



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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 8260

Introduced by Representative Howard A. Guintu

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 16, Article 2 of the 1987 Constitution provides that the State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature, while Section 2, paragraph 2, of Article 12 further mandates that the State shall protect the nation's marine wealth in its archipelagic waters, territorial sea, and exclusive economic zone.

By these constitutional provisions, the State has the duty to conserve, protect, and reserve the nation's marine wealth across the Philippines' maritime zones, thereby underpinning regulatory measures and environmental protection efforts that preserve and maintain the country's natural biological and physical diversity, securing for the Filipino people, both present and future generations, the perpetual existence of all natural resources. Pursuant to this policy, Republic Act No. 7586, otherwise known as the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1992, was enacted to establish a comprehensive system of protected areas aimed at biodiversity conservation. To further strengthen and expand this framework, Republic Act No. 11038, otherwise known as the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018, was subsequently enacted.

The province of Capiz is known for its rich marine resources, supporting local livelihoods and the economy. Its coastal waters host diverse ecosystems, including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds, all of which are vital for maintaining ecological balance and biodiversity. In June 2025, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Capiz remarkably discovered a 160-hectare seagrass bed during an underwater survey of the Tucad Reef in Pilar, Capiz¹. This seagrass bed serves as a feeding and nursery ground for various marine species and contributes significantly to the overall health of the coastal ecosystem. It may be one of the largest seagrass formations in the Philippines.

According to Dr. Ernest Federiso, officer-in-charge of DENR-Capiz, the Tucad Reef is home to at least 10 out of 18 recognized species of seagrass in the Philippines, as well as six

¹ 160-hectare seagrass bed in Pilar. (2025). The Capiz Times. <https://thecapiztimes.com/articles/160-hectare-seagrass-bed-in-pilar/>

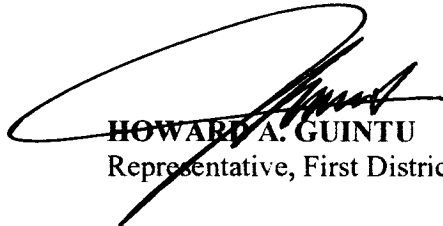
vulnerable species, and nine endangered species². This discovery underscores the imperative to protect and maintain the area against pollution and unsustainable exploitation, as environmental degradation poses a serious threat to biodiversity and marine ecology.

To determine the suitability of its establishment as a protected area under Republic Act No. 11038, DENR–Capiz conducted and completed a Protected Area Suitability Assessment (PASA). This determination was further reinforced when the Provincial Government of Capiz declared Tucad Reef a marine protected sanctuary in recognition of its ecological importance. Thus, the inclusion of Tucad Reef in the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) is not merely appropriate but necessary.

This legislative measure seeks to declare the Tucad Reef, situated within the marine waters and coastal areas of the Municipality of Pilar, Capiz, as a protected area to be known as the Tucad Reef Protected Seascape and Seagrass Meadows, under the provisions of the NIPAS Act. The proposed measure aims to ensure the long-term conservation, protection, and sustainable management of the area's rich marine biodiversity, ecological integrity, and the sustainable livelihood of the communities that depend upon it.

By placing the area under NIPAS, clear governance mechanisms and regulatory controls will be mobilized to prevent destructive activities and promote responsible resource use. This, in turn, is expected to sustain fisheries productivity, enhance local ecotourism, and secure the long-term well-being of coastal communities.

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



HOWARD A. GUINTU
Representative, First District of Capiz

² Galigao, N. (2026, January 16). DENR–Capiz seeks designation of Pilar's Tucad Reef as protected seascape [Review of DENR–Capiz seeks designation of Pilar's Tucad Reef as protected seascape]. Panay News. <https://www.panaynews.net/denr-capiz-seeks-designation-of-pilars-tucad-reef-as-protected-seascape/>



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AN ACT
DECLARING CERTAIN MARINE WATERS AND COASTAL AREAS LOCATED
IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PILAR, PROVINCE OF CAPIZ, A PROTECTED
AREA UNDER THE NATIONAL INTEGRATED PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM
(NIPAS), PURSUANT TO REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7586, AS AMENDED, WITH THE
CATEGORY OF PROTECTED SEASCAPE AND SEAGRASS MEADOWS, TO BE
REFERRED TO AS THE TUCAD REEF PROTECTED SEASCAPE AND
SEAGRASS MEADOWS, PROVIDING FOR ITS MANAGEMENT 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 “**Tucad Reef Protected Seascape and Seagrass Meadows Act.**”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to secure for the Filipino people, present and future generations, the perpetual existence of all native plants and animals through the establishment of a comprehensive system of integrated protected areas within the classification of national parks, marine reserves, protected landscapes and seascapes under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS), as provided for under Republic Act No. 7586, as amended by Republic Act No. 11038. The State recognizes the critical ecological, economic, cultural, and climate-regulating importance of coral reefs and seagrass ecosystems as essential habitats for marine biodiversity, fisheries

productivity, coastal protection, and carbon sequestration and shall ensure their conservation, protection, and sustainable management.

SEC. 3. *Establishment and Coverage.* – The **Tucad Reef Protected Seascape and Seagrass Meadows (TRPSSM)**, situated within the marine waters and coastal areas of **Barangays Balogo, Casanayan, San Antonio and San Ramon in the Municipality of Pilar, Province of Capiz**, is hereby declared a protected area under the **National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS)**.

