



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City



TWENTIETH CONGRESS

First Regular Session

House Bill No. 7800

Introduced by Representative Maria Angela S. Garcia

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Marine turtles, locally known as pawikan, are among the most ecologically significant marine species in the Philippines. The coastal habitats of Mariveles, Bagac, and Morong in the Province of Bataan serve as important nesting and foraging grounds for threatened marine turtle species.

The Province of Bataan has demonstrated strong leadership in marine turtle conservation through various provincial ordinances protecting nesting beaches and coastal habitats. This measure seeks to institutionalize and strengthen these local initiatives at the national level.

Anchored on Republic Act No. 9147 and Republic Act No. 11365, this bill declares the coastal habitats and nesting sites in the Municipalities of Mariveles, Bagac, and Morong as Critical Habitat, thereby providing enhanced legal protection and national support mechanisms.

Recognizing the increasing threats posed by climate change — including sea level rise, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events — this bill integrates climate-resilient, ecosystem-based adaptation measures consistent with Republic Act No. 9729.

The measure also adopts a Sustainable Blue Economy Management Framework to ensure that economic activities such as tourism and fisheries remain environmentally responsible and compatible with biodiversity protection. It recognizes mangroves, seagrass beds, and coastal wetlands as blue carbon ecosystems that contribute to climate mitigation and coastal stability.

Furthermore, the bill regulates seabed dredging, reclamation, and other coastal alteration activities that may degrade nesting beaches and critical habitats.

1 By declaring the pawikan as the Flagship Species of the Province of Bataan
2 and strengthening habitat protection, this measure promotes biodiversity
3 conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable economic growth.
4

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


REP. MARIA ANGELA S. GARCIA
Third District, Bataan



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AN ACT

DECLARING THE PAWIKAN (MARINE TURTLES) AS THE FLAGSHIP SPECIES OF THE PROVINCE OF BATAAN, AND ITS COASTAL HABITATS AND NESTING SITES IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF MARIVELES, BAGAC, AND MORONG, PROVINCE OF BATAAN, AS CRITICAL HABITAT PURSUANT TO REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9147, ADOPTING A CLIMATE-RESILIENT, INTEGRATED COASTAL MANAGEMENT, AND SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY FRAMEWORK FOR ITS PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT, REGULATING COASTAL ALTERATION ACTIVITIES, 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 "Bataan Pawikan Conservation and Critical Habitat Act."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. Pursuant to Section 16, Article II of the Constitution, the State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology.

The State recognizes that marine turtles (pawikan) and their coastal habitats in the Municipalities of Mariveles, Bagac, and Morong are ecologically significant and climate-sensitive ecosystems that contribute to biodiversity conservation, coastal protection, fisheries sustainability, tourism, and carbon sequestration.

It is hereby declared the policy of the State to:

- (a) Conserve and protect marine turtles and their nesting habitats;
- (b) Strengthen climate resilience of coastal ecosystems;

- (c) Promote a sustainable blue economy that supports responsible tourism, fisheries, and community livelihood;
- (d) Protect and enhance blue carbon ecosystems including mangroves, seagrasses, and coastal vegetation;
- (e) Adopt Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) principles to ensure coordinated, science-based, and multi-sectoral coastal governance; and
- (f) Harmonize national protection with existing provincial conservation measures.

This Act shall be implemented consistent with:

- Republic Act No. 9147, or the "Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act"
- Republic Act No. 11365, or the "Balanga Wetland and Nature Park Responsible Ecotourism Act"
- Republic Act No. 9729, or the "Climate Change Act of 2009".

SECTION 3. Declaration of Pawikan as Flagship Species of Bataan. The pawikan is hereby declared as the "Flagship Species of the Province of Bataan", symbolizing the Province's commitment to biodiversity protection, climate resilience, and sustainable coastal governance.

SECTION 4. Declaration of Critical Habitat. Pursuant to Section 25 of Republic Act No. 9147, the coastal habitats and nesting sites within the Municipalities of Mariveles, Bagac, and Morong are hereby declared as "Critical Habitat".

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Biodiversity Management Bureau, in coordination with the Provincial Government of Bataan, and Municipal Governments of Mariveles, Bagac and Morong, shall:

- (a) Delineate and map the boundaries based on scientific assessment;
- (b) Integrate climate risk and coastal vulnerability analysis;
- (c) Apply Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) approaches in planning and management;
- (d) Ensure alignment with existing provincial and municipal conservation ordinances.

SECTION 5. Sustainable Blue Economy, Climate-Resilient, and Integrated Coastal Management Framework. The declared Critical Habitat shall be managed under a Sustainable Blue Economy, Climate-Resilient, and Integrated Coastal Management Framework, which shall:

- (a) Promote conservation-first coastal governance;
- (b) Allow only environmentally compatible and sustainable economic activities;
- (c) Support responsible, community-based ecotourism;
- (d) Encourage sustainable fisheries and alternative livelihood;
- (e) Integrate ecosystem-based climate adaptation strategies;

- (f) Apply Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) principles, including inter-agency coordination, science-based decision-making, stakeholder participation, and adaptive management;
- (g) Prevent habitat degradation from incompatible development;
- (h) Ensure that port, tourism, fisheries, and coastal development activities are harmonized with habitat protection objectives.

SECTION 6. Climate Resilience Measures. Management shall incorporate:

- (a) Shoreline stabilization through nature-based solutions;
- (b) Mangrove and coastal vegetation restoration;
- (c) Coastal setback enforcement;
- (d) Nest relocation protocols during extreme climate events;
- (e) Integration with Local Climate Change Action Plans;
- (f) Climate risk monitoring and adaptive management mechanisms consistent with ICM principles.

