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# DENIR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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# DENR declares success in its coastal, marine ecosystem management in '19

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

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**T**HE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has assessed and mapped out a total of 2,075.10 hectares of coastal ecosystems for potential livelihood opportunities in 2019, exceeding its own target of 1,700 hectares.

The accomplishment of the DENR, through its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), is on top of regularly maintaining and protecting all the 48 marine protected areas in the country under the National Integrated Protected

Areas System.

On the other hand, six marine Protected Area networks were also established in Regions 3, 5, 7 and 12.

The DENR-BMB also monitored and supported 64 existing biodiversity-friendly enterprises, and provided technical assistance to 69 local government units nationwide.

These accomplishments are considered by the DENR as "a headway in scaling up the country's coastal and marine ecosystems in 2019."

Officials of the DENR attributed this to the full and effective implementation of its Coastal

and Marine Ecosystems Management Program (CMEMP).

Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu said the CMEMP became instrumental in pushing DENR's BMB to achieve its targets in terms of managing coastal and marine resources nationwide.

CMEMP is a national program that aims to comprehensively manage, address, and effectively reduce the drivers and threats of degradation of the coastal and marine ecosystems in order to achieve and promote sustainability of ecosystem services, food security, and climate-change resiliency for the benefit of present

and future generations.

Its primary objective is to achieve the effective management of coastal and marine ecosystems, thereby increasing the ability to provide ecological goods and services to improve the quality of life of the coastal population.

According to Cimatu, the BMB's accomplishments mark the beginning of greater protection for the country's coastal and marine environment.

"We will use these accomplishments as benchmarks for the incoming year for a better protection of our coasts and seas," the DENR chief said.



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## Cimatu hails improved coastal management

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has proved it was serious in improving the country's coastal and marine ecosystems in 2019 by fully and effectively implementing its Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Program (CMEMP), its chief said.

In a statement on Monday, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said the CMEMP became instrumental in pushing the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) to achieve its targets in terms of managing coastal and marine resources nationwide.

The BMB's accomplishments mark the beginning of greater protection for the country's coastal and marine environment, Cimatu said.

"We will use these accomplishments as benchmarks for the incoming year for better protection of our coasts and seas," he said.

CMEMP is a national program that aims to comprehensively manage, address and effectively reduce the drivers and threats of degradation to coastal and marine ecosystems to achieve and promote sustainability of ecosystem services,

food security and climate change resiliency for the benefit of present and future generations.

Its primary objective is "to achieve the effective management of coastal and marine ecosystems, thereby increasing the ability to provide ecological goods and services to improve the quality of life of the coastal population."

Through the CMEMP, the BMB was able to assess and map out during the year 2,075.10 hectares of coastal ecosystems for potential livelihood opportunities, exceeding its 2019 target of 1,700 hectares.

The BMB likewise regularly maintained and protected all the 48 marine protected areas in the country under the National Integrated Protected Areas System. Six marine protected area networks were also established in Regions 3 (Nueva Ecija), 5 (Bicol), 7 (Central Visayas) and 12 (Central Mindanao).

The bureau also monitored and supported 64 existing biodiversity-friendly enterprises, and provided technical assistance to 69 local governments nationwide.

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## The button of irreversible climate change

**By Marlowe Hood**

JOHAN Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, is a Big Picture scientist who strives to see how all the pieces of our planet's complex climate system fit together.

In 2009, he co-authored the "planetary boundaries" concept, which has since become a central paradigm for evaluating Earth's capacity to absorb the impact of human activity.

Rockstrom spoke with AFP at the COP25 UN climate conference in Madrid. Answers have been edited for concision and clarity.

**Q: Is a viable solution to global warming compatible with consumer capitalism?**

There's a simple way to answer that question: we don't have a choice. On climate, the time is running out so fast that there's no other pathway. Either we make this work within the existing economic paradigm, or we fail.

It's naive to say 'Let's go for de-growth, let's completely divest, or let's think of post-capitalist model and throw GDP in the waste bin'. We have to work with the economic machinery that we have in our engine room.

