

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

TWENTIETH (20th) CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

House Bill No. **1025**



Introduced by
Rep. **ROBERT NAZAL**

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE PROTECTION, CONSERVATION, RESTORATION, AND
SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PHILIPPINE NATIVE TREES, CREATING THE
NATIONAL NATIVE TREES COUNCIL, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 16 of the 1987 Constitution declares the policy of the State to protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology. Existing framework laws, the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act (RA 11038), the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (RA 9147), and the Enhanced National Greening Program (Executive Order 193, s. 2015) recognize this duty but lack a specific strategy, dedicated budget, or robust enforcement framework focused on native species.

More than half of the flowering-plant species found in the Philippines occur nowhere else on Earth; many are hardwood trees that anchor our watersheds, regulate climate, and safeguard food and water security. Yet the latest government accounts confirm that forest ecosystems remain under acute, man-made pressure:

1. Forest cover remains modest and fragmented.
According to the Philippine Statistics Authority's 2024 Land-Asset Accounts release, open- and closed-canopy forests together occupied only 6.91 million hectares-23.4 percent of the national land area-in 2020. While this reflects a 2.9 percent (193,354 ha) recovery since 2015, the absolute figure is still far below the ecological threshold needed to maintain stable hydrological cycles and biodiversity corridors. Closed-canopy forest, the most species-rich stratum, totaled just 2.22 million ha after a 9.3 percent gain; open forest scarcely changed, adding a mere 3,998 ha (0.1 percent) over the same period.
2. Competing land uses are accelerating.

In the same five-year window, the built-up footprint-residential, commercial, and industrial-expanded 20.6 percent to 1.03 million ha. Central Luzon, CALABARZON, and Central Visayas together accounted for 34 percent of that sprawl, further fragmenting the Luzon and Visayan Forest blocks.

3. Native trees are irreplaceable infrastructure.
Indigenous dipterocarps and other endemic hardwoods recharge aquifers up to four times more effectively than exotic monocultures, store dense carbon, and host 70-plus percent of the archipelago's vertebrate species. Their genetic traits-slow growth, dense wood, pest resilience-cannot be replicated once populations collapse.
4. Legal gaps impede conservation.
Existing statutes (e.g., the Forestry Code of 1975 and the Expanded NIPAS Act) regulate forestlands in general but are silent on native species propagation, seed-banking, genetic rescue, and sustainable use. Meanwhile, the DENR's National Greening Program, though sizeable, still permits fast-growing exotics that offer little habitat value.

This Act therefore seeks to:

1. Declare native trees a critical natural asset and require science-based mapping of remaining populations within one year of enactment;
2. Ban commercial extraction of threatened native taxa outside managed plantation settings;
3. Create a National Native Trees Fund, financed through public-private partnerships, to underwrite seed orchards, clonal nurseries, and community agro-forestry enterprises;
4. Integrate native-tree modules into K-12 and higher-education curricula to instill conservation values early;
5. Incentivize private stewardship via tax credits, access to DENR germplasm banks, and priority in ecotourism accreditation.

By grounding reforestation and landscape-restoration efforts in species that evolved with our soils and climate, the bill aligns with Sustainable Development Goals 6 (water), 13 (climate action), and 15 (life on land). It also complements the PSA-documented uptick in forest cover by ensuring that future gains are ecologically meaningful—diverse, self-sustaining, and resilient.

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


Rep. ROBERT NAZAL
Bagong Henerasyon Party-List

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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 the “Philippine Native Trees Act of 2025.”

SECTION 2. DECLARATION OF POLICY.

It is the declared policy of the State to safeguard the ecological, cultural, genetic, and socioeconomic values of Philippine native trees; to rehabilitate degraded forestlands and urban spaces through native species; and to ensure that any utilization of native trees and their products is ecologically sustainable and equitably benefits present and future generations, consistent with Articles II, XII and XIV of the Constitution and the State’s obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Paris Agreement, and other relevant treaties.

SECTION 3. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES.

This Act shall pursue the following objectives:

- A. Conduct a complete national inventory, geo-mapping, and genetic cataloguing of all Philippine native tree species;
- B. Establish permanent conservation areas and restoration corridors prioritizing endemic, threatened, and culturally significant species;

- C. Institutionalize science-based, community-led, and Indigenous-knowledge-guided restoration and sustainable-use programs;
- D. Promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) and market-based incentives to expand native tree propagation, agroforestry, and green urban infrastructure;
- E. Harmonize policies, standards, and enforcement mechanisms for the prevention, detection, and prosecution of illegal acts against native trees; and
- F. Mainstream native-tree education across formal curricula and public awareness campaigns.

SECTION 4. DEFINITION OF TERMS.

For purposes of this Act:

- A. Native Trees - refers to naturally occurring arboreal or arborescent species indigenous to the Philippine archipelago, including naturally evolved intraspecific varieties;
- B. Endemic Species - refers to native trees whose natural distribution is restricted to a defined Philippine biogeographic zone;
- C. Sustainable Utilization – refers to the managed use of native trees and their by-products in quantities and manners that do not lead to long-term decline, thereby maintaining potential to meet the needs of present and future generations;
- D. Restoration Corridor – refers to a linear or patch network of lands, both public and private, strategically managed or rehabilitated to reconnect natural habitats and facilitate gene flow among native tree populations;
- E. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) - refers to contractual arrangements under R.A. 11966 in which the private sector finances, designs, implements, operates, or maintains conservation, restoration, or forestry projects involving native trees;
- F. Benefit-Sharing - refers to the fair and equitable allocation of economic, social, and environmental gains derived from sustainable utilization of native trees among resource custodians, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.

