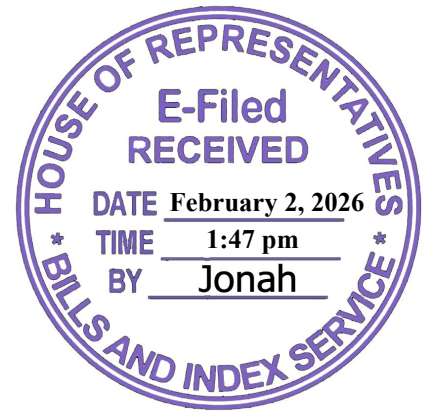


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 7534



Introduced by:

HON. CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines' coastal communities, infrastructure, and livelihoods are highly vulnerable to storm surges, erosion, and flooding. Mangrove ecosystems provide vital natural protection against these hazards while supporting fisheries, food security, and local economies. Despite their importance, mangroves continue to face degradation from clearing, conversion, encroachment, and poorly planned coastal development, including indirect impacts from nearby construction that disrupt hydrology, increase pollution, and hinder natural regeneration.

Existing environmental laws already recognize buffer zones as an effective tool for ecosystem protection. Under the National Integrated Protected Areas System, buffer zones may be designated to provide additional protection around protected areas, with development required to consider management plans. Similarly, laws governing fishponds and prawn farms mandate mangrove buffer zones along coastal areas. These provisions reflect a consistent legislative approach that uses buffer zones to prevent off-site environmental impacts and safeguard critical ecosystems like mangroves.

However, outside protected areas and specific lease arrangements, the lack of a uniform nationwide requirement for mangrove buffer zones has led to inconsistent implementation and avoidable environmental harm. This bill seeks to address that gap by mandating mangrove buffer zones in development projects across the Philippines, establishing baseline standards, integrating the requirement into planning and permitting processes, and directing agencies to issue science-based and enforceable rules. In doing so, the bill aims to balance sustainable development with environmental protection and community resilience.

In view of the foregoing, **ug sa ngalan sa SERBISYONG TINUORAY**, the undersigned respectfully requests the immediate passage of this measure.


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

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HON. CHRISTOPHERSON “COCO” M. YAP

AN ACT
MANDATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MANGROVE BUFFER ZONES IN
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES

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 “*Mangrove Buffer Zone Act*”.

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. — It is the policy of the State to promote sustainable coastal development and enhance climate resilience by institutionalizing mangrove buffer zones in all development projects within coastal areas of the country. Recognizing the vital role of mangroves in providing shoreline protection, supporting biodiversity, and contributing to climate change mitigation, the State mandates their preservation and rehabilitation as an essential component of land use planning and development.

SECTION 3. Scope and Coverage. — This Act shall apply to all new existing, and expanding development projects within coastal zones of the Philippines, including those undertaken by private entities or government agencies. Covered developments include, but are not limited to, subdivisions, industrial estates, ports, public infrastructure, reclamation areas, and coastal housing projects.

SECTION 4. Definition of Terms. — For the purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- (a) Mangrove Buffer Zones refer to coastal strips designated within a development project for the planting, protection, and maintenance of mangrove ecosystems, compromising not less than fifteen percent (15%) of the gross land area;
- (b) Development Projects refer to any infrastructure, residential, commercial, industrial, or governmental undertaking that alters the natural landscape in coastal zones;
- (c) Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) refers to a document issued by the DENR-EMB certifying that a project has complied with environmental laws and standards;
- (d) Coastal Zones refer to the areas along the coastline of the Philippines that are affected by tidal and marine influences and are prone to storm surges, sea level rise, and flooding;
- (e) DENR refers to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

SECTION 5. Establishment of Mangrove Buffer Zones. — The DENR-EMB, in coordination with its regional offices, shall, within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, publish a Mangrove Suitability Map identifying areas within the coastal zones of the Philippines where the establishment of mangrove buffer zones shall be mandatory.

