, and increasing the world's carbon footprint. Deforestation accounts for 12-20 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change, which also makes forests become increasingly vulnerable to changes in weather, temperature and rainfall patterns.

A study published by Scientific Reports on the "Effects of climate change and land cover on the distributions of a critical tree family in the Philippines" [1] revealed how climate change affects species of Philippine hardwood trees, such as yakal, apitong, guijo, hagakhak, and white lauan, and that areas suitable for the growth of these trees has already reduced their distribution by a median of 67 percent, with those within legislated protected areas by 37 percent. The study noted that most affected areas were in Southern Luzon and Northern Visayas.



Increasing temperatures can exacerbate the situation of the tress, which are already affected by deforestation and land use, said Sean Pang, the study's lead author.

With this, the CCC urges all government instrumentalities, businesses and industries, the civil society, and all stakeholders to undertake and support efforts that would restore the health of our forests through more effective policies and measures, innovative solutions and approaches, and funding support.

In this International Day of Forests, the CCC expressed that everyone must work together to ensure a more sustainable and more resilient environment for our Filipino nation and the world.

To recall, the Climate Change Commission is the lead policy-making body of the government tasked to coordinate, monitor and evaluate government programs and ensure mainstreaming of climate change in national, local, and sectoral development plans towards a climate-resilient and climate-smart Philippines. (PIA NCR)





# Forests as natural capital for healthy ASEAN

By ACB Published on March 20, 2021



On the International Day of Forests, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity highlights the true value of forests in the ASEAN as the backbone of growth and prosperity, and protectors against the impacts of climate change and emergence of new and deadly diseases. Photo by Eden Jhan G. Licayan

LAGUNA, March 20 -- The ASEAN region is fortunate to have healthy biodiversity-rich forest ecosystems with actual cover constituting 46 per cent of the region's total land area. Considered one of the world's most biologically rich and diverse ecosystems, forests are among its natural capital that sustains the region's growth, especially now as we collectively aim to speed up recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the start of this health crisis, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) has been stressing the role of biodiversity in regulating climate and diseases. Today, on International Day of Forests, the ACB highlights the central role of these complex ecological systems in our efforts to build a healthy region, which is aptly resonant with the theme of this year's celebration— Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being. Under these unprecedented times, there is a growing recognition of forests, along with other types of natural ecosystems, as integral components of a country's total wealth, which provide life support and basic human needs, such as food, fresh and clean, water, medicine, shelter, and fuel.

While we have seen a decline of the ASEAN forest cover in the past decades, the good news is that the overall rate of forestry loss in ASEAN slowed from 1.2 per cent per year from 2000 to 2010, to 0.26 per cent per year from 2011 to 2015, according to 2020 ASEAN-EU report Investing in Sustainable Capital in ASEAN. While this is an important progress, it is also worthy to note the need to continue improving genetic, species, and habitat diversity in our remaining forests.

With habitat fragmentation being one of the biggest threats to biodiversity in forest ecosystems, big land mammals like tigers, elephants, and rhinoceros are among the species most affected. On the other hand, Philippine eagles, one of the largest raptors in the world, need about 133 square kilometres of forest to successfully breed and raise their young. Their dwindling populations would have significant effects on other species they interact with and the landscapes they live in.



Bearing these in mind, we are pleased to share some of the recent developments taking place on the ground. First, our heartfelt congratulations to the Indonesian government, the management of Gunung Leuser National Park, a designated ASEAN Heritage Park, assisted by VESSWIC through the Small Grants Programme of the ACB and the German Development Bank (KfW), for the birth of a healthy elephant calf last month. We wish that "Boni" will stay healthy to continue inspiring us to protect wildlife and their habitats.

In Lao PDR, on the other hand, the Department of Forestry with support from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and the European Union under the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) Project has completed the five-year management plan of Nam Poui National Protected Area. The plan involves working closely with 19 villages including ethnic groups for long-term solutions, which include carving out areas to serve as habitats for elephants, white-handed gibbons, and other species thriving in the protected area, and promoting alternative livelihood activities and establishing clear and measurable links between livelihood improvement and conservation outcomes.

