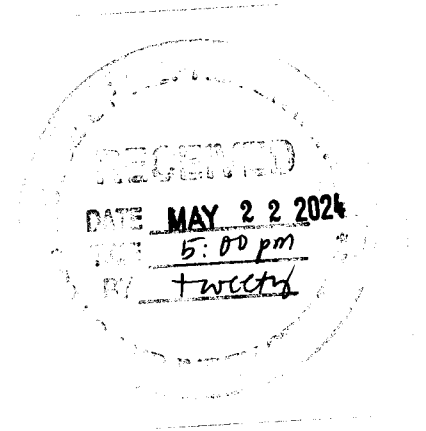




Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City



**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
Second Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 10486**

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Introduced by Representative KHYMER ADAN T. OLASO

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#### **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The proposed "Rights of Nature Act" is a landmark legislative measure designed to fundamentally alter the legal status of natural ecosystems in the Philippines. By recognizing nature as a legal entity with intrinsic rights, this bill aims to foster a more sustainable and equitable relationship between humans and the environment. The bill acknowledges the interconnectedness of all natural systems, emphasizing that human activities must respect the inherent roles and functions of these ecosystems. This holistic perspective is crucial for sustainable development, promoting practices that maintain the balance and health of natural systems. Additionally, the bill mandates that human activities ensure the conditions necessary for nature's regeneration, recognizing the limited regenerative capacities of ecosystems and the need for mindful human actions.

By granting legal personality to natural ecosystems, the bill empowers nature to be represented in legal matters, ensuring that environmental rights are actively enforced and safeguarded. It allows any Philippine resident to file actions to protect nature's rights, democratizing environmental advocacy and enabling broader community participation in environmental protection efforts. Furthermore, the bill ensures that human rights and the rights of nature are exercised in harmony, promoting a balanced approach to development where economic and social progress does not come at the expense of environmental health. It also encourages ecologically sound innovation, aligning with global sustainable development goals and supporting the development and use of technologies and practices that promote environmental sustainability.

The bill respects and incorporates diverse cultural perspectives and practices that contribute to harmonious living with nature, which is particularly important in a culturally diverse country like the Philippines. By aligning societal interests with the rights of nature, the bill promotes the collective well-being of communities, ensuring that environmental protection benefits all sectors of society. It outlines specific actions

for the government to prevent environmental degradation, promote sustainable production and consumption, and protect ecosystems from exploitation, establishing clear responsibilities and accountability mechanisms for public officials and agencies. The bill also mandates that corporations incorporate environmental protection into their operations and report their environmental impacts, ensuring that businesses contribute to environmental sustainability and are held accountable for their ecological footprint.

Moreover, the bill includes provisions to protect individuals and organizations from Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP), which are often used to intimidate and silence environmental advocates. This encourages active participation in environmental protection without fear of legal repercussions. By integrating respect for nature's rights into educational curricula, the bill fosters a culture of environmental consciousness and responsibility among future generations. In summary, the "Rights of Nature Act" is a progressive and transformative piece of legislation that seeks to enshrine the inherent rights of natural ecosystems into Philippine law. Its adoption would not only strengthen environmental protection but also promote sustainable development, ensure the well-being of communities, and enhance the legal framework for environmental advocacy.

Thus, the passage of this bill is earnestly requested.

  
**KHYMER ADAN T. OLASO**



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**AN ACT TO PROMOTE THE RIGHTS OF NATURE IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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

**Section 1. Short Title.** This Act shall be known as the “*Rights of Nature Act.*”

**Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy.** It is hereby declared the policy of the State to recognize and protect natural ecosystems and processes, or distinct and identifiable portions thereof, as legal entities possessing certain fundamental and inalienable rights. The State shall provide simple, effective and expeditious mechanisms for the protection and enforcement of these rights. Such rights shall be founded on the following:

- a. Interconnectedness of all creation bound by a common living source and all activities in the ecosystem—land, air, water, and sea live and function according to their respective roles to create and sustain the web life shall at all times be respected.
- b. Harmony. All human activities, within the framework of plurality and diversity, should achieve a dynamic balance with the cycles and processes inherent in Nature.
- c. Collective good. The interests of society shall be fulfilled consistent with the rights of Nature and shall involve all human activities.
- d. Guarantee of the regeneration of Nature. The State, at its various levels, and society, in harmony with the common interest, must ensure the necessary conditions in order

that Nature may regenerate, recognizing that ecosystems are limited in their ability to regenerate, and that humans are limited in their ability to undo their actions.

