

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Thirteenth Congress  
First Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 4146**



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**Introduced by Honorable Cesar G. Jalosjos**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

This bill seeks to declare Murcielagos Island in the Municipality of Labason, Province of Zamboanga del Norte as ecotourism zone.

Ecotourism/Ecological Tourism is a form of sustainable tourism within a natural and cultural heritage area where community participation, protection and management of natural resources, culture and indigenous knowledge and practices, environmental education and ethics, as well as economic benefits are fostered and pursued for the enrichment of most communities and the satisfaction of visitors.

In the Province of Zamboanga del Norte, there are a number of unspoiled and tranquil areas ideal for ecotourism. One of such is the Murcielagos Island which was declared as a Protected Landscape and Seascape under Proclamation 281 on April 23, 2000. The island is surrounded by a marine ecosystem with diverse marine life, coral reefs, seagrasses and seaweeds, perfect for leisure fishing, scuba diving, windsurfing and water-skiing. It has white beaches and crystal clear waters which could be further enhanced into first class beaches. Endowed with various flora and fauna, some parts of the island could be developed into botanical garden and recreational park. At present, foreign researchers regularly used the island as venue for educational and environmental awareness activities. The island has been listed as a permanent monitoring site for Mid-winter bird count by the International Waterfowl Census and Wetlands Research Bureau of Slimbridge, United Kingdom.

The lack of modern facilities and infrastructures such as roads, cottages, restaurants, potable water supply and means of transportation is the primary reason that the island cannot attract enough tourists. Without the necessary amenities to make it a well-developed tourism zone, it cannot bring revenues to

both the local and national government. Given the already limited livelihood opportunities in the area, any loss in its tourism potential should not be undervalued, nor ignored.

Moreover, the development of the island as an ecotourism zone should not be accompanied by a corresponding degradation of the environment and natural resources. The plants and animals in the island should be conserved and protected through the active participation of the local community. In return, the people in the surrounding communities must benefit from the profits generated from ecotourism activities.

Hence, the declaration of Murcielagos Island as ecotourism zone will put in place the necessary mechanisms to develop and promote tourism in the country and at the same time, ensure the sustainable use, development, management, protection and conservation of our natural resources and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of the present and future generations.

Approval of this bill is highly recommended.



**CESAR G. JALOSJOS**

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**AN ACT**  
**DECLARING THE MURCIELAGOS ISLAND IN THE MUNICIPALITY**  
**OF LABASON, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AS**  
**ECOTOURISM ZONE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

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

SECTION 1. The Murcielagos Island, collectively known as the Bayangan and Bali-udyong Islands in the Municipality of Labason, Province of Zamboanga del Norte, is hereby declared an ecotourism zone. As such, it shall be accorded priority development by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Tourism (DOT).

SEC. 2. The DENR and DOT, in coordination with other concerned agencies of the government shall, within one (1) year from the date of effectivity of this Act, prepare a development plan mandating the construction, installation and maintenance of appropriate facilities and infrastructure that will enhance tourism in the Murcielagos Island and prescribing the necessary steps towards the development, conservation and protection of its natural resources.

SEC. 3. The DENR and DOT shall immediately take steps to implement the development plan for Murcielagos Island and incorporate such plan in their respective overall development program for the next calendar year.

SEC. 4. The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged to the current appropriations of the DENR and DOT. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for the implementation of the development plan for the island shall be included in the annual budget of the DENR and DOT.

SEC. 5. Any laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations, issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,