All these efforts are aligned with our main thrust of working with the ASEAN Member States in integrating biodiversity and nature into development plans and recovery efforts. For these endeavours, we take guidance from the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and the Brunei Darussalam's leadership as ASEAN Chair. We also take note of the remarks of Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak at the recent partnership conference on the region's post-COVID-19 recovery on 15 March. "The region's recovery efforts must be done in a systematic and coordinated way, in concert with stakeholders and partners", he said.

The challenges we are currently facing only compel us to work more closely with all sectors and industries, especially as they directly benefit from healthy and thriving biodiversity, including our forest ecosystems.

Indeed, we have tremendous work ahead of us. As we celebrate the International Day of Forests this year, let us be reminded of the true value of our forests in the ASEAN. Protected, these ecosystems can effectively contribute to the wealth of our nations, as the backbone of our growth and prosperity, and our protectors against the impacts of climate change and emergence of new and deadly diseases. (TMSLim/ACB)



# Arrest deforestation, United Nations urges countries

By Catherine Teves [March 20, 2021, 3:10 pm](#)



**FOREST DAY.** The United Nations General Assembly 2012 proclaimed March 21 yearly as International Day of Forests. Countries are encouraged to undertake local, national, and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree planting campaigns. *(Photo courtesy of UN)*

**MANILA** – United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres raised the urgency to increasingly restore and conserve forests worldwide to reverse further deforestation.

Forests help sustain life on Earth and are essential in building a sustainable future, but deforestation continues at an "alarming rate" with around 10 million hectares of forests — about the size of Iceland — being lost annually, Guterres noted ahead of the annual International Day of Forests (IDF) on March 21.

"If we fail to act now, we risk a point of no return," he warned in his message, urging all sectors to help save forests as some 1.6 billion people worldwide directly depend on the ecosystem for food, shelter, energy, medicine, and income.

Forests filter air and water, help regulate climate, absorb one-third of climate change-driving greenhouse gas emissions every year and serve as habitat for some 80 percent of all known terrestrial species, he continued.

Aside from jeopardizing such benefits, Guterres said deforestation increases the risk for infectious disease outbreaks and even pandemics. It's still not too late to address deforestation, however, he said.

"The crises our planet faces require urgent action by all — governments, international and civil society organizations, the private sector, local authorities, and individuals," he said.

He noted stakeholders can look into how indigenous peoples (IPs) conserve forests and other ecosystems.

"IPs are leading the way, they care for Earth's biodiversity and achieve conservation results with very few financial resources and little support," he said.

Observance of the 2021-2030 UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration further highlights the need to protect and conserve forests, he continued.

Such observance "calls for action to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of forests and other ecosystems," he said.

In 2012, the UN General Assembly proclaimed March 21 of every year as IDF to celebrate and raise awareness about the importance of all forests.



Forest Restoration: A path to recovery and well-being is the 2021 IDF theme to highlight the benefits of forest restoration.

“It will highlight the valuable benefits of forest restoration in terms of human health, food security, environmental and climatic condition, provision of green jobs, stakeholder engagement, and healing,” the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources posted on its website.

FMB said the key messages of IDF 2021 are aligned with the three umbrella programs of the Philippine Master Plan for Climate Resilient Forestry Development 2016-2028 (Forestry Master Plan): Shield for climate change impacts, Serve the needs of people, and Shared responsibility. **(PNA)**



# Saving the forests is saving the planet

By Fr. Shay Cullen, SSC March 21, 2021

Today, March 21, is the International Day of Forests. Forests are of vital importance to the well-being of all creatures, the natural world and especially humankind. They absorb most of the damaging carbon dioxide that causes climate change. Their protection and restoration should be of highest national priority for each nation to hold back global warming from rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius and avert the catastrophe that is to come.

Forests are vital for retaining and releasing water the whole year-round, preventing droughts and providing clean water and protection from landslides and soil erosion in the typhoon season. In the Philippines and other countries that have suffered deforestation, there is severe low crop yield that causes food insecurity because of massive rains and typhoons that result in soil erosion. In some provinces, 50 percent of the rich topsoil has been washed away and more to come. There are no more forests to hold the water back. The Philippines, once self-sufficient in rice, now imports most of its rice.