- e. Multiculturalism. The exercise of the rights of Nature requires the recognition, recovery, respect, protection, and dialogue of the diversity of feelings, values, knowledge, skills, practices, skills, transcendence, transformation, science, technology and standards, of all the cultures of the world who seek to live in harmony with nature.
- f. Co-existence of Human Rights and Rights of Nature. All rights guaranteed under the Constitution and international human rights treaties and laws, shall be exercised in harmony and consistent with the Rights of Nature. Nothing in this Act shall diminish or prejudice the rights of peoples and communities whose livelihoods are based on utilization of natural resources provided the same are conducted and pursued in accordance with the objectives of this Act.
- g. Promotion of ecologically-sound innovation. The promotion of ecologically sound-innovation shall be in line with the rights of Nature and shall be actively pursued by the State.

**Sec. 3. Definition of Terms.** As used in this Act, the following terms are defined as follows:

- a. *Nature* refers to the physical world, which encompasses all the biotic and abiotic components and their interactions. It also refers to the meanings in which different groups attribute to the physical environment to make sense of the world.
- b. *Natural Ecosystems* refer to the complex and dynamic communities of plants, animals, microorganisms and other beings and their environment, both living and non-living, where human communities and the rest of nature interact as a functional unit under the influence of climatic, physiographic, and geological factors, as well as production practices, Filipino cultural diversity, and the worldviews of nations and indigenous peoples/indigenous cultural communities.
- c. *Ecological renewal and restoration* refers to the process that will enable the recovery of an ecosystem previously damaged by natural or anthropogenic causes.
- d. *Ecological debt* refers to what a country incurs when their ecological footprint exceeds their biocapacity. This means that the countries make use of resources of other countries to fulfill their consumption needs.

**Sec. 4. *The Fundamental Rights of Nature.*** Natural ecosystems shall have the right to exist; to the maintenance of the vital cycles, functions and processes that ensure their continued sustainability and well-being; to the conditions necessary for their ecological renewal and restoration; and to adequate and effective representation vis-à-vis the protection and enforcement of these rights. These rights shall be in addition to, and shall not impair or limit, any other right or remedy available under existing law, administrative regulations or jurisprudence. A violation of any existing environmental law or regulation shall be deemed a prima facie violation of these rights.

The State likewise recognizes that there are limits on the ability of natural ecosystems and processes to regenerate as well as on the ability of humanity to undo and reverse any damage it has caused to the environment. Thus, all development that affects or modifies natural ecosystems and processes must be sustainable, ensure the maintenance of critical ecosystem services, and respect intra- and intergenerational equity.

The rights protected in this Act shall not be interpreted to confer liabilities, duties, obligations, or responsibilities on the natural ecosystems and processes.

**Sec. 5. *Legal Personality of Natural Ecosystems and Processes.*** The legal personality of natural ecosystems and processes, including all of their living and non-living elements, as well as any distinct and identifiable portions, aggregations or components thereof, shall be recognized under law. In any action for the protection or enforcement of the rights recognized herein, the natural ecosystem or process involved shall be considered the real party-in-interest.

**Sec. 6. *Obligations of the Government.*** The Government shall take all necessary actions to protect and enforce the rights recognized by this law including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Develop and implement policies and regulations for prevention, early warning, protection, and precaution to prevent human activity from causing the extinction of living populations, the alteration of the cycles and processes that ensure life, and the destruction of livelihoods and cultural systems that are intertwined with natural ecosystems and processes;
- b. Promote balanced forms of production and patterns of consumption that, while satisfying the needs of the Filipino people, safe-guard the regenerative capacity and integrity of natural ecosystems and processes;

- c. Protect natural ecosystems and processes from the exploitation of its components, the commodification of living systems or the processes that support them, and the structural causes and effects of global climate change;
- d. Ensure long-term energy sovereignty, increased efficiency and the gradual incorporation of clean and renewable alternative sources into the energy matrix;
- e. Demand international recognition of ecological debt through the financing and transfer of clean technology compatible with the rights recognized in this Act;
- f. Promote peace and the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction; and
- g. Promote the recognition of the rights of natural ecosystems and processes in multilateral, regional and bilateral international relations.

**Sec. 7. *Obligations of Juridical Persons.*** All juridical persons shall take all necessary actions to protect and enforce the rights recognized by this law including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Embed the Right of Nature policy in their by-laws and organizational processes upon submission of their application for registration to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC);
- b. Undertake a regular reporting to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) of their impacts on specific ecosystem where they are conducting their business operations;
- c. Conduct environmental and human rights assessment prior to conducting their operations or whenever there is major change in their operations such as merger or closure of business, *Provided*, that, such assessment shall be a prerequisite for the issuance of the Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) by the DENR.