**Q: Why are fossil fuel companies reaching out to you, an Earth system scientist, for advice?**

The European-based oil companies—such as Shell, BP and Equinor—have not come to the point where they see the beginning-of-the-end of their business, but I'm sure that they recognize that we have a serious problem.

They are also very clever at engaging with the scientific community and allowing a high ceiling when it comes to entertaining different perspectives. But they still translate everything into their own conclusions, which are mostly aligned with Shell's "Sky Scenarios."

Their argument goes like this: 'We serve humanity by supplying modern energy. Economies need cheap energy because otherwise they just grind to a

halt. Don't blame us, we're just providing exactly what you are asking for.'

The Sky Scenario says that even with a 50 percent reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions over the next 30 years, Shell can be aligned with science and the Paris Agreement without changing very much.

But this is an illusion that presumes the deployment of unrealistic levels of carbon capture and storage (CCS)—a technology that syphons off CO2 as gas or coal is burned and stores it underground—and tree planting. It is a feel-good strategy for the status quo.

Today we only have three, four, maybe five hundred billion tons of CO2 in our 'carbon budge' left to emit—about 10 years' worth. There is no more room for this type of posturing. And yet companies are still making major natural gas and oil investments in the Arctic and elsewhere. This won't take us to a net zero economy in time.

**Q: Could Earth flip from being a self-cooling to a self-warming system?**

We should humbly cherish the fact that the Earth system remains in net cooling mode. We are loading the planet with heat by burning fossil fuels. So far the Earth system has responded by dampening that heat.

First, land and oceans absorb 50 percent of emitted greenhouse gases. That's the biggest economic subsidy ever. Second, 90 percent of the excess heat we generate is taken up in the oceans. Third, ice sheets and the polar ice cap reflect 90 percent of solar radiation back into space.

So we have carbon sequestration, heat absorption and albedo—whereby the Sun's energy is reflected back into space by mirror-like snow and ice—as the three big cooling agents on Earth. This is what has kept the system so resilient during the Holocene interglacial period [over the last 12,000 years]. I call the planet's capacity to buffer abuse 'Earth resilience'.

The big nightmare is the moment  
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## The button...

From A4

when Earth can no longer cope and shifts from that self-cooling state to become a net-warmer. We don't know where that point is yet, but we see the mechanisms.

The moment, for example, Greenland's ice sheet melts to such a large extent that it forms a film of liquid on the surface. We have already seen periods when it becomes a net absorber of heat rather than a net reflector of heat. Not for more than a few weeks at a time, but it's starting to happen.

We are also starting to see something similar with land-based ecosystems. We have had years when Earth's entire land surface is no longer a sink but a net source of greenhouse gases.

The point when the Earth system flips from being a net cooler to a net warmer is when you cross tipping points. You could end up in a state where that resilience is weakened so much that the climate system no longer reduces human disturbance, but rather reinforces it.

That will be the moment when we have lost control.

**Q: We often hear that there are only 'ten years left' to deal with climate change. What does that mean?**

We have to start educating humanity that there are two time-scales that matter when it comes to climate change.

One is the deployment time-scale—when we push the 'on' button of irreversible change, whether for the melting of ice sheets and the permafrost, or conversion of the Amazon from tropical forest to savannah. The other is the full impacts time frame, which unfolds over centuries.

We need to avoid the first one. We don't want to push the 'on' buttons of runaway global warming. The next decade is our window to avoid coming too close to those pressure points. AFP



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## YEARENDER

# Duterte wrath, water woes mark 2019

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

This year was marked by two major stories in the water sector: a waterless Metro Manila and the country's major utility firms incurring the wrath of President Duterte.

Last March, Metro Manila suffered the worst water crisis in years, leaving families to wait hours to get their daily water supply from tanker trucks.



While the water shortage problem eased, concerns still persist as Ayala-led Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. face an uncertain future after the government moved for a review of their contracts, which Duterte alleged were laden with provisions that were disadvantageous to the public.

Maynilad president and chief executive officer Ramoncito Fernandez said 2019 has been challenging for the company and the industry as a whole.

"It was a very challenging year, but we would rate good performance in terms of how the company has handled the crisis. What happened in March was not even caused by us, that should be very clear," Fernandez told **The STAR**.