In consultation with civil society groups and directly affected stakeholders, all covered development projects located within the identified areas shall:

- (a) Allocate at least fifteen percent (15%) of the total project area for the establishment or maintenance of a mangrove buffer zone;
- (b) Submit a Mangrove Buffer Zone Plan as a requirement for ECC issuance and permit approval; and
- (c) Undertake planting and maintenance activities in accordance with DENR technical guidelines.

Provided, That the requirement for a Mangrove Buffer Zone Plan shall apply only to development projects located in coastal zones where there is a natural presence of endemic mangrove species as verified by the DENR through an official site assessment.

SECTION 6. National Mangrove Buffer Zone Advisory Council. — A National Mangrove Buffer Zone Advisory Council, which is hereinafter be referred to as the “Advisory Council”, is hereby constituted to oversee the implementation, monitoring, and policy enhancement of this Act. The Council shall be chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and co-chaired by the

Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). The members shall include:

- (a) One (1) representative from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH);
- (b) One (1) representative from the Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR);
- (c) One (1) representative from the Department of Tourism (DOT);
- (d) One (1) representative from the Climate Change Commission (CCC);
- (e) One (1) representative from the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP);
- (f) One (1) representative each from three (3) accredited national civil society organizations engaged in coastal or environmental protection;
- (g) One (1) representative from the National Youth Commission (NYC);
- (h) One (1) representative from the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP);
- (i) One (1) representative from the business sector nominated by a national chamber of commerce or industry organization; and
- (j) Not more than three (3) representatives from the technical and scientific experts on environmental planning, sustainable site development, and urban planning.

The Advisory Council shall perform the following functions:

- 1.) Formulate and regularly update national guidelines and technical standards for the establishment, maintenance, and monitoring of mangrove buffer zones;
- 2.) Review and recommend policies to ensure alignment with national climate adaptation and biodiversity goals;
- 3.) Promote inter-agency coordination and capacity building among implementing institutions and LGUs;
- 4.) Conduct annual performance and compliance audits in coordination with regional DENR offices;
- 5.) Provide technical assistance and support for local mangrove initiatives, especially in disaster-prone coastal municipalities;
- 6.) Facilitate public awareness campaigns and stakeholder consultations on mangrove conservation;
- 7.) Recommend the inclusion of additional mangrove zones as Marine Protected Areas under the NIPAS framework; and
- 8.) Serve as the primary policy advisory body for mangrove conservation and rehabilitation efforts in the country;;

- 9.) Perform such other functions and mandate provided for by relevant laws and regulations.

SECTION 7. Environmental Compliance Certificate Compliance. — The formulation and submission of mangrove buffer zone plan, as provided in this Act, shall be a prerequisite for the issuance of ECCs and business permits. The DENR-EMB and LGUs shall ensure that project proponents have complied with this ACT prior to the issuance or renewal of permits and clearances.

SECTION 8. Penalties. — After a one-year grace period from the effectivity of this Act, the following penalties shall apply:

(a) For Micro Enterprises:

First Offense	: P10,000.00 and ten-day suspension;
Second Offense	: P25,000.00 and twenty-day suspension;
Third Offense	: P50,000.00 and permanent revocation of permits.

(b) For Small to Medium Enterprises:

First Offense	: P50,000.00 and ten-day suspension;
Second Offense	: P100,000.00 and thirty-day suspension;
Third Offense	: P250,000.00 and revocation of permits.

(c) For Large Enterprises and Government Projects:

First Offense	: P500,000.00;
Second Offense	: P1,000,000.00;
Third Offense	: P2,500,000.00 and disqualification from future projects in identified areas.

SECTION 9. Protected Area Classification. — All mangrove buffer zones established under this Act shall be eligible for classification as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and shall be evaluated by the DENR-BMB for inclusion under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) pursuant to Republic Act No. 7586, as amended by Republic Act No. 11038.

SECTION 10. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR) shall, in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), and in consultation with the local government units, indigenous peoples, and relevant civil society organizations, promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 11. Appropriations. — The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the appropriations of the DENR. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 12. Separability Clause. — If any provision or part of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in force and effect.

SECTION 13. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 14. Effectivity. — Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the implementing rules and regulations, this Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,