

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4428



Introduced by REPRESENTATIVE ELEANDRO JESUS F. MADRONA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

There is a "blue hole" in the Province of Romblon and recognized as the only documented "blue hole" in the entire Philippines.

A "blue hole" is a rare marine underwater sinkhole, usually characterized by circular steep walls and a dramatic vertical drop. It is called a "blue hole" because its depth creates a distinctly darker and deeper blue color compared to its surrounding shallow waters.

The Blue Hole Underwater Park in Romblon is located in the pristine waters off Barangay Cawayan, Municipality of San Agustin, Tablas Island. Measuring approximately eight (8) meters in diameter and descends to a depth of around twenty-seven (27) to thirty-two (32) meters deep, this natural formation is believed to have been formed by the collapse of an ancient limestone cavern beneath the reef, most likely caused by seismic activities over thousands of years.

Rapidly increasing its popularity, the Blue Hole Underwater Park is considered as a remarkable and extraordinary dive site. It has practically become a dream destination especially for divers, marine enthusiasts and adventure tourists, offering unique diving and underwater experiences.

Thus, this bill seeks to declare the area encompassing the Blue Hole Underwater Park as a tourism destination to ensure the proper formulation and implementation of the necessary guidelines on site development, visitor safety, environmental protection and conservation, as well as community participation. Its designation as a tourism destination is inextricably linked to the progressive generation of local revenues through tourism.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Madrona".

ELEANDRO JESUS F. MADRONA

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AN ACT
DECLARING THE AREA ENCOMPASSING THE BLUE HOLE UNDERWATER
PARK, LOCATED IN BARANGAY CAWAYAN, MUNICIPALITY OF SAN AGUSTIN,
PROVINCE OF ROMBLON, A TOURISM DESTINATION

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

SECTION 1. The area encompassing the Blue Hole Underwater Park, located in Barangay Cawayan in the Municipality of San Agustin, Province of Romblon, is hereby declared a tourism destination. Pursuant thereto, the development in the area 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 San Agustin shall, in coordination with the DOT and concerned agencies of the government, prepare a tourism development plan that shall include the construction, installation, and maintenance of such appropriate infrastructure and facilities to enhance tourism in the area: *Provided*, That said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the natural beauty of the area: *Provided further*, That the implementation of the tourism development plan shall be included in the budget of the Municipal Government of San Agustin.

SEC. 3. The DOT shall assist the Municipal Government of San Agustin in the implementation of the tourism development plan by providing technical assistance in tourism capacity building. It shall also include the Blue Hole Underwater Park in 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 San Agustin.

The DOT through the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), if necessary, may include such allocation in the TIEZA's program.

SEC. 5. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Municipal Government of San Agustin shall, in consultation with the DOT and concerned agencies of the government, promulgate rules and regulations to implement this Act.

SEC. 6. All laws, rules, regulations, executive orders, and other issuances inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 7. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,