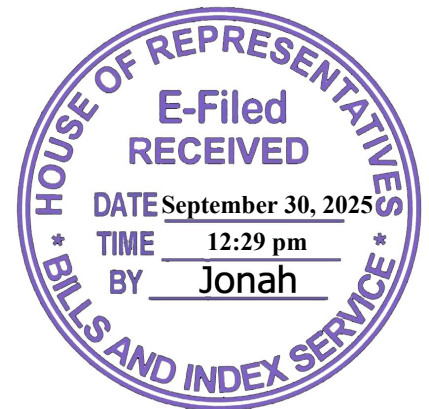


Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila  
**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session



**HOUSE BILL NO. 4993**

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**Introduced by:**

**HON. CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Barangay Napantao, located in the Municipality of San Francisco, Province of Southern Leyte, is home to the oldest Marine Protected Area in Sogod Bay—the Napantao Fish Sanctuary, established in 1996. Spanning approximately five hectares, this sanctuary is recognized as a world-class diving site, boasting a vibrant marine ecosystem and hard coral cover that is double the national average.

Despite its ecological and tourism potential, Napantao has yet to fully benefit from sustainable tourism. The area faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited skilled tourism personnel, and insufficient promotion, which hinder the growth of its visitor economy.

Declaring Barangay Napantao as an ecotourism zone will pave the way for its transformation into a model of community-based, sustainable tourism. This initiative will prioritize the development of environmentally sound facilities and amenities, foster local enterprise, and generate employment opportunities for residents. It will also ensure the preservation and conservation of the area's unique natural resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the devastation wrought by Typhoon Odette have severely impacted the tourism sector in Southern Leyte, resulting in business closures and job losses. As travel restrictions ease and the sector seeks to recover, institutional support from the national government is crucial to jumpstart economic activity and promote inclusive growth in the region.

In view of the foregoing, and in the spirit of SERBISYONG TINUORAY (genuine public service), the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

  
**CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP**  
**Representative, Second District of Southern Leyte**

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

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
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**HOUSE BILL NO. 4993**

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**AN ACT**

**DECLARING BARANGAY NAPANTAO IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN LEYTE AS AN ECOTOURISM ZONE, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

*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 "Napantao Ecotourism Zone Act."

**SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.** — Barangay Napantao in the Municipality of San Francisco, Province of Southern Leyte, is hereby declared an ecotourism zone. Its development as a sustainable and community-based ecotourism destination shall be prioritized and supported by the Department of Tourism (DOT), subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of ecotourism zones.

**SECTION 3. Tourism Development Plan.** — Within one (1) year from the effectivity of this Act, the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte, in coordination with the DOT, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and other concerned agencies, shall prepare a tourism development plan for Barangay Napantao. The plan shall provide for the development, maintenance, improvement, and restoration of tourism sites and facilities, in accordance with technical and environmental standards. The plan shall ensure the preservation of ecological balance, natural beauty, and cultural heritage, and shall be community participatory in approach.

**SECTION 4. Implementation and Promotion.** — The DOT shall assist the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte and the Municipality of San Francisco in implementing the tourism development plan by providing technical assistance and capacity-building programs. The DOT shall also include Barangay Napantao in its national, regional, and local tourism promotion programs.

**SECTION 5. Funding.** — The funding for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual budget of the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte and may be augmented by the DOT from its internally generated funds and other sources.

**SECTION 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOT, in consultation with the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte, the Municipality of San Francisco, and other concerned agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

**SECTION 7. Repealing Clause.** — All laws, rules, regulations, proclamations, executive orders, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

**SECTION 8. Effectivity.** — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

*Approved,*