

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 594

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**Introduced by REP. FRANCIS G. ESCUDERO**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

This bill seeks to declare the Municipality of Donsol, Province of Sorsogon as the whale shark capital of the Philippines.

Donsol is one of the coastal municipalities of Sorsogon located about six hundred kilometers (600 kms.) southeast of Manila accessible via the Pan-Philippine Highway and by domestic flights. It is bounded by the turbulent, deep waters of the Burias Pass on the west side facing the Province of Masbate. Fishing and agriculture are the major sources of livelihood for the residents of Donsol.

The municipal waters of Donsol recently gained international attention because of numerous whale shark sighting occurring year after year starting from October and November and peak during the months of February up to May. This unique phenomenon has attracted tourists from all over the world giving Donsol the recognition of being the whale shark capital of the world.

The whale shark (*rhicodon typus*), locally called the "*Butanding*", is considered as the biggest living fish in the world measuring from nine to eighteen meters (9-18 m.) in length and weighing up to forty tons (40 tons). They have a broad, flat head with a checker board pattern of white spots and stripes and a cavernous mouth studded with rows of tiny teeth feeding only on plankton and krill. They swim gently and allow close human interaction. These whale sharks pose neither threat to humans nor the ecosystem as there have been no reports of whale shark attacks in Donsol. These sharks instead face the dangers of being butchered into extinction.

By declaring the Municipality of Donsol as the whale shark capital of the Philippines, protection of these species will eventually follow as local and international groups concerned with animal welfare will be encouraged by the government to actively participate in the development of ecotourism in this region. Business opportunities and income generating projects for the residents can also be undertaken in connection with this whale shark phenomenon experienced only in Donsol.

This bill is in response to Resolution No. 31-2003 of the *Sangguniang Bayan* of Donsol, Sorsogon requesting for the proclamation declaring the Municipality of Donsol, Sorsogon as the whale shark capital of the Philippines supported by owners of several beach front hotels and restaurants including *Butanding* Information Officers (BIO) and fishermen not only in the Municipality of Donsol but also in the whole Province of Sorsogon.



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**AN ACT DECLARING THE MUNICIPALITY OF DONSOL, PROVINCE OF  
SORSOGON AS THE WHALE SHARK CAPITAL OF THE PHILIPPINES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the  
Philippines in Congress assembled:*

**SECTION 1.** The Municipality of Donsol, Province of Sorsogon is hereby declared as the whale shark capital of the Philippines.

**SECTION 2.** The Department of Environment and Natural Resources shall promulgate rules and regulations for the protection and conservation of the whale shark in the Municipality.

**SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect upon its approval

Approved,