

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2905



Introduced by Representative LEILA M. DE LIMA

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE PRESERVATION, REFORESTATION, AFFORESTATION,
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MANGROVE FORESTS IN THE
PHILIPPINES, PROHIBITING ILLEGAL AND DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE
MANGROVE RESERVATION AREAS, PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Mangrove forests are among the most productive and fertile ecosystems in the world. Mangroves provide for animals and humans. They are the habitats and nurseries for over 3,000 fish species.¹ As climate heroes, they can store 3 to 5 times more carbon per area than tropical upland forests.² Mangroves also serve as natural barriers against storm surges, tsunamis, and coastal erosion. Their intricate root systems absorb and dissipate wave energy, helping to stabilize shorelines and significantly reduce the impact of natural disasters on coastal communities.³ As biodiversity havens, mangroves support a huge variety of plants and animals, many of them important for food production.⁴

Despite their critical importance, mangroves remain undervalued and severely threatened. With about 18,000 km (about 11184.68 mi) of shorelines, the Philippines in the early 1900s had vast areas of mangroves totaling 500,000 hectares.⁵ However, over fifty percent (50%) of these mangroves have been wiped out in the last half-century, and human activity has been a driver of damage.⁶ These vital ecosystems face mounting pressures from all sides—including deforestation, land development, reclamation, pollution, and the conversion of mangrove areas into fishponds. Compounding these threats are the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea

¹ Save Our Mangroves Now. Retrieved from <https://www.mangrovealliance.org/save-our-mangroves-now/>.

² Ibid.

³ Lu, B.J. (May 31, 2024). The Importance of Mangroves. Retrieved from <https://www.pna.gov.ph/opinion/pieces/888-the-importance-of-philippine-mangroves>.

⁴ UNEP. (July 25, 2023). An inside look at the beauty and benefits of mangroves. Retrieved from <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/inside-look-beauty-and-benefits-mangroves>.

⁵ Oceana: Restore Mangrove Forest. Retrieved from <https://ph.oceana.org/our-campaigns/restore-mangrove-forests/>.

⁶ Mangroves for Community and Climate. Retrieved from <https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/mangroves-for-community-and-climate>.

levels, siltation and increasingly intense typhoons. Worse even, improper planting practices and weak enforcement of environmental laws have further hindered effective mangrove conservation and restoration efforts.

This proposed measure is largely based on Senator Francis “Kiko” N. Pangilinan’s Senate Bill No. 224 in the 20th Congress. Primarily, this bill aims to establish designated reservation areas in all coastal municipalities throughout the country, exclusively for the preservation, protection, reforestation, afforestation, and sustainable development of mangrove forests. By formally allocating these areas for mangrove conservation, we ensure that future generations continue to benefit from the vital ecological and socio-economic services this unique ecosystem provides.

Finally, the bill seeks to punish illegal and destructive activities in the mangrove reservation areas and introduce strict penalties for nefarious practices, such as the unauthorized cutting and destruction of mangrove trees, as well as for the dumping of waste within these protected zones. In addition, violators will be held financially liable for the full cost of restoring or rehabilitating any damaged mangrove areas, reinforcing the government’s commitment to environmental accountability and long-term ecosystem health.

Immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



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FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

1 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*National Mangrove*
2 *Forest Protection and Preservation Act of 2025.*”

3
4 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 protect and preserve the country’s natural resources. Towards this end, the
6 preservation, reforestation, afforestation, and sustainable development of the
7 mangrove forests shall be pursued through the establishment of reservation areas
8 exclusively for mangrove trees.

9
10 SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

- 11
12 a) *Afforestation* refers to the establishment of a mangrove forest in an area
13 that did not carry such forest within the pasty fifty (50) years or within living
14 memory;
15
16 b) *Coastal area* refers to the band of dry land and adjacent ocean space (water
17 and submerged land) in which terrestrial processes and uses directly affect
18 oceanic processes and uses and vice versa; its geographic extent may
19 include areas within a landmark limit of one (1) kilometer from the shoreline
20 at high tide to include mangrove swamps, brackish water ponds, nipa
21 swamps, estuarine rives, sandy beaches, and other areas within a seaward
22 limit of two hundred (200) meters isobath to include coral reefs, algae flats,
23 seagrass beds, and other soft bottom areas;
24
25 c) *Mangrove forest* refers to a type of forest occurring on a tidal flat along the
26 sea coast, extending along streams where the water is brackish;

1 d) *Reservation area* refers to the portion of coastal areas which have been set
2 aside exclusively for reforestation, afforestation, conservation, and
3 preservation purposes; and
4

5 e) *Reforestation* refers to the planting of mangrove trees along the denuded
6 coastal areas.
7

