

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 880



Introduced by Representative **REYNOLDS MICHAEL T. TAN**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

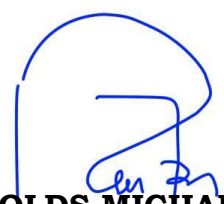
This bill seeks to declare the Sohoton Caves and Natural Bridge as an ecotourism site in the Municipality of Basey, Province of Samar.

The Sohoton Caves and Natural Bridge is one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in the Province of Samar and is internationally known for its natural beauty featuring cathedral-shaped caves, unique limestone formations, subterranean rivers, lush green forest and a natural stone bridge.

The most popular feature of Sohoton Caves and Natural Bridge is the natural stone bridge which connects two mountains. Several caves are also found in the area and the largest of which is the Panhulugan Cave. Unique and interesting limestone formations can be seen inside the caves that attract tourists and locals alike.

The declaration of Sohoton Caves and Natural Bridge as an ecotourism site will not only result to the development and improvement of the tourist site but will likewise help in the furtherance of socio-economic development in the local communities as well as in the whole country.

As embodied in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature. In light of all this, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought


REYNOLDS MICHAEL T. TAN
Representative
Second District, Samar

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AN ACT
DECLARING SOHOTON CAVES AND NATURAL BRIDGE IN THE
MUNICIPALITY OF BASEY, PROVINCE OF SAMAR 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. Short Title. – This Act shall be known as “Sohoton Caves and Natural Bridge Ecotourism Act.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy – The 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates that the State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.

Accordingly, it is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote an ecologically-sustainable and effective tourist industry that will enhance environmental preservation and support socio-economic development.

SECTION 3. The Sohoton Caves and Natural Bridge Ecotourism Site. The Sohoton Caves and Natural Bridge in the Municipality of Basey, Province of Samar is hereby declared as an ecotourism site. 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 sites.

The DOT, in coordination with the concerned local government units as well as with the other concerned government agencies, shall prepare a tourism development plan for Sohoton Caves and Natural Bridge which shall be incorporated in the overall National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP), pursuant to Republic Act No. 9593, otherwise known as “The Tourism Act of 2009”, and which shall also include the construction and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities in the area; Provided, That the development plan

shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the scenery and resources of the area.

SECTION 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within sixty (60) days after the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the DOT, in consultation with the concerned local government units, the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) and other agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 5. *Appropriations.* The Secretary of the DOT shall include in the Department's program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act and internally generated funds of the DOT.

SECTION 6. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, rules, regulations, proclamations, executive orders or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby deemed repealed or amended accordingly.

SECTION 7. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,