SECTION 5. NATIONAL NATIVE TREES COUNCIL (NNTC).

- A. There is hereby created a National Native Trees Council attached to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) composed of the following:

1. DENR Secretary (Chair);
 2. Secretaries of
 - a. Agriculture;
 - b. Education;
 - c. Tourism;
 - d. Interior and Local Government;
 - e. Finance; and
 - f. Trade and Industry (Members);
 3. Chairperson of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP); and
 4. Three (3) representatives from academe, civil-society environmental organizations, and recognized Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs), respectively, to be appointed by the President upon recommendation of the DENR Secretary.
- B. The NNTC shall formulate and update every five (5) years a National Native Trees Master Plan (NNTMP), approve conservation priorities, oversee inter-agency coordination, accredit PPP projects, and monitor compliance with this Act.

SECTION 6. NATIONAL INVENTORY AND GENETIC CATALOGUING.

Within three (3) years from the effectivity of this Act, the DENR, in collaboration with the Philippine Space Agency, universities, herbaria, and local government units (LGUs), shall:

- A. Compile a geo-referenced inventory of all native tree populations, indicating conservation status consistent with IUCN criteria;
- B. Establish a National Native Trees Database accessible to the public, subject to safeguards on sensitive ecological data; and
- C. Deposit verified DNA barcodes and voucher specimens in recognized Philippine herbaria and gene banks.

SECTION 7. CONSERVATION AREAS AND RESTORATION CORRIDORS.

- A. The NNTC shall, in consultation with affected LGUs and ICCs, designate Critical Native Tree Habitats (CNTHs) and Restoration Corridors, to be integrated into the National Integrated Protected Areas System under R.A. 11038 or established as community-based Forest Biodiversity Reserves.
- B. CNTHs and Restoration Corridors shall be managed through co-management agreements among DENR, LGUs, ICCs, and duly organized people's organizations (POs).

SECTION 8. SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION AND BENEFIT-SHARING.

- A. Harvesting of native trees outside CNTHs or protected areas shall require a Sustainable Native Trees Resource Use Permit (SNTRUP) issued by the DENR upon proof of compliance with NNTC guidelines.
- B. At least thirty percent (30 %) of the gross proceeds from licensed harvesting, timber certification schemes, or bio-prospecting fees shall accrue to directly affected ICCs/POs as benefit-sharing, without prejudice to royalties under R.A. 8371.
- C. The DENR shall adopt traceability systems and chain-of-custody standards for native timber and non-timber products.

SECTION 9. PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND INCENTIVES.

- A. PPPs for conservation, restoration, or sustainable native-tree enterprises shall be eligible for:
 - 1. Income-tax holidays of up to eight (8) years;
 - 2. Zero-rated VAT on the sale of certified native-tree seedlings and related services;
 - 3. Accelerated depreciation for machinery used exclusively in native-tree nurseries or processing; and,
 - 4. Access to the Green Financing Program of government financial institutions.
- B. The NNTC shall evaluate and endorse PPP proposals for approval by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board.

SECTION 10. RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND EXTENSION (RDE).

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and state universities and colleges (SUCs) shall prioritize RDE on native-tree silviculture, climate-resilient genotypes, and value-adding technologies. Grants shall be allocated for community-based participatory research led by ICCs and POs.

SECTION. 11. EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS.

- A. The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall integrate modules on Philippine native trees, biodiversity, and climate action across K-12 and tertiary curricula.

- B. The Philippine Information Agency, in coordination with the DENR and LGUs, shall implement nationwide campaigns commemorating “Native Trees Week” every last full week of June.

SECTION 12. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE.

The NCIP shall ensure Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for any activity within ancestral domains involving native trees and shall facilitate Indigenous-knowledge-based conservation, including traditional management practices such as *muyong*, *payaw*, and *lapat*.

SECTION 13. LEAD AGENCY.

The DENR shall be the lead agency in implementing this Act, in coordination with the DA, DILG, NCIP, DepEd, CHED, DOST, DOF, DOT, and other concerned agencies and LGUs.

SECTION 14. APPROPRIATIONS.

The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of the concerned agencies. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 15. IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS.

The DENR, in consultation with the NNTC and concerned agencies, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations of this Act within sixty (60) days from its effectivity.

SECTION 16. PROHIBITED ACTS.

It shall be unlawful to:

- A. Cut, destroy, or injure any native tree within CNTHs or protected areas without a special permit;
- B. Transport, trade, or export native tree products without the required documentation and traceability certificates;
- C. Introduce invasive alien species into restoration sites;
- D. Falsify or tamper with native-tree certification tags or documents; and

- E. Obstruct, hinder, or resist duly authorized officers in the performance of their duties under this Act.

SECTION 17. PENALTIES.

- A. Any person who violates Section 16(1) or (2) shall, upon conviction, suffer the penalty of imprisonment ranging from six (6) years and one (1) day to twelve (12) years, and a fine of not less than Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (PhP 500,000.00) nor more than Two Million Pesos (PhP 2,000,000.00), without prejudice to higher penalties under existing laws.
- B. Violations of Section 16(3), (4) or (5) shall be penalized by imprisonment of two (2) years and one (1) day to six (6) years, and a fine of not less than One Hundred Thousand Pesos (PhP 100,000.00) nor more than Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (PhP 500,000.00).
- C. Corporate offenders shall be subject to the foregoing fines, and the responsible officers or directors shall be liable jointly and severally.

SECTION 18. REPEALING CLAUSE.

All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 19. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE.

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

SECTION 20. EFFECTIVITY.

This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,