8 SEC. 4. *Establishment of Mangrove Reservation Areas.* – There shall be
9 established and set aside in all coastal areas in each municipality within the Philippine
10 portions of land solely for the preservation, protection, reforestation, afforestation, and
11 sustainable management of mangrove forests. All existing mangrove forests shall
12 automatically form part of the reservation areas.
13

14 SEC. 5. *Establishment of the National Council for the Preservation of Mangrove*
15 *Forest.* – There is hereby established a National Council for the Preservation of
16 Mangrove Forests, hereinafter referred to as the National Council, which shall be an
17 attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).
18

19 The National Council shall be composed of twelve (12) members consisting of:
20

- 21 1) The Secretary of the DENR who shall act as Chairman;
- 22 2) The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) who shall act as Vice-
23 Chairman;
- 24 3) The Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government
25 (DILG);
- 26 4) The Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST);
- 27 5) The Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority
28 (NEDA);
- 29 6) The Director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR);
- 30 7) The Director of the Forest Management Bureau (FMB);
- 31 8) The Director of the Ecosystem and Research Development Bureau;
- 32 9) The Administrator of the National Mapping and Resources Information
33 Authority;
- 34 10) A representative from the academe to be appointed by the President of the
35 Philippines;
- 36 11) A representative from the research institutions conducting researches on
37 sustainable mangrove forest management to be appointed by the President
38 of the Philippines; and
- 39 12) A representative from an accredited non-government organization (NGO)
40 conducting programs on sustainable mangrove forest management to be
41 appointed by the President of the Philippines.
42

43 SEC. 6. *Powers and Functions of the National Council.* – The National Council
44 shall have the following powers and functions:
45

- 46 a) To review existing relevant policies and conducts studies on mangrove
47 forest and its preservation;
- 48 b) To prepare a comprehensive program for the preservation, reforestation,
49 afforestation, and sustainable development of mangrove forests;

- c) To establish the guidelines in identifying the areas to be declared as mangrove forest reservations;
- d) To identify and delineate the boundaries of coastal areas which shall form part of the mangrove reservation areas;
- e) To exercise control and supervision over all the local councils; and
- f) To promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 7. *The Local Council for the Preservation of Mangrove Forests.* – A local council for the preservation of mangrove forests, hereinafter referred to as the Local Council, shall be established in each of the municipalities where a mangrove reservation area has been identified. Each Local Council shall be chaired by the Regional Executive Director of the DENR, under whose jurisdiction the reservation area is located, or his/her duly authorized representative, who should at least have the rank of provincial director or regional division chief. The Local Council shall have the following members: (a) a representative of the municipal government concerned; (b) a representative each from the barangays under whose territory the reservation area is located; (c) a representative from an accredited NGO; and (d) a representative from the private sector.

SEC. 8. *The Powers and Functions of the Local Council.* – The Local Council shall have the following powers and functions:

- 1) To implement and enforce all the programs and policies laid down by the National Council;
- 2) To carry out the general administration and day-to-day planning of the program;
- 3) To secure the mangrove reservation area from illegal and destructive activities which would endanger the successful implementation and viability of the program; and
- 4) To perform such other powers and functions as may be designated by the National Council.

In order to secure the mangrove reservation area from illegal and destructive activities, the Local Council and the local government unit, under whose jurisdiction the reservation area is located, shall employ the services of forest guards who shall be tasked with the responsibility to guard and police the areas. They shall have the authority to arrest those caught violating the provisions of this Act and the rules and regulations issued pursuant thereto.

In the event that any of the forest guards are found to be guilty of nonfeasance, misfeasance or malfeasance, the forest guard or guards concerned and the officials of the Local Council and the local government unit, by virtue of the principle of command responsibility, shall be held liable for such violations and shall be prosecuted in accordance with the provisions of this Act, without prejudice to any liability provided for under other existing laws.

SEC. 9. *Prohibited Acts.* – The following acts are hereby prohibited within the mangrove reservation areas:

- a) Cutting, uprooting or destroying any mangrove tree;
- b) Dumping of waste;
- c) Construction or reclamation activity;
- d) Illegal fishing activities that will result in the damage and/or destruction of the mangrove forest; and
- e) Other acts or activities that will result in the damage and/or destruction of the mangrove forest.

SEC. 10. *Penalties.* – Any person, natural or juridical, found guilty of violating any provision of this Act or the rules and regulations issued by the National Council shall, after due notice and public hearing by the first-level courts of competent jurisdiction, be fined in the amount of not less than Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (PhP200,000.00) but not more than One Million Pesos (PhP1,000,000.00) or imprisonment of not less than one (1) year but not more than six (6) years, or both, at the discretion of the court: *Provided*, That if the area requires rehabilitation or restoration as determined by the court, the offender shall also be required to restore or compensate for the restoration of the damage.

If the offender is an association or corporation, the president or manager and the officer who has direct knowledge of the offense shall be held liable under this Act.

SEC. 11. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected by such declaration shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, administrative orders, and rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 13. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the *Official Gazette* or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,