

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Seventeenth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. **4979**

Introduced by the Honorable Ann K. Hofer

EXPLANATORY NOTE

It is embodied in Section 16, Article II of the 1987 Constitution that the State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.

The Underground Tipan Cave in the Municipality of Naga, Second District of Zamboanga Sibugay is a hidden gem that is already gaining attention from both local and international tourists. The Cave has an impressive gallery of speleothem formation that go as far as 30-meters high, a beautiful karst area with limestone formations, a breathtaking lagoon that serves as habitat for special kind of bats and other species, and a magnificent underground river with fresh waters.

With the Underground Tipan Cave being declared as an ecotourism site, the needed development and promotion for this gem will be recognized. Furthermore, the creation of an ecotourism council will ensure the management and sustainability of the conservation of the Cave and equitable sharing of benefits among the people. It is also expected that such development will boost local government income, generate earnings from foreign exchange, and create employment opportunities for the people residing with the area.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate approval of this measure is earnestly sought.

ANN K. HOFER

Second District, Zamboanga Sibugay

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AN ACT
DECLARING THE UNDERGROUND TIPAN CAVE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF
NAGA, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY AS AN ECOTOURISM SITE AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as “Underground Tipan Cave
2 Ecotourism Act.”
3

4 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is hereby declared policy of the State to protect and
5 advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm
6 and harmony of nature.
7

8 SEC. 3. *The Underground Tipan Cave Ecotourism Site.* The Underground Tipan Cave
9 in the Municipality of Naga in the Second District of Zamboanga Sibugay is hereby declared
10 as an ecotourism site, whose geographical limits shall be subject to study by the local
11 government unit. Its development shall be prioritized by the Department of Tourism (DOT)
12 and shall be subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of ecotourism
13 sites.
14

15 SEC. 4. *The Underground Tipan Cave Ecotourism Council.* There shall be created an
16 ecotourism council, to be known as the Underground Tipan Cave Ecotourism Council,
17 hereinafter referred to as the “Council” and shall be composed of the following members:
18

- 19 (a) The Local Chief Executive of the Municipality of Naga, as Chairperson;
20 (b) A representative from an accredited non-governmental organization whose
21 advocacy is environmental preservation;

- (c) A representative from a recognized indigenous people's organization; and
(d) Two (2) representatives from the private sector;

Naga's local legislative body shall appoint the members of the Council for a term of five (5) years, renewable for one term.

SEC. 5. *Functions and Responsibilities of the Council.* The Council shall be responsible for the following:

- (a) Formulation and implementation of the Underground Tipan Cave Development Plan, in consultation with local residents, businesses, and other stakeholders;
- (b) Assessment and evaluation of the potential impact of the development to the environmental safety and well-being of the site, communities, and enterprises;
- (c) Provision of technical and financial assistance to communities within the site;
- (d) Formulation of rules and regulations in relation to the maintenance and security of the ecotourism site;
- (e) Performance of other functions as may be necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act.

SEC. 6. *Implementing Agency.* The DOT shall be the agency which shall take care of planning, implementing, coordinating, and monitoring this Act.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* The funding necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the yearly budget allocation for the DOT under the General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.* If any part or provision of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, other provisions, which are not affected thereby, shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, rules, regulations, proclamations, executive orders or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby modified or amended accordingly.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,