The deforestation is mainly caused by mining companies and loggers allowed by officials. In 1900, there was 70 percent forest cover in the Philippines. By 1999, there were about 3 percent to 5 percent remaining. Forty years of savage uncontrolled logging caused this irreplaceable loss of primary rainforest. Denuded, bare and exposed hills and mountains are the tragic results and the destruction still goes on. Ninety-eight percent of Philippine plywood exported to Japan is worth \$86 million. Some wood exported are from sustainable plantations, however.

There has been what I call “foresticide” with the global deforestation rate at an estimated 10 million hectares per year. That is 429 million hectares since 1990. The cutting of millions of hectares of Brazilian Amazon rainforests and the killing of forest guards and indigenous people are growing. More than 230 million hectares of prime forests will have been destroyed by 2050, researchers say.

There is a “secret war” over the environment in the Philippines, Brazil and elsewhere as some government officials support logging and mining companies.

Dozens of forest guards and environmental protectors are being systematically shot dead by mining security guards in the Philippines and cattle ranchers in Brazil. The military has allegedly declared indigenous communities as terrorists or supporters of communists and justify displacing them. The mining companies then exploit the ancestral lands without protest or opposition. Italian environmentalist priest Father “Pops” Tentorio was shot dead in 2011. No one has been convicted for the crime. Other priests were killed in previous years.

In the Amazon, the forests are cut to provide pasture for cattle and fields for palm oil and soya-growing. The indigenous people are being wiped out by disease and violence by the cattle ranchers and soya planters. The proliferation of cattle in the world is now at 989 million, which is down from more than one billion in 2014, causing an environmental disaster as the animals produce huge amounts of methane, a global-warming gas causing climate change that damages forests. In Europe, there is a battle to preserve the forests of Poland. The government is allowing the logging of the world heritage site of the famous primeval Bialowieza Forest that has stood for millions of years. In 2018, the European Court of Justice declared the deforestation as illegal.

But Poland is planning to continue soon despite the protests and legal challenges. Destroying the habitat of wildlife will destroy their chances for survival.



Germany has a big threat to its fabled forests by acid rain caused by polluting factories, coal plants and vehicles emissions. By the 1980s, 2.5 million hectares were damaged and hundreds of thousands of trees died. The acid rain killed the leaves and the roots. The forests are being protected with changes in law and change to renewable-energy sources.

Trees are essential for humans and animals and birds. They emit healthy fumes and aromas and that is why it is healthy to live near trees. Trees are inter-connected by a root system and promote the growth of essential fungi and other plants. A world without trees and wild creatures is a diminished form of life. But there is good news as mega planting projects are getting popular, according to this report by Geographyrealm (<https://www.geographyrealm.com/mega-tree-planting-efforts-around-the-world/>):

“In India in Uttar Pradesh, 800,000 volunteers planted 50 million trees in a single day. The record was broken the following year by the state of Madhya Pradesh, which had 1.5 million volunteers planting 66 million tree saplings in just 12 hours. The efforts continue each year. This year, respecting all the social distancing measures, 2 million volunteers gathered at farmlands, government buildings and riverbanks in Uttar Pradesh to plant 250 million saplings distributed by officials. Also, this year, trees are being tagged to keep records of their survival. The overall goal is to increase the forest cover to 235 million acres by 2030 — a number India pledged in Paris in 2016.

“The Ethiopian government’s Green Legacy Initiative placed volunteers – around 23 million of them — at 1,000 planting sites across the country. Together they reportedly managed to plant more than 350 million saplings in just 12 hours.

“Faced with desertification and increasing wildfire threats, Turkey has initiated its own mega-planting project. Last year, the government declared that November 11 would become the National Forestation Day. In the first year, volunteers planted 11 million trees in more than 2,000 locations across Turkey. The northern Anatolian city of Çorum broke the world record for the most trees planted at a single site in one hour — 303,150 saplings.”

Not that many survived, however, and the survival rate is disputed, with an estimated 40 percent perhaps having made it.