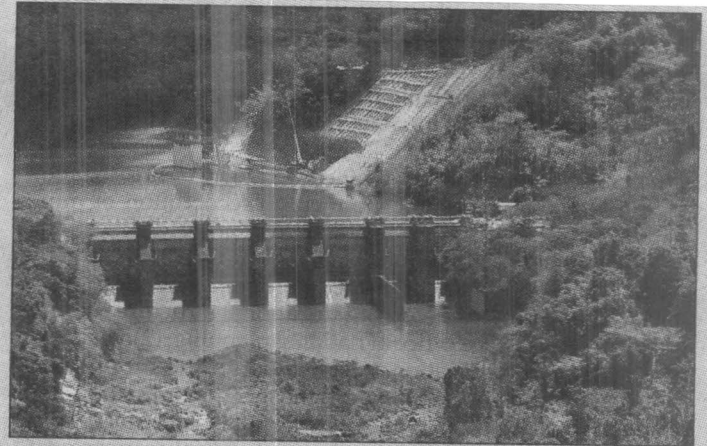
Too little rain, a growing demand, and delays in expanding water infrastructure caused the water supply crunch.

The water supply crisis has put a severe dent in Manila Water's bottom line. Adding to its woes is the P1.13 billion penalty imposed by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) for failure to provide 24/7 water supply to its customers.

### Angat Dam

Metro Manila sources 96 percent of its supply from Angat Dam, which has been receding over the last years.

In 2019 it hit record lows, after exacerbated by the El Niño episode.



The dam started declining in April amid El Niño and eventually reached the critical level in June. This triggered several weeks of interrupted water service connection across Metro Manila and its neighboring provinces.

"We responded positively to the reduced allocation of Angat and we have identified mitigating measures to help us address effects of possible continued low water source allocation," Fernandez said.

According to the National Water Resources Board, lesser allocation is needed to preserve the dam's water elevation

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Duterte... From B1

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and reach the target yearend level of 212 meters. Even if the Philippines experiences typhoons moving forward, projections showed Angat would continue to operate below its maximum normal capacity until June 2020 when the next dry season would have culminated.

Until 2021, Metro Manila's water demand is expected to outstrip supply by as much as 13 percent during peak days.

It is only in the next three years that projected water supply of 5.89 billion liters a day will begin exceeding demand of 5.24 billion liters a day, but this is highly dependent on the controversial P12.2 billion Kaliwa Dam becoming operational.

**Kaliwa Dam**

"If you look back at history, Kaliwa Dam has been in the masterplan of government for decades, unfortunately, because we had ample rains in the past, the government did not focus on getting another source," Fernandez said.

"But with climate change here and real, the government is realizing that they should have acted faster," he said.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System already asked the Department of Interior and Local Government to speed up the issuance of permits for new water sources projects amid the continued supply crunch in the metro.

Despite it being a new water source, the China-funded mega dam continues to face resistance from groups due to the issue of ancestral domain rights of indigenous peoples in the area.

MWSS recently secured its environmental compliance certificate, a requirement needed by any project in the country that poses potential environmental risk or impact.

The ECC covers the construction and operation of a gravity dam along Kaliwa River located in the towns of Teresa and Tanay in Rizal province, and General Nakar and Infanta in Quezon.

The dam will be 60-meter tall with a riverbed elevation of 100 meters. Its reservoir surface area will cover some 291 hectares at full supply level volume of 57 million cubic meters.

MWSS has reoriented its priorities and adopted a raw water security roadmap that will provide potable and sustainable water supply in the next five to 50 years which will translate to at least 1,518 million more liters per day by 2022.

Among the projects being fast tracked are the 150 MLD Putatan, 100 MLD Cardona, 188 MLD Sumag, 50 MLD Rizal Wellfield, 80 MLD Calawis Wawa, 100 MLD Putatan 3, and 250 MLD Lower Ipo.

All these projects, including the Kaliwa Dam, are expected to be completed in 2023.

Eyed as medium-term water source projects from 2023 to 2027 are the 420 MLD Wawa Dam, 250 MLD East Bay, 350 MLD Bayabas Dam, 550 MLD Angat Norzagaray Phase 2, 250 MLD East Bay, 750 MLD Sierra Madre, and 1,800 MLD Kanan River Phase 1.