**Sec. 8. *Representation and Standing.*** Any Philippine resident may file an action to enforce the rights or obligations recognized under this Act. Upon the filing of any such action, the Court shall issue an order which shall contain a brief description of the cause of action and the reliefs prayed for, requiring all interested parties to manifest their interest to intervene in the case within a reasonable amount of time from notice thereof.

**Sec. 9. *Reliefs.*** If warranted, the court shall issue a judgment in favor of the natural process or ecosystem on whose behalf an action for the protection and enforcement of the rights recognized herein was filed, which shall include measures for its protection, preservation,

1 ecological renewal and restoration, as well as the payment of attorney's fees, costs of suit and  
2 other litigation expenses. Monetary damages to be awarded shall be the amount necessary to  
3 rectify or repair the damage done to natural ecosystems and processes by the defendant.

4 **Sec. 10. *Trust Fund.*** Any monetary award that may be awarded by any Court in defense  
5 of the rights of Nature shall not accrue to the benefit of the representative but it will be  
6 deposited to a Trust Fund, *Provided*, however, that any expenses incurred by the representative  
7 shall constitute a lien to the monetary award.

8 All monetary award shall be deposited in the Trust Fund under the administration of  
9 the Conservation Committee provided for in this Act, which shall be used to implement the  
10 measures for protection, preservation, ecological restoration, or renewal ordered by the court.

11 **Sec. 11. *Appointment of Conservation Committee.*** To administer the trust fund and  
12 implement the measures necessary for protection, preservation, or ecological renewal and  
13 restoration of the natural ecosystem or process on whose behalf an action pursuant to this Act  
14 was filed, the Court shall appoint a conservation committee from the stakeholders concerned.  
15 The Court shall give preference to indigenous cultural communities from the same area,  
16 people's organization, non-governmental organization, or any public interest group accredited  
17 by or registered with any government agency. Under no circumstances shall a person or entity  
18 responsible for a violation of the rights recognized herein be appointed to a conservation  
19 committee.

20 **Sec. 12. *Designation of Courts and Promulgation of Procedural Rules.*** The Supreme  
21 Court shall designate the court or courts that will hear and resolve cases brought under this Act  
22 and shall promulgate the rules of pleading, practice and procedure to govern the proceedings  
23 brought under this Act.

24 **Sec. 13. *Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation.*** A Strategic Lawsuit against  
25 Public Participation (SLAPP) is any action filed to harass, vex or exert undue pressure against  
26 any person or legal entity that has taken legal action or made a public communication of any  
27 kind in connection with the enforcement or protection of the rights recognized herein or any  
28 other environmental law or regulation. The defendant in a SLAPP may file a special motion to  
29 dismiss at any point of the proceedings alleging that the case is a SLAPP. This special motion  
30 to dismiss shall be resolved within thirty (30) days after it is heard. If the court dismisses the

1 SLAPP, it shall award damages, attorney's fees and costs of suit. The dismissal shall be with  
2 prejudice.

3 **Sec. 14. *Education.*** The Department of Education and the Commission on Higher  
4 Education shall integrate into the curriculum of all levels the respect for and recognition of the  
5 inherent and inalienable rights of natural ecosystems.

6 **Sec. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** The Secretary of Environment and  
7 Natural Resources, in coordination with the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of  
8 Social Welfare and Development, Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education  
9 Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, National Commission on  
10 Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change Commission, and associations or organizations  
11 representing environmental advocates shall issue the Implementing Rules and Regulations  
12 necessary for the effective implementation of this Act within ninety (90) days from the  
13 effectivity thereof.

14 **Sec. 16. *Appropriations.*** The amount necessary for the initial implementation of the  
15 provisions of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the  
16 Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

17 **Sec. 17. *Penalties.*** Any person who violates any of the provisions of this Act or its  
18 Implementing Rules and Regulations shall, upon conviction by final judgment, be punished by  
19 imprisonment of not less than six (6) months nor more than two (2) years or a fine of not less  
20 than Five Million pesos (PhP5,000,000), nor more than Ten Million pesos (PhP10,000,000),  
21 or both, at the discretion of the court. If the violation is committed by a juridical person, the  
22 officer responsible therefor shall serve the imprisonment when imposed. If violation is  
23 committed by an alien, he or she shall be immediately deported after service of sentence,  
24 without need of further proceedings.

25 **Sec. 18. *Separability Clause.*** If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or  
26 unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not otherwise affected shall remain  
27 valid and subsisting.

28  
29 **Sec. 19. *Repealing Clause.*** Any law, presidential decree or issuance, executive order,  
30 letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the  
31 provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

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2       **Sec. 20. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in  
3 the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

4       *Approved,*