Yet it is hoped in the future that the forests can be replanted, and in the Philippines, we need more planting projects working directly with the people. Tree projects of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have endured failures and allegedly some corrupt deals with contract growers.

The best practice we found is to give the saplings to the indigenous peoples to plant on their ancestral deforested lands. In our efforts at the Preda Foundation working with the Aeta indigenous people, they plant an average of 3,000 saplings every year for the past 15 years. A small but significant contribution. We can save the forests and restore them by trusting and working with the people.



# Dumpsite in Baguio City is now an eco-park

Published March 20, 2021, 10:35 PM

by [Philippine News Agency](#)

The signs are clear and visible that the over 60-year-old closed dump facility of the city is turning to become an ecological park.



A Nipa Hut is expected to be one of the attractions of a former dumpsite which will soon be opened as an eco-park in Baguio City. (PIO-Baguio City)

Aileen Refuerzo, chief of the city information office, on Friday said the Irisan dumpsite-turned-eco-park is being eyed as the city's newest attraction with works being done to prepare it for visitors.

The stinky odor emitted by the tons of garbage that accumulated over decades has been eradicated, giving relief to the noses and lungs of the residents in the city's biggest and vote-rich barangay.

"At present, it is showing a lot of promise and has the potential to become part of our attractions in the city," said City Mayor Benjamin Magalong.

He said that still to be done and part of the improvement work in the area is the construction of a sewerage treatment plant to address the leachate problem.

"It is still a long way to go but we are happy with the transformation," the mayor said.

In 2011, the Supreme Court issued a Writ of Kalikasan after an avalanche of garbage at the height of Typhoon Mina left six people dead.

In 2008, the city government has already stopped using the area as an open dumpsite but the mountain of garbage remained, which rolled down during the typhoon in 2011.

Magalong earlier said that turning the decommissioned dumpsite into an ecological park is a long-term solution to the condition of the area.

The project to transform the former Irisan open dumpsite into a park costs more than PHP17 million.

At present, greenery on terraces can be seen with recyclables utilized as planting materials along available areas.

Magalong said they are hoping that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will help Baguio in convincing the Supreme Court to lift the Writ of Kalikasan over the five-hectare former dump facility.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/03/20/dumpsite-in-baguio-city-is-now-an-eco-park/>



## Motolite promotes ‘urban mining’

posted March 20, 2021 at 07:12 pm

by [Manila Standard Business](#)

Motolite continues to promote earth-friendly manufacturing and sustainability via its own version of “urban mining” in partnership with corporations and civic groups.



EERI's world-class battery recycling plant

Motolite teamed up with the Philippine Business for Social Progress and ABS-CBN Foundation for the collection of used batteries, which are being reprocessed back to commercial use by Motolite's third-party recycler Evergreen Environmental Resources Inc.

Latest data showed that despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, Motolite has been collecting around 2,500 metric tons of used batteries every month, or 30,000 MT annually. This is equivalent to the volume of solid wastes being produced by the entire country for a day.

Motolite's partnerships with PBSP through its “Balik-Baterya” initiative and ABS-CBN Foundation under its “Bantay-Baterya” program involve more than 200 companies including PLDT Inc., San Miguel Corp., Globe, Meralco, Nestle and Energy Development Corp.

Proceeds from the used batteries are being used by PBSP and ABS-CBN Foundation in their social development programs.

Motolite also has a trade-in scheme with dealers and partner-retailers. Customers that are surrendering their used batteries are getting up to a 9-percent discount in their new purchases.

Motolite then brings these used batteries to EERI, which operates a world-class recycling facility in Bulacan. Its state-of-the-art equipment and ISO-certified operations and management allow EERI to recover and reprocess back to commercial use some 96.5 percent of the components of old batteries.

Motolite uses the output of EERI in producing new batteries, making it a good model for sound urban mining—or the recovery of raw materials from used products and wastes—practices and green manufacturing.

Motolite makes battery production in the country sustainable, as every used battery recycled translates into a new battery, with a ratio of 1:1.

Motolite no longer sources primary lead, negating the need for underground mining. The processing of secondary lead also requires 40-percent less energy compared to using primary lead.

