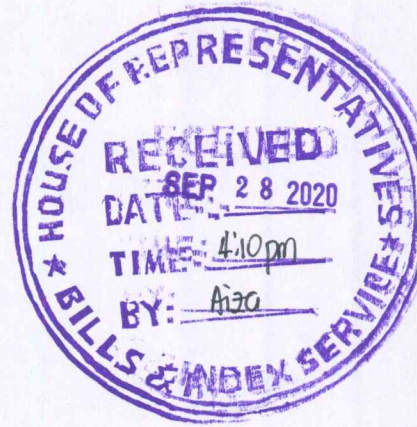


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7787



Introduced by Representative FAUSTINO 'INNO' A. DY V

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to declare Barangay San Miguel in the Municipality of Echague, Province of Isabela as an ecotourism zone.

Tourism drives economic growth, and in the Philippines, it is the ecotourism sector that grows the most rapidly. But that rapid growth, left unchecked, could result in irreversible damage to Philippine ecology and biodiversity, killing plants and animals while dispossessing people who rely on the ecotourism for their livelihood. As such, to preserve the ecology, to help communities reliant on ecotourism, and to sustain tourism-driven economic growth, the State must craft measures to better manage ecotourism, ensuring ecotourism zones are managed in ways that are sustainable, pro-community, and pro-ecology. This bill is one such measure.

Barangay San Miguel is the remotest barangay of the Municipality of Echague. Located fifty kilometers away from the town proper, at the foot of the Sierra Madre Mountains, the Barangay hosts the *Dipaniong Cave Eco-Trail*, the *Dicalabbagin Falls Circuit*, and the *Ilaguen White Sand River*. The area boasts of high biodiversity, hosting endemic and endangered birds such as the Isabela Oriole and the Rufous Hornbill, locally known as the *Kalaw*.

As part of the Filipinos' priceless natural heritage, the area warrants the protection of the law, a protection that this Act seeks to carry out in three ways: (1) declaring Barangay San Miguel into an ecotourism zone; (2) creating a Council that will ensure the zone is developed sustainably; and (3) directing national agencies to support and prioritize the zone for sustainable development.

For the foregoing cogent reasons, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


FAUSTINO "INNO" A. DY V

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HOUSE BILL NO. 7787

Introduced by Representative FAUSTINO 'INNO' A. DY V

AN ACT
DECLARING BARANGAY SAN MIGUEL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF
ECHAGUE, PROVINCE OF ISABELA AN ECOTOURISM ZONE AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SEC. 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as “San Miguel Ecotourism Zone Act”.

SEC. 2. *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 equitably beneficial to local communities.

SEC. 3. *Creation of an Ecotourism Zone.* – Barangay San Miguel in the Municipality of Echague, Province of Isabela is hereby declared an ecotourism zone. Its development shall be prioritized by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and shall be subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of ecotourism zones.

SEC. 4. *San Miguel Ecotourism Development Council.* – A multi-sectoral council known as San Miguel Ecotourism Development Council (the Council) shall be created. It shall be composed of the following as members:

- (a) The Regional Director of the Department of Tourism (DOT) – Region 2, as Chairperson;
- (b) The Mayor of the Municipality of Echague, Province of Isabela, as Co-Chairperson;
- (c) The Regional Director or a representative of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) – Region 2;
- (d) The Regional Director or a representative of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) – Region 2;
- (e) The Punong Barangay of Barangay San Miguel;
- (f) The Provincial Tourism Officer of the Province of Isabela;
- (g) The Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer of the Province of Isabela;

- (h) One (1) representative from an academic institution, preferably from a university or college in the Province of Isabela, with proven track record in or related to conservation of forests and wildlife;
- (i) One (1) representative from the private sector, preferably a resident of the Province of Isabela, who is distinguished in a profession or field of interest relevant to conservation or ecotourism; and
- (j) One (1) representative from a non-governmental organization (NGO) or people's organization (PO), duly accredited both by the DENR and the Municipality of Echague. The NGO or PO represented should have been in existence for at least five (5) years with track record in conservation of forests and wildlife.

The ex officio members of the Council by virtue of their elective or appointive government positions as specified in the immediately preceding subparagraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g) shall serve for the duration of their respective terms of office in their respective elective or appointive government positions.

The members of the Council specified under subparagraphs (h), (i), and (j) of this Section shall be appointed by the Sangguniang Bayan of Echague following a transparent and fair selection process. They shall each serve a term of three (3) years and may be reappointed for another term.

The members of the Council shall serve without compensation, except for the actual and necessary travelling and subsistence expenses incurred in the performance of their duties, either in their attendance in meetings of the Council or in connection with other official business authorized through a resolution of the Council, subject to existing rules and regulations. Each member shall have the full capacity and accountability for decisions binding to the member's sector.

A member of the Council may be removed for any of the following grounds:

- a) More than three (3) consecutive unexcused absences from regular meetings of the Council;
- b) Commission of acts prejudicial to the development and management of the ecotourism zone;
- c) Disassociation from the office or organization being represented;
- d) Termination of relationship with the office or organization being represented; or
- e) Conviction by final judgment of any criminal act.

The local government of the Municipality of Echague shall provide a Secretariat for the Council to be headed by the Municipal Tourism Officer.

The DOT and the DENR shall assist the Council in carrying out the objectives of this Act.

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

- a) Formulation and implementation of an ecotourism development and management plan in consultation with the 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 the communities within and surrounding the ecotourism zone;
- d) Formulation of rules and regulations in relation to the maintenance and security of the ecotourism zone; and
- e) Performance of other functions as may be necessary to carry out the objectives of this Act.

SEC. 6. *Formulation of Guidelines and Standards.* – The DOT and the DENR shall assist the Council in the formulation of local ecotourism standards ensuring that environmental protection is integrated in the development and management of the ecotourism zone.

The guidelines and standards shall:

- a) Raise the capacity of all stakeholders and ensure that best practices are followed;
- b) Ensure optimal use of water and energy;
- c) Reduce waste and pollution through the encouragement of recycling and other environmentally-sound waste management reduction and disposal schemes;
- d) Prevent vandalism in the ecotourism zone; and
- e) Encourage the use of local produce and services, and support the employment of local people.

SEC 7. *Coordination with National Agencies.* -The DOT and the DENR shall closely coordinate with the Council, as well as the relevant regional offices of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Transportation (DOTr), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Philippine National Police (PNP) and other line agencies of the government in the implementation of this Act.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within thirty (30) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOT and the DENR, in consultation with the Council, other concerned government agencies, and stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper and effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 9. *Appropriations.* – The Secretaries of the DOT and DENR shall include in their respective Department's program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations and administrative regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) national newspapers of general circulation or in the Official Gazette.

Approved,