SECTION 7. Recognition and Protection of Blue Carbon Ecosystems.

Mangroves, seagrass beds, and coastal wetlands within the Critical Habitat are hereby recognized as “blue carbon ecosystems”.

The DENR, in coordination with the Provincial Government of Bataan and Municipal Governments of Mariveles, Bagac and Morong, shall:

- (a) Conduct blue carbon mapping and valuation;
- (b) Integrate blue carbon conservation into climate mitigation strategies;
- (c) Explore access to voluntary carbon financing mechanisms, subject to biodiversity and community safeguards;
- (d) Ensure that blue carbon initiatives are implemented consistent with Integrated Coastal Management principles.

SECTION 8. Prohibited Acts and Regulation of Coastal Alteration. In

addition to acts penalized under existing wildlife and environmental laws, the following acts are prohibited within the declared Critical Habitat and designated buffer areas:

- (a) Poaching, harvesting, or collection of marine turtles or their eggs;
- (b) Capturing, killing, trading, transporting, or possessing marine turtles, their parts, or derivatives;
- (c) Disturbing nesting turtles, including handling, harassment, or use of flash photography during nesting periods;
- (d) Use of destructive fishing gear or methods that may cause injury or mortality to marine turtles;
- (e) Dumping, discharge, or disposal of toxic substances, hazardous waste, untreated sewage, or solid waste;
- (f) Construction of facilities or structures that damage nesting beaches or critical habitat areas;
- (g) Unauthorized anchoring of vessels within identified nesting or marine turtle habitat zones;

- 1 (h) Seabed dredging, sand extraction, reclamation, quarrying, excavation, or
2 any coastal morphological alteration activity within the declared Critical
3 Habitat and buffer zones.

4
5 Seabed dredging or coastal alteration may only be allowed for:

- 6
7 (1) Government-led disaster mitigation; or
8 (2) Emergency navigational safety measures;
9

10 Provided that such activities:

- 11
12 (i) Undergo full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
13 (ii) Secure scientific clearance from the DENR-Biodiversity
14 Management Bureau;
15 (iii) Demonstrate no adverse impact on nesting beaches, coastal
16 stability, or blue carbon ecosystems; and
17 (iv) Are strictly limited in scope and duration.
18

19 Violations shall be subject to penalties under applicable environmental and
20 wildlife laws.

21
22 **SECTION 9. Establishment of the Bataan Pawikan Conservation and**
23 **Research Center.** There is hereby established in the Municipality of Morong,
24 Province of Bataan, a Bataan Pawikan Conservation and Research Center, which
25 shall serve as:
26

- 27 (a) A scientific research and monitoring facility for marine turtle conservation;
28 (b) A hatchery and rehabilitation support facility;
29 (c) A climate resilience and blue carbon research hub;
30 (d) An environmental education and community training center;
31 (e) A sustainable ecotourism information and interpretation facility.
32

33 The Center shall operate under the technical supervision of the DENR, in
34 coordination with the Provincial Government of Bataan and the concerned local
35 government units.
36

37 The Center may enter into partnerships with academic institutions, civil
38 society organizations, and private entities, and may receive grants, donations, and
39 other lawful contributions.
40

41 The establishment and operation of the Center shall be subject to the
42 availability of funds.
43

44 **SECTION 10. Bataan Pawikan Conservation and Blue Economy Council.**
45 A multi-sectoral Council is hereby created to oversee implementation. It shall be
46 chaired by the Governor of Bataan and include:

- 47 • Mayors of Mariveles, Bagac, and Morong;
48 • Representatives from DENR, DOT, BFAR, and DPWH;
49 • Provincial ENRO and Tourism Office;
50 • Accredited NGOs and coastal sector representatives;

1
2 The Council shall ensure substantial representation of women consistent with
3 Republic Act No. 9710. The Council shall:
4

- 5 (a) Formulate and oversee implementation of a Management Plan
6 consistent with this Act;
7 (b) Ensure application of Integrated Coastal Management principles;
8 (c) Coordinate among national agencies, LGUs, port authorities, fisheries
9 stakeholders, tourism operators, and civil society;
10 (d) Promote science-based monitoring and adaptive management;
11 (e) Facilitate access to climate and blue economy financing mechanisms.
12

13 **SECTION 11. Harmonization with Local Ordinances.** Nothing in this Act
14 shall diminish or invalidate existing provincial, municipal, or city ordinances
15 providing stricter protection for marine turtles and their habitats.
16

17 The implementation of this Act shall be harmonized with existing conservation
18 measures adopted by the Province of Bataan and the concerned local government
19 units, consistent with the principles of local autonomy and cooperative
20 environmental governance.
21

22 **SECTION 12. Funding.** The DENR and DOT shall include allocations in their
23 annual budgets for:
24

- 25 (a) Habitat protection and monitoring;
26 (b) Climate resilience measures;
27 (c) Enforcement and patrol operations;
28 (d) Sustainable livelihood and tourism support;
29 (e) Scientific research and blue carbon assessment.
30

31 Additional funding may be sourced from climate finance and conservation
32 partnerships.
33

34 **SECTION 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** Within ninety (90)
35 days from effectivity, the DENR, in coordination with concerned agencies and the
36 Provincial Government of Bataan, shall promulgate the necessary rules and
37 regulations.
38

39 **SECTION 14. Separability Clause.** If any provision of this Act is declared
40 invalid, the remainder shall remain in force.
41

42 **SECTION 15. Repealing Clause.** All inconsistent laws are repealed or
43 modified accordingly.
44

45 **SECTION 16. Effectivity.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
46 publication.