

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2166



INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE CHERYL P. DELOSO-MONTALLA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

One of the most amazing sites that the Municipality of Sta. Cruz in the province of Zambales can boast of are the Sagrada Familia Caves. The Sagrada Familia Caves are series of caves that are popular tourist spots for avid spelunkers. The collective name of the caves was derived from the formation of stalagmites in one of the caves that resembled the structure of the holy family. Hence, the name Sagrada Familia which is the Spanish translation of the phrase "holy family".

Sagrada Familia caves is a popular tourist attraction to local and foreign tourists especially during the holy week because of the belief that climbing up the mountain to reach the "holy" cave is a form of penance. A few crevices on the roof of the caves allow penetration of sunlight that makes it easy for anyone to appreciate the beautiful rock and mineral formations within. Majority of the caverns, however, could not be seen as they are shrouded in darkness but this gives an eerie but spectacular feeling of oneness with nature. The textured stairs leading to the caves are made up of coral fragments alongside the cliff. These coralline remnants are scientific proof that millions of years ago the area was part of the ocean floor.

Despite the hidden beauty of the Sagrada Familia Caves and the frequency of tourist visits in the area, no comprehensive plan has ever been made to ensure the protection of the caves. It is not only for the tourist potential but also for the scientific significance of these caves that an independent body must be made in order that the Sagrada Familia Caves must be preserved while taking into consideration the possible problems that might deter or hamper its full development as a scientific and tourist destination area.

It is in this light that this bill is being filed and immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


CHERYL P. DELOSO MONTALLA
Representative
2nd District, Zambales

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AN ACT

DECLARING THE SAGRADA FAMILIA CAVES IN ZAMBALES AS AN ECOTOURISM ZONE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. It is hereby declared the policy of the state to promote a sustainable ecotourism industry to attract local and foreign tourists while making them aware of the urgent need to preserve the blessings of nature.

SECTION 2. Sagrada Familia Caves Ecotourism Zone. The Sagrada Familia Caves is hereby declared an ecotourism zone.

SECTION 3. Sagrada Familia Caves Ecotourism Governing Board. For the purpose of Section 2 of this Act, an ecotourism governing board, to be known as the Sagrada Familia Caves Ecotourism Governing Board, is hereby created. The board shall be composed of the Representative of the Second District of Zambales who shall act as chair, the Secretaries of the Department of Tourism and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources or their duly authorized representatives, a member of a non-government organization whose advocacy is environmental preservation, a member of the academe, a representative of the business sector and a representative of the private sector. The governing board shall prepare the rules and regulations necessary for the full implementation by the concerned local government units of the provisions of this Act and shall, as the need arises, amend, modify or revise such rules and regulations to meet the needs of changing times.

SECTION 4. Sagrada Familia Caves Ecotourism Master Plan. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Tourism (DOT) shall, within 120 days from approval of this Act, develop a master plan to be approved by the President of the Republic of the Philippines upon the recommendation of the governing board.

SECTION 5. Appropriation. The amount necessary for the initial implementation of the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the unappropriated balance of the budget of the DOT for the first year. Subsequently, a yearly appropriation for the effective implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act of the Republic of the Philippines.

SECTION 6. Repealing Clause. All laws, rules, regulations, executive orders, presidential decrees or any other issuance contrary to or inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 7. *Separability Clause.* If any provision or part of this Act may be declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions which are not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 8. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette*.

Approved,