



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



Seventeenth Congress
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8291

Introduced by Representative Benjamin C. Agarao, Jr.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to declare the Cavinti Underground River and Cave Complex in the Municipality of Cavinti, Province of Laguna as an ecotourism site.

The Cavinti Underground River and Cave Complex has immense potential for tourism. This limestone cave complex which was first explored sometime in the 1940s is categorically classified as a Class II subterranean ecological designation for ecotourism. Its physical features are a combination of twilight zonings near its openings and dark zones in the inner portion. The cave's inner surroundings are covered by numerous stalactites and stalagmites with various column formations. In the middle of the cave's first chamber is a twin falls. Since the cave has just been discovered recently, it still has several chambers yet to be explored. The cave is also naturally interconnected to the Lalangawan River to which many hydrologic features are entirely dependent.

Surrounding the cave is an equally rich and thriving, almost undisturbed ecosystem. At least 34 species of premium hardwood trees can be found around the cave, including Narra, Red Lauan and Kamagong. There are also a number of softwood species. Faunal component consists of species classified as endangered, nearly-threatened, and vulnerable dwelling inside and outside the cave.

Establishing the Cavinti Underground River and Cave Complex as a premier ecotourism site would mean more income for the locals. However, the influx of visitors must be balanced with the preservation of the cave complex since ecotourism makes the environment vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Without a proper management and conservation plan integrated in the tourism development roadmap, the beauty of the cave complex is bound to fade to oblivion.

Through this bill, a tourism development plan for the Cavinti Underground River and Cave Complex must be prepared. This document will provide infrastructure and facilities that can further boost tourism in the area while still preserving the environmental integrity of the cave complex. The development plan will also include what we consider as the most important partner in this tourism development endeavor – the people. The people of Cavinti must likewise be prepared to handle the volume of tourists and must be well educated on how the cave complex must be protected.

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



BENJAMIN C. AGARAO, JR.



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AN ACT

**DECLARING THE CAVINTI UNDERGROUND RIVER AND CAVE
COMPLEX AS AN ECOTOURISM SITE AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR**

*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 tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable,
responsible, participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable and
equitable for local communities.

SEC. 2. *Cavinti Cave Complex Ecotourism Site.* – The Cavinti
Underground River and Cave Complex in the Municipality of Cavinti, Province
of Laguna is hereby declared as an ecotourism site, and shall be accorded
priority development by the Department of Tourism.

Within one year from the approval of this Act, the Department of
Tourism, in consultation with the Municipality of Cavinti, shall prepare the
development plan for the Cavinti Underground River and Cave Complex.

1 The plan shall be implemented jointly with the Municipality of Cavinti and the
2 Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), in coordination
3 with the Department of Public Works and Highways. The tourism development
4 plan shall provide for the:

5 (a) Construction, installation and maintenance of appropriate facilities
6 and infrastructure to encourage tourism in the area;

7 (b) Comprehensive environmental protection and management plan to
8 preserve the site's biodiversity and the integrity of its ecosystem; and

9 (c) Community preparation plan to include the local folks in managing,
10 operating and caring for the cave complex as an ecotourism site.

11 SEC. 3. The Department of Tourism shall take immediate steps to
12 expedite the implementation of the development plan for the Cavinti
13 Underground River and Cave Complex, and incorporate the same in the
14 National Tourism Development Plan, pursuant to Republic Act No. 9593,
15 otherwise known as the "*Tourism Act of 2009*."

16 SEC. 4. **Boundaries.** – The Department of Tourism, in coordination with
17 the Municipality of Cavinti, the TIEZA and other appropriate agencies of the
18 government, shall identify well defined geographic areas within the Cavinti
19 Underground River and Cave Complex ecotourism site and coordinate the
20 integrated development of these areas for the optimum utilization of natural
21 assets and attractions, as well as existing infrastructure and facilities. The

1 development plan shall ensure the preservation of the scenery and the historic
2 significance of the identified ecotourism site.

3 SEC. 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Secretary of
4 Tourism shall, in consultation with the Municipality of Cavinti, the TIEZA and
5 other tourism stakeholders, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for
6 the proper implementation of this Act.

7 SEC. 6. *Appropriations.* – The initial amount necessary for the
8 development of the Cavinti Underground River and Cave Complex as an
9 ecotourism site shall be charged to the current year's appropriations for the
10 Department of Tourism under the General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such
11 sum as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be
12 included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

13 SEC. 7. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential
14 decrees, rules and regulations and other issuances contrary to or inconsistent
15 with this Act shall be deemed repealed or modified accordingly.

16 SEC. 8. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
17 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

18 Approved,