



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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **1612**



INTRODUCED BY REP. STEPHEN JAMES T. TAN

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This Bill Proposes to declare the caves of Sulpan, Cathedral, Deit, and the underground river located in the Municipality of Matuginao, Samar, as a nature-based tourism destination.

These subterranean natural wonders, with their captivating geological features, diverse flora and fauna, and cultural significance, remain relatively undiscovered and unexploited. By designating these caves as a nature-based tourism destination, the local government seeks to promote sustainable tourism that showcases their unique ecological importance and cultural heritage, while also providing economic opportunities for the local communities.

The Municipality of Matuginao, Samar, boasts an abundance of natural resources, including the caves that house a wealth of endemic flora and fauna, geological formations, and cultural artifacts. Despite their significant ecological and cultural value, these caves have yet to be fully developed and marketed as a tourist attraction. This bill aims to harness the potential of these caves as a nature-based tourism destination and to provide a framework for their sustainable management and promotion.

Promoting these Caves as a nature-based tourism destination will bring greater visibility to Samar and allow the province to showcase its natural beauty. It provides a platform for highlighting the province's vast potential and boosting its tourism industry. This, in turn, will create opportunities for local businesses to thrive and provide income to the community.

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


STEPHEN JAMES T. TAN

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**AN ACT DECLARING SULPAN CAVE AND SULPAN LAKE, CATHEDRAL CAVE,
DIET CAVE, AND UNDERGROUND RIVER IN BARANGAY LOCATED IN THE
MUNICIPALITY OF MATUGINAO, A NATURE-BASED
TOURISM DESTINATION**

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 “*Matuginao Caves Nature-based Tourism Destination Act.*”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote a tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible, participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable and equitable for local communities. To this end, the State shall endeavor to provide the proper mechanisms and infrastructures for sustainable tourism development. It shall promote and develop certain areas and sites identified as tourist destinations or attractions or having potential for tourism to drive and propel inclusive growth throughout the country.

SECTION 3. *Matuginao Caves Nature-based Tourism Destination Sites.*

Sulpan Cave, Sulpan Lake, Cathedral Cave, Diet Cave, the underground river located in the Municipality of Matuginao, are hereby designated as nature-based tourism destinations. Their development shall be incorporated in the Department of Tourism's (DOT) National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) successor plan for 2023 – 2028 and be jointly implemented with the Municipality of Matuginao and Provincial Tourism Office of the Province of Samar. The construction and maintenance of infrastructure facilities in the area shall be a shared responsibility of the DOT and the local government unit with emphasis on sustainable development and resource management.

SECTION 4. *Appropriations.* - The DOT, DENR, DPWH, and LGU shall include in its Annual Investment Program (AIP) the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The Samar Tourism Council, after due consultation with the DOT, DENR, DPWH, LGUs, and other stakeholders, shall promulgate the rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act within sixty (60) days after its effectivity. Provided, That the law shall take effect after sixty (60) days with or without the IRR.

SECTION 6. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 7. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, and issuances, proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issuances contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act shall be deemed amended accordingly.

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

Approved,