MWSS also expects too complete by June 2022 Aqueduct 7 and Tunnel 5 which are now on stream to provide another 1,600 MLD to flow towards La Mesa.

An off take agreement between Manila Water and Prime Metroline Infrastructure Holdings Inc. has also been approved to pursue the development of a water supply source east of Metro Manila, the Wawa Bulk Water Supply Project.

**Gov't vs. water firms**

Above it all, President Duterte's tirade against the two concessionaires has caused public alarm.

The MWSS cancelled the extension of the concession agreement forged with the two firms, which is seen to result in higher water rates after 2022.

"The price of water is related to the capacity of the company to invest and to improve, that's what needs to be talked about. Everytime we are challenged, our capacity to invest, to get financial support will also be challenged," Fernandez said.

Duterte's latest rage stemmed from the decision of an international arbitral court which directed the Philippine government to pay the two utility firms over P10 billion for non-implementation of rate hikes.

Duterte sought for a review of the concession deals and the removal of onerous provisions.

"We have already done our spending plan on the presumption that we can recover what we have spent and that the longer the recovery period is, the lower the tariff that can be passed on to consumers," Manila Water board member and former president and CEO Tony Aquino said.

"The government as represented by the regulatory office and MWSS are always a party on the setting of rates. It is not unilateral and we are not the only ones computing the tariff," he added.

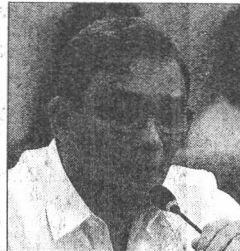
The MWSS board revoked the resolution grant-

ing the 15-year extension of the contracts of the two concessionaires until 2037. This means the contracts will end by 2022, which was the original expiration date.

"There has to be a lot of discussion and co-operation moving forward. We have expressed



Duterte



Fernandez



Aquino

willingness to sit down so we could understand the rationale behind it and make solutions together," Fernandez said.

"For now, we motivate our people to not be distracted by the noise, and just focus on giving good service to our customers. Customers are more demanding, the climate change has been erratic affecting our operations and the regulatory environment has also been unpredictable," he added.

**The real deal with privatization**

Amid all the mess, IBON Foundation, a non-profit research, education and information-development institution, maintained that things would remain unsettled if the government sticks to its water privatization policy.

It was in 1997 when former president Fidel Ramos solicited bids for concession agreements with MWSS to address the water crisis in Metro Manila that existed due to the failure of the MWSS to maintain viable operations owing to technical inefficiencies and financial debts.

IBON Foundation executive director Sonny Africa said water rates increased by seven-fold under Maynilad and 10-fold under Manila Water.

The United Nations Development Program believes water costs should not exceed three percent of household income.

Yet a study conducted by the Water for People Network found out that poor families in Metro Manila are paying as much as 22 percent of their household income for water.

"Under an unchanged framework of privatization, there are reasons to doubt whether government's renegotiated concession agreements will be able to completely rectify the problems. The basically profit-driven approach is inappropriate and will inevitably result in contracts still unnecessarily skewed towards ensuring private profit even at the expense of social objectives," Africa said.

"Privatization means having public utilities and social services run by the private sector. The private sector is assumed to be inherently more efficient than the public sector and, hence, able to provide the utility or service better. The better services, it is argued, justify the more expensive prices and resulting profits," he said.

IBON Foundation argued that there are around 500 large cities worldwide with a population of over one million, including the big cities in Metro Manila. Despite the wave of water privatization starting in the 1990s, 82 percent of these cities and their populations are actually still served by public providers.

"Nationalization is the real alternative to water privatization. It is the best way to ensure that water is provided as a service instead of operated as a business," Africa said.

"The concession agreements should be terminated as the starting point for returning Metro Manila water services to full public ownership, management and control. Government officials and the water firms should also be held accountable for over two decades of water service misdeeds," he said.

Until such time the government decides on what to do with the country's water services, or if it could actually do something about it, consumers might still have to brace for waterless days.