

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5006



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**Introduced by AGRI PARTYLIST**  
**Representative Orestes T. Salon and Representative Delphine Gan Lee**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

This bill seeks to create a center for the conservation of the Sinarapan fish species and to provide measures for their protection.

Probably one of the most unusual freshwater fishes found anywhere in the world, the *Sinarapan* or *Tabios* is endemic to Lake Buhi and Lake Bato in the Camarines Sur Province. It was first discovered in 1902 where it was described as the smallest known vertebrate. Extensive research showed that the biggest Sinarapan specimen only grew as big as 15 millimeters with an average length of only 12.5 millimeters. The Sinarapan is unique among the fish species of the world. It is the only known species of goby known to exist only in freshwater.

Sinarapan is an important food source for the Bicolano fishermen. These are caught in big quantities and then dried to make a meal called *badi*. Sinarapan are also fried in oil, or boiled with vegetables, and have a delicious flavor. When more are caught than the local market demands, the surplus are salted or dried in cakes and exported to the neighboring towns in Camarines Sur and Albay Provinces.<sup>1</sup>

However, *badi* is no longer served in the native restaurants. Years of neglect and abuse have seriously depleted the population of the Sinarapan, which are found nowhere else on the planet. Moreover, the introduction of various non-native fish has also been a factor in depleting the numbers of Sinarapans to at times critically low levels. It is now considered an endangered species<sup>2</sup> and is in dire need of protection.

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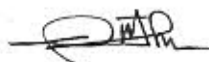
<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aenet.org/volcano/sinarap.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Endangered Wildlife and Plants of the World, Anne Hildyard, Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2001.

Studies conducted by Dr. Victor Soliman showed that Sinarapan can still be found in Lakes Buhi and Bato. The fish now thrives in Lakes Manapao, Katugday and Makuwaw, which are tarns or mountain lakes in Mt. Asog in Buhi, Camarines Sur. The fish stock in Lakes Buhi and Bato has not recovered significantly from the adverse effects of overfishing. There are intrinsic and extrinsic factors that can explain the low population of Sinarapan in Lakes Buhi and Bato. Primarily, the stock had experienced the immediate and lagged effects of biological overfishing of various forms – growth, recruitment and ecosystem. In growth overfishing, very high proportion of immature Sinarapan was caught or died from fishing operations. Recruitment overfishing results from excessive proportion of adults being fished or dying in fishing.

Hence this measure which seeks to conserve the Sinarapan species through the creation of the Center for the Conservation of the Sinarapan and by providing measures and prohibitions that will aid in the preservation efforts for this national treasure.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is highly and earnestly recommended.



**REP. ORESTES T. SALON**



**REP. DELPHINE GAN LEE**



1 (C) Pursue, with due regard to the national interest, the Philippine  
2 commitment to international obligations, particularly those concerning the  
3 protection of wildlife and their habitat; and

4 (D) Initiate and support scientific studies on the conservation of the  
5 Sinarapan.

6 For purposes of this Act, the term “*Sinarapan*” or “*Tabios*” refers to a species  
7 of fresh water fish or goby endemic to the Philippines and is scientifically known as  
8 *Mistichthys luzonensis*.

9 **SECTION 3.** *Center for the Conservation of the Sinarapan.* – There is hereby  
10 created a Center for the Conservation of the Sinarapan, hereinafter referred to as the  
11 “*Center*” under the supervision of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.  
12 The Center is hereby authorized to organize and establish a technical staff composed  
13 of qualified personnel and may hire the services of experts and consultants, both local  
14 and foreign. Further, it may enlist the services of government officials and employees  
15 as may be necessary.

16 **SECTION 4 .** *Powers and Functions of the Center.* – For the implementation  
17 of the purposes and objectives of this Act, the Center shall have the following  
18 functions:

19 (A) Initiate programs and projects as may be necessary for the conservation  
20 and protection of the Sinarapan fish species and coordinate the  
21 implementation thereof;

- 1 (B) Coordinate programs as may be required including the delineation of  
2 any areas within the Sinarapan fish habitat to ensure the survival of the  
3 species;
- 4 (C) Accept donations in cash or in kind from domestic and international  
5 sources in support of its activities subject to the appropriate rules of the  
6 Commission on Audit;
- 7 (D) Initiate programs and activities geared towards encouraging the active  
8 participation and involvement of the civil society groups, private sector and  
9 the academe in the conservation efforts of the Center;
- 10 (E) Enter, make and execute contracts of any kind as may be necessary or  
11 incidental to the attainment of its purposes with any person or corporation;
- 12 (F) Call on any government agency, office or instrumentality or local  
13 governments for such assistance as it may deem necessary for the  
14 performance of its functions and powers;
- 15 (G) Encourage, support, coordinate and/or undertake scientific studies and  
16 researches concerning the Sinarapan and cause the publication of such  
17 studies as may be deemed appropriate by the Center; and
- 18 (H) Perform other things, business and functions directly or indirectly  
19 necessary, incidental or conducive to the attainment of the purposes and  
20 objectives of this Act.

21 **SECTION 5. *Illegal Acts.*** – It shall be unlawful for any person to willfully and  
22 knowingly exploit Sinarapan fish species and their habitats, or undertake the following  
23 acts, except as may be provided by the Center:

- 1 (A) Fishing, capturing, killing, or destroying Sinarapan species;
- 2 (B) Inflicting injury which cripples and/or impairs the reproductive
- 3 system of Sinarapan species;
- 4 (C) Dumping of waste products in the natural habitat of the
- 5 Sinarapan;
- 6 (D) Introduction of foreign species in the natural habitat of the
- 7 Sinarapan;
- 8 (E) Trading, transporting, collecting, hunting or possession of
- 9 Sinarapan, their by-products and derivatives; and
- 10 (F) Any act analogous to the foregoing with the effect of harming or
- 11 depleting the Sinarapan population.

12 **SECTION 6. Penalties.** – Any person who violates any of the provisions of

13 this Act shall be punished by imprisonment of not less than six (6) years and not more

14 than twelve (12) years or a fine of not less than One hundred thousand pesos

15 (P100,000.00) but not more than One million five hundred thousand pesos

16 (P1,500,000.00) or both at the discretion of the courts.

17 **SECTION 7. Funding.** – The amount of Ten million pesos (P10,000,000.00) is

18 hereby authorized to be appropriated out of the funds in the National treasury not

19 otherwise appropriated for the initial operations of the Center. Thereafter, such sum as

20 maybe necessary for the continued operation of the Center shall be included in the

21 General appropriations Act.

1           **SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within thirty (30) days  
2 from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture in coordination with the  
3 Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources shall issue the implementing rules  
4 and regulations necessary for the implementation of this Act.

5           **SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision or part hereof, is held  
6 invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise  
7 affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

8           **SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.*** – Any law, presidential decree or issuance,  
9 executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary  
10 to or inconsistent with the provisions of this act is hereby repealed, modified or  
11 amended accordingly.

12           **SECTION 11. *Effectivity Clause.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days  
13 after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general  
14 circulation.