

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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4011



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

AN ACT
DECLARING DANAOLAKE LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF POLANGUI,
PROVINCE OF ALBAY, AN ECOTOURISM SITE, PROVIDING FOR ITS
CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT, WITH SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR
THE SINARAPAN (*MISTICHTHYS LUZONENSIS*), AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Danao Lake, located in the Municipality of Polangui, Province of Albay, is a volcanic crater lake that serves as a freshwater resource, cultural landmark, and natural sanctuary for biodiversity in the Bicol Region.

The lake is ecologically significant as one of the natural habitats of the **Sinarapan (*Mistichthys luzonensis*)**, known as the *world's smallest commercially harvested fish*. The Sinarapan, endemic to the Bicol Region, has been historically important to local communities both as a food source and as a symbol of regional identity. However, this species is now classified as threatened due to habitat degradation, overfishing, and the introduction of invasive species.

Despite its ecological and cultural importance, Danao Lake faces serious environmental pressures — including unsustainable fishing, siltation from agricultural run-off, pollution, and lack of a comprehensive management framework. Without urgent intervention, the habitat of the Sinarapan and the ecological integrity of the lake will continue to decline.

National law and policy already support its protection. Republic Act No. 9147 (*Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act*) obliges the State to conserve threatened species and their habitats. Republic Act No. 8550 (*Philippine Fisheries Code, as amended*) requires the conservation of municipal waters and the regulation of aquaculture and fishing methods. Republic Act No. 9593 (*Tourism Act of 2009*) and Executive Order No. 111 on the National Ecotourism Strategy call for the promotion of community-based, sustainable tourism anchored on environmental stewardship.

This bill therefore seeks to **declare Danao Lake in Polangui, Albay as an ecotourism site, with special conservation measures for the Sinarapan (*Mistichthys luzonensis*)**. It mandates the Department of Tourism, in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Polangui, to prepare a **Sustainable Ecotourism and Conservation Management Plan** for the lake. This plan shall include the establishment of Sinarapan sanctuaries and hatchery programs, regulation of fishing and aquaculture practices, improvement of water quality, construction of eco-friendly visitor facilities, and livelihood programs for lakeside communities.

By declaring Danao Lake an ecotourism site and prioritizing the conservation of the Sinarapan, this measure will secure the biodiversity of the lake, reinforce Polangui's identity as a steward of this unique species, and create sustainable livelihoods through ecotourism and fisheries management.

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


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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 “Danao Lake Ecotourism and Sinarapan Conservation Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is declared the policy of the State to conserve biodiversity, protect threatened species, and promote ecotourism as a tool for inclusive economic growth and environmental stewardship. Towards this end, the State shall protect and develop Danao Lake in Polangui, Albay as an ecotourism site, while giving priority to the conservation of the Sinarapan (*Mistichthys luzonensis*), recognized as the world’s smallest commercially harvested fish and endemic to the Bicol Region.

SEC. 3. *Ecotourism Site Declaration.* The Danao Lake, located in the Municipality of Polangui, Province of Albay, is hereby declared an ecotourism site, subject to the guidelines prescribed in this Act.

SEC. 4. *Development and Management.* The Department of Tourism (DOT), in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Polangui, shall prepare and implement a Sustainable Ecotourism and Conservation Management Plan for Danao Lake.

The plan shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) conservation and propagation measures for the Sinarapan (*Mistichthys luzonensis*), including fish sanctuaries, hatchery programs, and regulated fishing practices;

(b) maintenance of water quality and rehabilitation of the lake watershed;

(c) establishment of eco-friendly visitor facilities such as boardwalks, viewing decks, sanitation systems, and interpretive centers consistent with carrying capacity;

(d) regulation of aquaculture and other activities inconsistent with the conservation of the lake; and

(e) creation of community-based livelihood and benefit-sharing programs for fisherfolk and lakeside residents.

SEC. 5. *Prohibited Acts.* The following acts are prohibited within the Danao Lake ecotourism area:

(a) dumping of solid or liquid waste, sewage, or industrial effluents;

(b) destructive fishing practices, including fine-mesh nets, dynamite or cyanide fishing;

(c) introduction of invasive or non-native species into the lake;

(d) unregulated aquaculture and construction of floating cages inconsistent with the management plan; and

(e) quarrying, land conversion, or other extractive activities within the watershed that degrade water quality.

Violators shall be penalized under Republic Act No. 8550 (*Philippine Fisheries Code, as amended*), Republic Act No. 9147 (*Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act*), Republic Act No. 9003 (*Ecological Solid Waste Management Act*), Republic Act No. 7586 (*National Integrated Protected Areas System Act, as amended*), and other applicable laws.

SEC. 6. *Funding.* The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act under the budget of the DOT, DENR, and BFAR. The Provincial Government of Albay and the Municipal Government of Polangui shall allocate counterpart funds. Ecotourism fees and grants may also be tapped to finance conservation and livelihood programs.

SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOT, DENR, BFAR, the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Polangui shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.* If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,