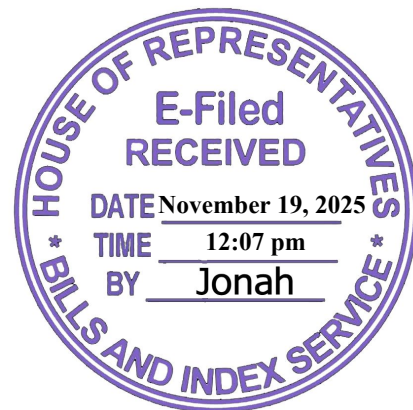




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives

20th CONGRESS

First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 6189

Introduced by Hon. Charisse Anne C. Hernandez

Lone District of Calamba, Laguna

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges, the Philippines' longest chain at 540 kilometers, act as Luzon's natural shield against typhoons, reducing floods and landslides while supporting biodiversity, watersheds, and climate resilience for millions. But it's facing severe threats from deforestation, illegal logging, mining, and projects like the China-funded Kaliwa Dam or construction of wind farms, worsening disaster risks as storms intensify.

Recent data shows the range loses about 9,000 hectares of forest yearly to illegal activities and mining, with the Southern Sierra Madre hit hardest by poor enforcement and development. Nationally, the Philippines lost 44,000 hectares in 2024, emitting 24 million tons of CO₂, reducing some areas' forest cover to under 10% and undoing reforestation efforts. This vulnerability was clear during Super Typhoon Uwan (Fung-wong) in November 2025, which forced over 900,000 evacuations, caused fatalities, and widespread damage in northern Luzon. While the Sierra Madre weakened winds by 1-13%, experts note its effect is limited, happening after coastal areas like Aurora suffer first, with deforestation boosting floods and landslides.

The Kaliwa Dam, a P12.2 billion project for Metro Manila's water supply, remains controversial. In 2025, NEDA approved a P3.1 billion cost hike, delaying completion to 2026 amid funding issues and loan extensions to 2028. It risks flooding villages like Daraitan, destroying forests and sacred sites, and heightening typhoon dangers. Indigenous groups like the Dumagat-Remontado and Agta face displacement, discrimination, and rights violations under RA 8371, with ongoing

harassment from dam and mining projects. The Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park, holding 25% of old-growth forests, is threatened by large-scale destruction.

This bill creates the Sierra Madre Conservation Authority under DENR to manage protection and rehab. It bans destructive activities, sets a 10-year moratorium on logging, mining, and development to restore 50,000 hectares, and protects indigenous domains with consent rules. Aligning with existing laws, it boosts community efforts, research, and funding for resilience. Passing this bill is essential to save the Sierra Madre, shield communities, and fight environmental threats.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charisse', with a stylized flourish at the end.

CHARISSE ANNE C. HERNANDEZ



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives

20th CONGRESS

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HOUSE BILL NO. 6189

Introduced by Hon. Charisse Anne C. Hernandez

Lone District of Calamba, Laguna

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SIERRA MADRE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO
FOCUS ON THE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF THE SIERRA MADRE
MOUNTAIN RANGES, PROHIBITING DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES, AND IMPOSING A
TEN-YEAR MORATORIUM ON LOGGING, DEVELOPMENT AND MINING
ACTIVITIES TO ALLOW RECOVERY OF FORESTS AND WATERSHEDS, 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 "Sierra Madre Conservation Act of 2025."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. — It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and conserve the Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges, recognized as the longest mountain chain in the Philippines spanning approximately 540 kilometers, serving as a natural barrier that weakens typhoons, mitigates flooding and landslides, supports biodiversity hotspots, and provides water sources and climate resilience for millions of Filipinos.

The State acknowledges the severe threats facing the Sierra Madre, including aggressive deforestation, illegal logging, mining activities, and destructive infrastructure projects. Furthermore, the State commits to safeguarding the ancestral domains of indigenous peoples. To this end, the State shall establish mechanisms to halt environmental degradation, enforce strict prohibitions on destructive activities, and promote sustainable conservation efforts.

SECTION 3. Creation of the Sierra Madre Conservation Authority. — There is hereby created the Sierra Madre Conservation Authority (SMCA), hereinafter referred to as the Authority, which shall be attached to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for policy and program

coordination. The Authority shall be the primary government agency responsible for the conservation, protection, rehabilitation, and sustainable management of the Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges.

The Authority shall be headed by a Chairperson, appointed by the President of the Philippines, with the rank and privileges of a Cabinet Secretary, and shall include representatives from the DENR, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), local government units within the Sierra Madre region, environmental non-governmental organizations, and indigenous peoples' organizations.

SECTION 4. Powers and Functions of the Authority. — The Authority shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Formulate and implement a comprehensive master plan for the conservation and protection of the Sierra Madre, including reforestation programs, biodiversity monitoring, and watershed rehabilitation;
- (b) Enforce prohibitions on mining, logging, quarrying, and other environmentally destructive activities within the Sierra Madre and its buffer zones;
- (c) Coordinate with relevant agencies to conduct regular patrols, surveillance, and enforcement actions against illegal activities;
- (d) Promote community-based conservation initiatives involving indigenous peoples and local communities;
- (e) Conduct research, studies, and assessments on the environmental health of the Sierra Madre, including the impacts of climate change and human activities;
- (f) Secure funding from national and international sources for conservation projects;
- (g) Recommend the declaration of protected areas under Republic Act No. 7586 (National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 1992), as amended; and
- (h) Perform such other functions as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 5. Ten-Year Moratorium on Logging, Development, and Mining. — To allow for the recovery of forests, trees, and watersheds in the Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges, a ten-year moratorium is hereby imposed on all logging, development projects, mining operations, and related activities, effective immediately upon the approval of this Act. During this period:

- (a) No new permits, licenses, or approvals shall be issued for such activities;
- (b) Existing permits shall be suspended or revoked, subject to due process and just compensation where applicable;
- (c) The Authority shall prioritize reforestation and rehabilitation efforts, aiming to restore at least 50,000 hectares of degraded forest land within the moratorium period; and
- (d) Monitoring and evaluation reports on the recovery progress shall be submitted annually to Congress and the President.

The moratorium may be extended by Congress upon recommendation of the Authority if environmental recovery goals are not met.

SECTION 6. Protection of Ancestral Domains. — The Authority shall ensure the full participation of indigenous peoples in all conservation activities and respect their rights to free, prior, and informed consent for any projects affecting their ancestral domains. Any violation of indigenous peoples' rights shall be grounds for the immediate cessation of activities and imposition of penalties.

SECTION 7. Funding. — The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DENR. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act. The Authority may also accept donations, grants, and contributions from local and international sources.

SECTION 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DENR, in consultation with the Authority, NCIP, and other stakeholders, shall promulgate the necessary implementing rules and regulations for the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 9. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 10. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 11. Effectivity. — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,