For plastic components, Motolite has enough pellets for the black plastic parts of batteries. It only needs to buy virgin plastic resins for the colored casings or parts, which represent only about 30 percent of its requirements.

Motolite and EERI's recycling initiative also saves the environment and the public from the haphazard dumping of hazardous wastes, something that other battery brands in the market are unable to do.

EERI, aside from hurdling the stringent requirements of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, received ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 14001:2015, 9001:2015 and 50001 certifications.

Source: <https://manilastandard.net/mobile/article/349963>





# WWF-PH invites Filipinos to take climate action, speak up for nature

By [The Manila Times](#) March 21, 2021



On Saturday, March 27 at 8:30 p.m. local time, Earth Hour, one of the largest global grassroots movements for the environment, will virtually bring together millions of people, businesses and leaders from around the world to shine a spotlight on the urgent need to address nature loss and climate change. With evidence pointing towards a close link between nature’s destruction and rising incidences of infectious disease outbreaks like Covid-19, Earth Hour 2021 will unite people online to speak up for nature.

A recent draft of the Philippines’ Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), launched on February 5, includes plans to reduce carbon emissions by 75 percent by the year 2030.

“We welcome the government’s increased commitment to combating climate change. We urge the government, however, to be more ambitious – marking only a 2% unconditional cut in emissions does not send a strong enough message through Philippine society about the importance of protecting the environment. Given the state of the environment today, as well as our country’s reliance on natural resources and the climate we have today, we must work to restructure our society towards becoming a green economy that puts nature first,” said WWF-Philippines Earth Hour Pilipinas National Director Atty. Angela Ibay.

On the day itself, prior to the switch-off, WWF-Philippines will be running a watch party through their Facebook page. Named EH PHLix 2021, the live stream consists of several shows featuring different ways Filipinos can practice sustainability and speak up for nature from the safety of their homes. EH PHLix will run from 3:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The program will end with the Countdown to Earth Hour 2021, to be hosted by WWF-Philippines National Ambassadors Marc Nelson and Rovilson Fernandez, and which will run from 7:00p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The grand switch-off will take place between 8:30p.m. to 9:30p.m. – WWF-Philippines encourages all viewers to share with them their own Earth Hour celebrations through social media.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/03/21/public-square/wwf-ph-invites-filipinos-to-take-climate-action-speak-up-for-nature/853892/>



# Plastic waste pollution still a global concern: group

By Catherine Teves [March 20, 2021, 6:09 pm](#)



**WORLDWIDE PROBLEM.** The proliferation of plastic wastes is a global concern. Break Free From Plastic, a global movement that was launched in 2016 and has been releasing reports since 2018, works with volunteers and non-governmental organizations to count and document the brands on plastic waste found in countries. *(Photo courtesy of BFFP)*

**MANILA** – A group of environmental advocates is urging the government to institute measures to address the country's problem of plastic wastes.

Members of Break Free from Plastic (BFFP) are seeking a nationwide ban on single-use and problematic (non-recyclable) plastic products.

"Impose accountability and liability on corporations for the waste on packaging and end-of-life of their products," the group also said in its Philippine Brand Audit Results report released this week.

BFFP cited the need to implement mechanisms for fostering growth and innovations in eco-friendly and alternative product packaging and delivery systems.

There's also a need to impose "hefty" penalties on corporations and individuals failing to address waste and pollution as well as not adhering to clean production standards, the group continued.

"Support cities and communities in their programs to ban or regulate the use of single-use plastics and packaging products," the group said.

BFFP raised the urgency for such measures, noting that results of its 2020 brand audit showed only about two percent of plastic waste collected in the country can be considered recyclable materials.

"The biggest bulk, at 98 percent, is single-use plastics that are not recyclable and have no economic value," the group said.

Recyclable material is "any waste material retrieved from the waste stream and free from contamination that can still be converted into suitable beneficial use or for other purposes," according to Republic Act (RA) 9003 (Ecological Solid Waste Management Act).

Newspapers, ferrous scrap metal, non-ferrous scrap metal, used oil, corrugated cardboard, aluminum, glass, office paper, and tin cans are among recyclable materials, noted RA 9003.

