

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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4013**



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

AN ACT
DECLARING THE BUHAWI HILLS LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PIO
DURAN, PROVINCE OF ALBAY, AN ECOTOURISM SITE, PROVIDING FOR ITS
DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Municipality of Pio Duran, located on the western seaboard of Albay, is endowed with coastal and upland landscapes that remain underdeveloped for sustainable tourism. Among these is the Buhawi Hills, a ridge formation offering panoramic views of Albay's coastline, surrounding agricultural plains, and the West Philippine Sea. Known locally for its windswept slopes and distinct geological features, Buhawi Hills has become an emerging destination for trekking, sightseeing, and eco-adventure, with potential to anchor the municipality's ecotourism program.

At present, however, Buhawi Hills has no formal protection or management framework. The absence of an ecotourism plan exposes the area to risks such as unregulated visitor access, littering, erosion from uncontrolled trail use, and unplanned construction. Experiences from other ecotourism sites in Albay — such as the Quitinday Hills in Camalig and the Jovellar Underground River — demonstrate that visitor traffic can increase rapidly once a site gains popularity. Without safeguards, the ecological and aesthetic value of Buhawi Hills could be degraded before it is fully developed as a sustainable tourism attraction.

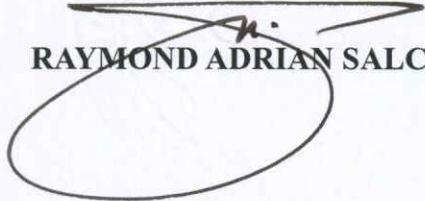
National policy supports the declaration of ecotourism sites that combine biodiversity conservation, community participation, and sustainable rural development. Executive Order No. 111 (1999) established the National Ecotourism Development Council and mandated government to pursue ecotourism consistent with environmental carrying capacity and local empowerment. Republic Act No. 9593, or the *Tourism Act of 2009*, likewise directs the Department of Tourism to promote tourism development that is ecologically sustainable, culturally appropriate, and community-inclusive. In addition, Republic Act No. 9003 (*Ecological Solid Waste Management Act*), Republic Act No. 9147 (*Wildlife Resources*

Conservation and Protection Act), and Republic Act No. 7586 (*National Integrated Protected Areas System Act, as amended*) provide the legal framework for environmental protection applicable to ecotourism areas.

This bill therefore seeks to declare the Buhawi Hills in Pio Duran, Albay as an ecotourism site. It mandates the Department of Tourism, in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Pio Duran, to prepare a Sustainable Ecotourism Development and Management Plan for the site. The plan shall regulate infrastructure and access consistent with carrying capacity, provide visitor facilities such as trails and sanitation systems, ensure biodiversity and landscape conservation, and establish benefit-sharing schemes so that local residents directly participate in and profit from ecotourism activities.

The declaration of Buhawi Hills as an ecotourism site will position it within western Albay's growing eco-adventure and coastal tourism circuit, alongside Pantao Port, Batong Langoyon dive site in Maonon, and the Quinale Plains. It will diversify livelihood opportunities in Pio Duran, create sustainable jobs in guiding and homestay services, and reinforce Albay's strategy of leveraging natural and cultural assets for inclusive development.

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



RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA

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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4013**

Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

AN ACT
DECLARING THE BUHAWI HILLS LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PIO
DURAN, PROVINCE OF ALBAY, AN ECOTOURISM SITE, PROVIDING FOR ITS
DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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 “Buhawi Hills Ecotourism Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is declared the policy of the State to promote ecotourism as a driver of sustainable rural development, biodiversity conservation, and cultural preservation. Towards this end, the State shall recognize and protect natural attractions such as Buhawi Hills to ensure that their development is consistent with environmental integrity and community empowerment.

SEC. 3. *Ecotourism Site Declaration.* The Buhawi Hills, located in the Municipality of Pio Duran, Province of Albay, is hereby declared an ecotourism site.

SEC. 4. *Development and Management.* The Department of Tourism (DOT), in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Pio Duran, shall prepare a sustainable ecotourism development and management plan for Buhawi Hills. The plan shall:

- (a) conserve the area’s natural features, geological formations, and biodiversity;
- (b) provide eco-friendly visitor facilities such as view decks, trails, sanitation systems, and interpretive centers consistent with carrying capacity;
- (c) regulate and monitor tourist activities to prevent environmental degradation; and
- (d) establish community-based enterprises and benefit-sharing mechanisms to ensure that residents of Pio Duran directly benefit from ecotourism.

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

- (a) dumping of waste or pollutants;
- (b) illegal logging, quarrying, or mining;
- (c) unregulated construction of facilities inconsistent with the ecotourism plan; and
- (d) any activity that endangers biodiversity, water systems, or the landscape.

Violations shall be penalized under existing environmental laws, including Republic Act No. 7586 (*National Integrated Protected Areas System Act*), Republic Act No. 9003 (*Ecological Solid Waste Management Act*), and Republic Act No. 9147 (*Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act*).

SEC. 6. *Funding.* The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act under the budget of the concerned agencies. The DOT, DENR, DPWH, and concerned LGUs may also mobilize resources from ecotourism fees, grants, donations, and partnerships with the private sector.

SEC. 7. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOT, DENR, DPWH, the Provincial Government of Albay, and the Municipal Government of Pio Duran shall jointly promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement 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. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,