

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 3261



Introduced by **HON. JOSEFINA B. TALLADO**

AN ACT DECLARING THE MUNICIPALITY OF SANTA ELENA IN THE PROVINCE OF CAMARINES NORTE AS AN ECOTOURISM ZONE AND APROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Camarines Norte has been identified in the Department of Tourism's National Tourism Masterplan as a Tourism Development Area. This designation signals the importance to lay down measures which will improve and enhance the tourism capabilities of the province to goals of the Masterplan.

Indeed Camarines Norte is still a vastly untapped tourism destination and surely, among the many towns in Camarines Norte, the town of Santa Elena is definitely one of those that stands out with respect to ecotourism potential.

Santa Elena boasts of breath-taking tourist hotspots that are still widely untapped due to lack of adequate tourism infrastructure.

In light of the huge potential of the Municipality of Santa Elena to become one of the top tourist destinations, it is hereby sought that it be declared as an Ecotourism Zone. The passage of this bill will surely create new jobs, improve the local livelihood and will be beneficial for the domestic economy.

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


HON. JOSEFINA B. TALLADO
Representative
1st District, Camarines Norte

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. This Act shall be known as the “Santa Elena Ecotourism Act of 2025”.

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote a sustainable and effective ecotourism industry to attract tourists, both local and foreign. Towards this end, the country should rationalize all efforts to make the tourism industry a major source of livelihood and an avenue for economic development. Moreover, measures should be taken to ensure that tourism development would be done with a view on the preservation of the existing ecosystem and natural environment.

SECTION 3. Santa Elena Ecotourism Zone. –The Municipality of Santa Elena in the Province of Camarines Norte is hereby declared as an Ecotourism Zone. As such, its development shall be prioritized by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and other concerned agencies, subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of ecotourism zones.

In particular, the development of the following areas will be given focus by the DOT, the concerned government agencies and also the Municipality of Santa Elena, Province of Camarines Norte, to wit:

- a. Imee-Irene Twin Falls (Busay Falls);
- b. Mt. Cadig Falls;
- c. Mag-asawang Bato
- d. Tinagong Dagat,
- e. Pulonguit-guit; and
- f. Pabungbungan Falls

SECTION 4. Ecotourism Governing Board. – Within one (1) year from the approval of this Act, there shall be created the Santa Elena Ecotourism Governing Board, to be composed of the following:

- a. Mayor of the Municipality of Santa Elena, as *ex-officio* Chairperson
- b. Secretary of the Department of Tourism or a duly-authorized representative, as member;

- c. Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources or a duly-authorized representative, as member;
- d. Representative of the 1st District of Camarines Norte or a duly-authorized representative, as member;
- e. Representative from an accredited non-governmental organization whose advocacy is environmental preservation, as member;
- f. Representative of the academe, as member; and
- g. Representative from the business sector, as member.

The Board shall prepare the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act and shall, when necessary, amend, modify or revise such rules and regulations to meet existing needs.

The Municipal Government of Santa Elena shall provide a secretariat for the Board including the funding necessary to cover expenses for the performance of its official functions and activities.

SECTION 5. *Ecotourism Development Plan.* – Within one (1) year from the approval of this Act, the DOT, in coordination with the local government unit of Santa Elena, the Representative of the 1st District of Camarines Norte and other concerned government agencies, shall prepare an ecotourism development plan containing, among others, the construction, installation and maintenance of such appropriate facilities and infrastructure that shall enhance tourism in the Municipality of Santa Elena, particularly in the areas mentioned in Section 3 hereof; Provided, that the said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the natural beauty and indigenous nature of the locality.

SECTION 6. *Implementation of the Plan.* The DOT shall take immediate steps in implementing the ecotourism development plan and incorporate the same in its overall development plans and programs for national implementation.

SECTION 7. *Appropriations.* The Secretary of the DOT shall include in the Department's program, the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act and internally generated funds of the DOT.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* – 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.

SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, rules, regulations, presidential decrees, and other issuances inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SECTION 10. *Effectivity Clause.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.