Recycling plastics "has never been the solution," the group said.

"The real long-term response to the plastic waste problem is to regulate the production and use of this problematic product," it said.



The group's members have been spearheading brand auditing, a citizen action that involves counting, analyzing, and documenting plastic types, brands, and companies responsible for the plastic waste that end up in ecosystems, beaches, and urban centers.

Its 2020 Philippine brand audit showed eight companies have been the top plastics polluters in the country during the past three years: Nestle, Colgate-Palmolive, Unilever, Proctor and Gamble, Universal Robina Corporation, Monde Nissin Corporation, Nutri-Asia Inc., and Liwayway Holdings

The 2020 Philippine brand audit covered 38,580 pieces of branded plastic waste items recovered from 17 sites, the group added. **(PNA)**



# Parishioners plant trees to mark 500 yrs of Christianity on Homonhon

ByCBCP NEWS MARCH 21, 2021



Polish Ambassador Karoslaw Szczepankiewics joins the residents of Homonhon Island in planting 500 trees to celebrate the 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines on March 14, 2021.

GUIUAN, Eastern Samar—A small parish in an island that is dominated by decades-old chromite mining operations led the planting of 500 native trees over the weekend to drum up care for the environment.

It was a symbolic event on March 14 on Homonhon Island off Guiuan town in Eastern Samar province as part of the celebration of the 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines.

Fr. Christian Ofilan of the St. John the Baptist Parish said it was to remind the faithful that they are God's stewards of all creation.

"Through this we encourage and remind Christians to be responsible and to be good stewards of God's creation," Ofilan said. "Protecting the environment is part of the Christian message."

More than 500 parishioners from the island's eight villages joined the activity, with Polish Ambassador to the Philippines Jaroslaw Szczepankiewicz.

Mining operations have been ongoing in Homonhon since the early 1990s.

The Borongan Diocese has also been at the forefront in raising environmental awareness to save the island.

The island is at the center of the diocese's jubilee celebrations because it is where Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his Spanish crew first landed 500 years ago.

Magellan's expedition reached the archipelago on March 16, 1521, but docked in Homonhon only on March 17.

From March 17 to 28 that year, they took a respite on the island before proceeding to Southern Leyte's Limasawa Island, where the first recorded Easter Mass on March 31, 1521, was held.

To commemorate the day, Bishop Crispin Varquez will lead a Mass at the St. John the Baptist Parish Church in the island's Casuguran village.

*Alren Beronio/CBCP News*

Image credits: [Alren Beronio](#)

Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/03/21/parishioners-plant-trees-to-mark-500-yrs-of-christianity-on-homonhon/>



# Study on new variant discovered in PH could take several months

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Mar 19, 2021 8:33:10 PM



**Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, March 19)** — Studying the new coronavirus variant first detected in the Philippines could take several months, according to the World Health Organization.

The WHO and the Department of Health are working together in investigating the P.3 variant [which has been found in 98 COVID-19 patients](#) in the Philippines. It is not yet considered a "[variant of concern](#)" since there's still not enough data to determine if it has higher transmissibility or if it causes an increased risk for serious disease or death.

"This (study) could take several months but rest assured that we are doing everything within our capacities here in WHO to support the DOH to understand what it means to have the P.3 variant in the Philippines," Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe, WHO Representative to the Philippines, said in an online media briefing.

He explained studying new versions of the virus usually takes time, citing the case of the variant first discovered in the United Kingdom.

"I want to remind you that the B.1.1.7 variant was detected first in September last year and now we have some information. That gives you an idea of how much time it takes to understand these variants," Abeyasinghe said.

The variant from UK has been associated with increased virus transmissibility and has infected at least 177 people in the country. Two other variants are causing concern, the one that emerged in South Africa, feared to lessen the efficacy of some COVID-19 vaccines, and the one from Brazil, which could affect the ability of antibodies generated through previous infection, according to experts.

Health authorities are not ruling out the possibility these variants could be driving the current surge of infections in the Philippines.

The new variants are apparently "circulating in areas beyond where they have been confirmed," Abeyasinghe said, citing the need to strengthen the country's genome sequencing capacity to detect virus mutations.

Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/3/19/philippines-new-variant-who-doh-study.html>

# Stricter enforcement of health protocols to implement in QC

March 20, 2021



Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte issued a memorandum creating an incentive system that will recognize policemen's efforts in ensuring the implementation of minimum health standards in the city, specifically in public transportations, commercial establishments, and special concern lockdown areas in the city.

The move was made amid the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the past two weeks. The LGU and the QC Police District (QCPD) will heighten the enforcement of health protocols in the city's 142 barangays.

"The city government will be enforcing a stricter monitoring of the implementation of health protocols with the help of QCPD led by PBGen Danilo Macerin. And to further encourage our 16 police stations in our enforcement, we will be initiating a non-cash, outputs-based incentive system for them," explained Mayor Belmonte.

Through these incentives, the local executive is hoping the reinforcement of health protocols will be executed more strictly.

Police station commanders will intensify foot patrols in the city's special lockdown areas, barangays with high COVID cases, hang-out areas such as basketball courts, transport terminals and footbridges, public transportation including tricycles, public markets and commercial establishments, government facilities and places of worship, and areas where violations of health protocols are regularly committed or reported.

Each police station is also tasked to submit a daily report including the total number of ordinance violation receipt (OVR) issued, and highlight the top three violations in barangays and establishments where most violations occurred.

Meanwhile, the Department of Public Order and Safety will analyze the reports and will forward it to the City Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit. The CESU will then recommend where enforcement operations should be focused or re-focused.

All violators will have to pay their respective penalty within seven days of issuance at the DPOS and City Treasurer's Office (CTO) at the QC Hall, or in satellite CTO offices in QC. — *Allan Francisco*

Source: <https://ptvnews.ph/stricter-enforcement-of-health-protocols-to-implement-in-qc/>

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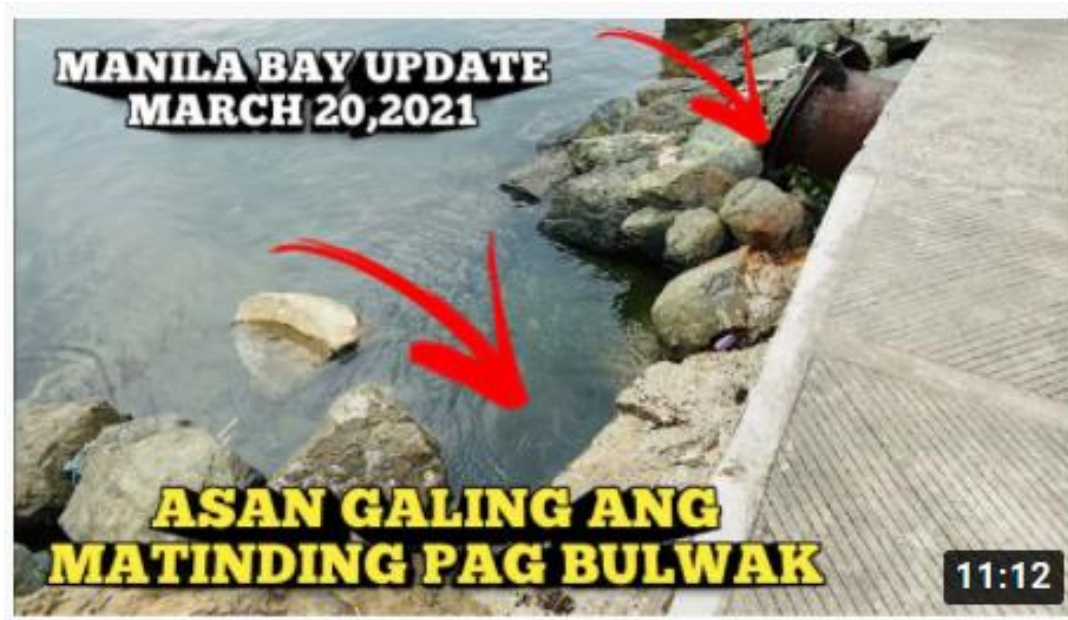
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