

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 902



Introduced by **HON. JOHN TRACY F. CAGAS**

AN ACT
DECLARING PASSIG ISLET LOCATED IN BARANGAY BATO, MUNICIPALITY
OF STA. CRUZ, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, AN ECOTOURISM SITE

This bill seeks to declare Passig Islet of Barangay Bato in the Municipality of Sta. Cruz, Province of Davao del Sur as an ecotourism site.

The Passig Islet, an aqua-eco park resort is one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in the province because of its serene environment, clear water and white sand. Being an archipelago, it is not uncommon in the Philippines to find little islets situated near bigger islands, but Davao del Sur's petite paradise will give you a surprise with its beauty and unique terrain.

Little is known about this treasure, the islet which stretches for about a hectare was first occupied by coastguards and served as a hangout place of the locals. Realizing its potential, the island was then turned by the local government to a small pocket of paradise by putting up cottages and surrounding it with tires packed with cement to keep the sand from eroding.

Currently, to reach the islet, visitors had to walk through a wooden bridge connecting the islet to the mainland. The walk to the end of the bridge is an experience to behold as it goes through thick, lush mangrove trees leading to the area where pump boats wait. The boat ride is to be anticipated as well, as it gives a panoramic view of the sea, the islet and the mountains. Passig Islet boasts of an astonishing ambience of tropical treasure, which could easily become a good choice for travelers and locals who want to engage in aqua-ecotourism activities such nature viewing, bird watching, swimming, picnic, photography and camping.

However, the lack of allied infrastructure such as spa or therapy services and food establishments to support the Passig Islet hinders the full socio-economic and environmental development of the area. There is still a need to enhance the facilities of the aquatic eco park resort as the cottages and bridge are already dilapidated. Developing this barangay into an aqua-ecotourism site will provide employment opportunities to the local residents and create influx of tourists.

This bill has been previously approved in the House of Representatives during the 18th Congress as filed by Hon. Mercedes "Didi" C. Cagas and was transmitted to the Senate but was not taken up due to the advent of the COVID 19 pandemic. This bill has also passed third reading at the lower house during the 19th Congress.

In view of the policy of the state to promote a tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible, participative, a culturally sensitive, economically viable and ethically and socially equitable for local communities, as declared in republic Act 9593, otherwise known as "The Tourism Act of 2009," the approval of this bills is intently recommended.

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

SECTION 1. The Passig Islet located in Barangay Bato, Municipality of Sta. Cruz, Province of Davao Del Sur, is hereby declared an ecotourism site. As such, its development shall be prioritized and supported by the Department of Tourism (DOT), subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of ecotourism destinations.

SEC. 2. Within one (1) year after the approval of this Act, the municipal government of Sta. Cruz shall, in coordination with the DOT and concerned agencies of the government, prepare a tourism development plan that shall include the construction, installation and maintenance of such appropriate infrastructure and facilities to enhance tourism in the area : *Provided*, That said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the natural beauty and resources of the area; *Provided, further*, That the implementation of the tourism development plan shall be included in the budget of the municipal government of Bansalan.

SEC. 3. The DOT shall assist the municipal government of Sta. Cruz in the implementation of the tourism development plan by providing technical assistance in tourism capacity building. It shall also include Barangay Passig Islet in all its national and regional promotion programs.

SEC. 4. The funding for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual budget of the municipal government of Sta. Cruz. The DOT may augment such allocation with internally-generated funds.

SEC. 5. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the city government of Digos shall, in consultation with the DOT and concerned agencies of the government, promulgate the rules and regulations to implement this Act.

SEC. 6. If any provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 7. All laws, rules, regulations, presidential decrees, and other issuances inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed or amended accordingly.

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

Approved,