

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4754



Introduced by Representative Alan I B. Ecleo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The proposed bill aims to declare Lake Bababu, located in Barangay Melgar in the Municipality of Basilisa, Province of Dinagat Islands, a tourist destination.

With its emerald green waters, the enigmatic Lake Bababu is a place of tranquility for its visitors. It derives its name from the Cebuano words "*baba sa buwaya*," which translates to crocodile's mouth, referring to the shape of Babas Cove to which it is connected. Furthermore, Lake Bababu is one of the few meromictic lakes in the Philippines which means that it has two layers of water, both freshwater and saltwater, that do not mix due to the unique formation of its basin, its surface waters, and the chalk-white limestone walls surrounding the area.

At an approximate length of 650 meters, Lake Bababu is regarded as the longest fully submerged underwater cave system in the whole country. It is also a home to rich ecosystems and to a wealth of unexplored biodiversity.

Presently, Lake Bababu is under the management of the Bababu Ecotourism Adventure Park (BEAP) whose membership is composed of officers from the local government unit of Basilisa and the descendants of the original founder of the lake. However, the financial constraints of the local government and BEAP have made regular and efficient maintenance activities difficult to accomplish. Such issues with adequate maintenance and sufficient regulation are concerning because they are likely to cause deterioration of the lake's critically fragile nature, more so as there has been a consistent increase in the number of visitors going to the area.

Hence, in order to guarantee the sufficiency of funds necessary for the maintenance of Lake Bababu, as well as ensure that it is being adequately managed and promoted through effective tourism development plans, it is deemed best to have it be declared as a tourist destination, effectively bringing the same under the direct leadership and supervision of the Department of Tourism (DOT). Such a declaration will foster the growth of tourism in the area while simultaneously minimizing the risks on its natural resources.

In view thereof, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

ALAN I B. ECLEO
Representative, Lone District of Dinagat Islands

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AN ACT DECLARING LAKE BABABU LOCATED IN BARANGAY MELGAR IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BASILISA, PROVINCE OF DINAGAT ISLANDS A TOURIST DESTINATION, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. Lake Bababu in Barangay Melgar in the Municipality of Basilisa, Province of Dinagat Islands is hereby declared a tourist destination. As such, the Department of Tourism (DOT) shall prioritize its development and subject the same to the rules and regulations governing tourist destinations.

SECTION 2. Within one (1) year from the approval of this Act, the DOT, in collaboration with the concerned local government units and agencies of the government, shall prepare a tourism development plan that complements the natural qualities of Lake Bababu: *Provided*, That said development plan shall take into account the preservation and conservation of the natural beauty and resources of the area: *Provided, further*, That any and all activities and developments to be implemented in the area shall conform with the guidelines for ecotourism development jointly issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the DOT.

SECTION 3. The DOT and its concerned attached agencies shall take immediate steps in order to implement the tourism development plan. It shall also include Lake Bababu in all its national, regional, and local promotion programs.

SECTION 4. The Secretary of Tourism shall include in the Department's program the construction, installation, and maintenance of appropriate facilities in Lake Bababu, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in the Official Gazette or in any two national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,