

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6645



Introduced by Hon. Salvador B. Belaro Jr.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

With the Malay Archipelago, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Australia, the Philippines form an ocean region called Coral Triangle, an area with tremendous importance as the global center for marine biodiversity which includes some 400-500 species in 90 genera of reef-forming corals. The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, a 900,000 km² marine eco-region that lies at the apex of the Coral Triangle (70% in the Philippines, 20% in Indonesia, and 10% Malaysia), is home to around 2,500 species of fish.¹

A report² published in 2005 suggests that the Philippines is not only part of the center, but it is the ‘center of the center’ of marine biodiversity which has the richest concentration of marine life per unit area on the entire planet. As the epicenter of marine biodiversity in the world, its marine resources are made up of not just coral reefs but “seagrass beds, mangrove and beach forests, fisheries, invertebrates, seaweeds, marine mammals, among others”³, including the 120 restricted-range endemics, 38 of which can be found in the Philippines.⁴

¹ OneOcean.org. n.d. http://www.oneocean.org/flash/philippine_biodiversity.html

² Carpenter, K.E. and V.G. Springer. 2005. Environmental Biology of Fishes (2005) 72: 467-480.

³ 4th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2009, p. 45.

⁴ Carpenter, 2005.

Moreover, OneOcean.org⁵ cites that information available reveals an astounding variety of marine life: 5,000 species of clams, snails and mollusks⁶; 488 species of corals⁷; 981 species of bottom-living algae⁸, and thousands of other organisms. Five of the seven sea turtle species known to exist in the world today occur in Philippine waters.

The list continues to grow as new marine surveys discover new species. In 1953, Herre recorded 1,815 marine fish species (out of a total of 2,145 fish species) in the Philippines⁹. Today, about 2,824 marine fish species are listed for the Philippines at FishBase¹⁰ (February 2006), including 33 endemic (one of which is endangered), 1,729 reef-associated, 169 pelagic, and 336 deepwater species.

In 2004, a survey in Panglao, Bohol observed 1,200 decapod crustaceans or different species of crabs and shrimps; some 6,000 mollusk species, including sea slugs and microshells; and hundreds of other previously unrecorded marine species. The survey also found fossils of snails extinct in other parts of the world, and numerous species that were photographed alive for the first time. Another survey was conducted in 2005 under the same project in the deep waters (up to 2,200 meters) of the Bohol-Mindanao-Cebu triangle. It recorded some 1,000 mollusk species, 600 crustacean species, more than 100 echinoderm species, and over 100 fish species, many of them considered rare or very rare, or new to science.¹¹

⁵ OneOcean.org is the website used by the Fisheries for Improved Sustainable Harvest (FISH) Project, a seven-year (2003-2010) technical assistance project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented in partnership with the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), other national government agencies, local government units and non-government and other assisting organizations. FISH Project was conducted subsequent to the Coastal Resource Management Project (CMRP), a 9-year (1996-2004) technical assistance and training project to coastal communities across selected towns in the country.

⁶ Springsteen, F.J. and Leobrera, F.M. 1986. Shells of the Philippines. Carfel Shell Museum, Malate, Metro Manila. 317 pages

⁷ Nemenzo, F. 1981. Studies on the systematics of scleractinian corals in the Philippines. Proceedings of the 4th International Coral Reef Symposium, Manila 1:25-32.

⁸ Silva, P.C., Menez, E.G. and Moe, R.L. 1987. Catalog of the Philippine benthic algae. Smithsonian Contributions in Marine Science 27: 1-179.

⁹ Herre, A.W.C.T. 1953. Check list of Philippine fishes. Research Report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Volume 20, 977 pages.

¹⁰ FishBase is a global species database of fish species. It provides comprehensive species data, including taxonomy, geographical distribution, biometrics and morphology, behavior and habitats, ecology and population dynamics as well as reproductive, metabolic and genetic data.

¹¹ OneOcean.org, n.d.

At present, the richness of Philippine marine resources is being endangered by threats coming from five major groups—chemical pollution and eutrophication, fisheries operations, habitat alteration, invasion of alien species and global climate change. Primary threats are habitat loss due mostly to destructive human activities such as mining, logging and hazardous and solid waste disposal.¹²

With the hope of overturning these anthropogenic misfortunes through education, this bill aims mainly to make our countrymen realize the priceless value of our Philippine marine biodiversity through the establishment of marine parks in suitable areas of the country.

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



CONG. SALVADOR B. BELARO, JR.

Representative

1-Ang Edukasyon Party List

¹² Eric Dorente. 2016. Haribon Foundation. Haribon.org.
<http://www.haribon.org.ph/index.php/news/item/167-philippine-marine-biodiversity-a-brief-profile>

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING NATIONAL MARINE PARKS IN THE COUNTRY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. This Act shall be known as the “National Marine Heritage Act of 2017”.

SECTION 2. The 1987 Constitution mandates that the State shall protect and advance the right of the Filipino people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accordance with the rhythm and harmony of nature. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to conserve and protect the wildlife species and their habitats to promote ecological balance and maintain biological biodiversity and to ensure and secure the well-being of present and future generations of Filipinos.

SECTION 3. National Marine Parks are hereby established in suitable areas of the country, the establishment of which shall have the following objectives:

- a) To establish, manage and develop national and regional sea parks in key locations around the country;
- b) To establish national and international networks and linkages relating to the parks' development;
- c) To manage and develop national reference collections in selected areas of marine biodiversity;
- d) To appreciate collections and research, along with technical and museological skills and knowledge, on the sea parks by disseminating information through exhibits, publications, educational training, outreach, technical assistance and other public programs; and
- e) To recruit and train professionals on necessary disciplines related to the management and development of marine parks;

SECTION 4. The management of the aforementioned marine parks shall be given to the National Parks Development Committee (NPDC) created under the Executive Order No. 69 upon which the management of all existing parks, including the marine parks to be created pursuant to this law shall be entrusted. The NPDC shall hereafter be tasked to ensure the management, development and maintenance of all sea parks in the country.

SECTION 5. The National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), in coordination with the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR-BMB) and Department of Public Works and Highways, are hereby mandated to jointly formulate the implementing rules and regulations for this Act.

SECTION 6. The initial fund of Five Hundred Million pesos (P500,000,000.00) necessary to carry out the provision of this Act shall be included in the General Appropriation Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved.