

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

TWENTIETH (20th) Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1908



Introduced by Rep. MARIA VANESSA C. AUMENTADO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to declare the Double Barrier Reef of Bien Unido, Bohol as a tourist destination.

Bohol, among others, is known for its dive spots and teeming marine biodiversity. Notably, the province has the famous, Danajon Reef wherein the Bien Unido double barrier reef is a part of. The Danajon Reef is a very rare geological formation and the only double barrier reef in the Philippines. It comprises of two (2) sets of large coral reef that formed offshore on a submarine ridge due to a combination of a favorable tidal currents and coral growth in the area. Danajon Reef's unique geological double barrier reef formation and high marine biodiversity has great potential for ecotourism; it is the only double barrier reef for the entire Indo-Pacific region and where there are only six (6) of its kind in the world.

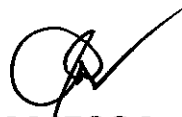
Bien Unido, known as "*Bohol's Last Frontier*", offers a variety of attractions including island hopping, diving, and unique cultural experiences. A highlight is the underwater grotto with statues of the Virgin Mary and Santo Nino, a reminder of environmental stewardship. It is situated along the Danajon Bank.

In 2010 the Municipality of Bien Unido installed a giant underwater grotto shrine in its double barrier reef dive site, which is part of the Danajon Reef. Since then, the Bien Unido double barrier reef became an eco-cultural tourist destination. Underwater grotto, like one in the Mediterranean island of Malta, has been one of the top diving sites of the world, where divers can pray and meditate while being immersed into the amazing underwater world and given a moment of deeper reflection than those normally experienced.

The “Bien Unido Double Barrier Reef Marine Park” is the first underwater pilgrimage in Asia. The declaration of Bien Unido Double Barrier Reef as an ecotourism site will surely enhance tourism development and promotion program. It will generate potential global attraction because underwater lovers and diving enthusiasts need not go to Malta anymore for that underwater grotto exploration can also be experienced in the Bien Unido Double Barrier Reef in Bohol.

The proposed measure aims to help the local government of Bien Unido to promote its tourism industry and to generate higher income for the LGU. Likewise, it also aims at conserving and preserving the natural marine resources and geological significance of the Bien Unido double barrier reef as part of the Danajon Reef.

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



MARIA VANESSA C. AUMENTADO

Representative

Bohol - Second [2nd] District

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AN ACT
DECLARING THE BIEN UNIDO DOUBLE BARRIER REEF AND ITS
IMMEDIATE UNDERWATER ENVIRONS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF
BIEN UNIDO, PROVINCE OF BOHOL, A TOURIST DESTINATION

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

SECTION 1. The Bien Unido Double Barrier Reef and its immediate underwater environs located in the Municipality of Bien Unido, Province of Bohol are hereby declared a tourism destination. Pursuant thereto, its development shall be prioritized and supported by the Department of Tourism (DOT), subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of tourism destinations.

SEC. 2. Within one (1) year after the approval of this Act, the municipal government of Bien Unido shall, in coordination with the DOT, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and other concerned agencies of the government, prepare a tourism development plan that shall include the construction, installation and maintenance of such appropriate facilities and infrastructures to ensure accessibility and the security of tourists in the area: *Provided*, That said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the marine life and underwater geological significance of the area: *Provided further*,

That the implementation of the tourism development plan shall be included in the budget of the municipal government of Bien Unido.

SEC. 3. The DOT shall assist the municipal government of Bien Unido in the implementation of the tourism development by providing technical assistance in tourism capacity building. It shall also include the Bien Unido Double Barrier Reef and its immediate underwater environs 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 Bien Unido. The DOT may augment such allocation with internally-generated funds.

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

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.