The protected area shall comprise **coral reef ecosystems with an area of one hundred ten and fourteen hundredths (110.14) hectares, seagrass meadows covering one hundred twenty-five and twenty-four hundredths (125.24) hectares**, together with **marine waters, seabed, and other related habitats**, including duly designated buffer zones, **covering a total area of three thousand eight hundred forty-nine (3,849) hectares**.

The **TRPSSM** shall encompass the Tucad Reef and its surrounding waters, within the following geographic coordinates:

Boundary Corner	X	Y
1	501150.131	1278491.354
2	501150.131	1272259.911
3	502757.458	1272136.301
4	504682.490	1273169.484
5	505468.304	1273431.422
6	505990.374	1273828.298
7	507259.537	1274288.674
8	507936.872	1274378.632
9	508509.212	1274951.020
10	508450.164	1275021.395

The technical descriptions provided in this Act shall be subject to actual ground survey and verification by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) immediately after the effectivity of this Act. Any modification on the coverage of this Act due to factors such as changing ecological situations, new scientific or archaeological findings not

previously considered, shall be made through an act of Congress, after consultation with the affected public and concerned government offices.

SEC. 4. *Objectives.* – The Tucad Reef Protected Seascape and Seagrass Meadows shall be managed to:

- a. Conserve and protect coral reef and seagrass ecosystems and their associated flora and fauna;
- b. Sustain fisheries productivity and enhance food security for coastal communities;
- c. Strengthen coastal resilience against climate change, storm surges and sea-level rise;
- d. Promote scientific research, environmental education and ecological monitoring;
- e. Encourage sustainable and community-based livelihood opportunities compatible with conservation objectives; and,
- f. Recognize and integrate traditional and local knowledge systems in marine resource management.

SEC. 5. *Management of the Protected Area.* – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall exercise primary jurisdiction, authority and responsibility in the management, protection and administration of the Tucad Reef Protected Seascape and Seagrass Meadows, in coordination with concerned local government units (LGUs), national government agencies, civil society organizations and local communities.

A Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) shall be created pursuant to Republic Act No. 11038 to serve as the policy-making and governing body of the protected area.

SEC. 6. *Composition of the Protected Area Management Board.* – The **Protected Area Management Board (PAMB)** is composed of the following:

a. Chairperson

Regional Executive Director (RED), DENR Region VI or his/her duly authorized representative

b. Vice Chairperson

Governor of the Province of Capiz or authorized representative

c. Members

a. National Government Agencies

- PENRO Capiz
- Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)
- Department of Tourism (DOT)
- Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
- Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)
- Other relevant national government agencies

b. Local Government Units

- Municipal Mayor of Pilar
- Barangay Captains of barangays covering or adjacent to the protected area

c. People's Organizations / NGOs

- Representatives from duly recognized People's Organizations (POs)
- Representatives from accredited Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

d. Academe / Scientific Community

- Representative from the academe or scientific institutions with expertise in marine and coastal ecosystems

e. Private Sector

- Representative from the private sector, particularly those involved in ecotourism, fisheries or sustainable enterprises within the protected area

f. Indigenous Peoples (if applicable)

- IP Mandatory Representative, if there are any recognized Indigenous Cultural Communities within the area

d. PAMB Secretariat

The **Protected Area Superintendent (PASu)** shall serve as *ex officio* member and **Head of the PAMB Secretariat**.

SEC. 7. *Protected Area Management Plan (PAMP).* – Within one (1) year from the effectivity of this Act, the DENR, through the PAMB, shall prepare and adopt a Protected Area Management Plan (PAMP) which shall serve as the primary framework for zoning, conservation, sustainable use, enforcement and development of the protected area.

SEC. 8. *Prohibited Acts.* – The following acts are prohibited within the Tucad Reef Protected Seascape and Seagrass Meadows:

- a. Destruction, removal or damage to corals, seagrass and other marine resources;
- b. Use of destructive fishing methods such as blast fishing, cyanide fishing and bottom trawling
- c. Dumping of wastes, toxic substances, or pollutants;
- d. Reclamation, dredging, quarrying or seabed alteration without proper authority;
- e. Unauthorized extraction of natural resources; and
- f. Any activity inconsistent with the approved PAMP.

SEC. 9. *Penalties.* – Any person who violates the provisions of this Act shall be penalized in accordance with **Republic Act No. 11038 (Expanded NIPAS Act)**, **Republic Act No. 8550**, as amended by **Republic Act No. 10654**, and other applicable environmental and fisheries laws.

SEC. 10. *Protected Area Fund.* – There is hereby established a **Tucad Reef Protected Seascape and Seagrass Meadows Fund** to finance the administration, conservation, protection and management of the protected area.

SEC. 11. *Protected Area Staffing and Organizational Support.* – To ensure effective management, protection, and administration of the Tucad Reef Protected Seascape and Seagrass Meadows, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall establish and maintain a Protected Area Management Office (PAMO) headed by a Protected Area Superintendent (PASu).

The DENR, in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM),

shall provide the necessary plantilla positions and personnel support for the protected area, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations. The Protected Area Management Office shall, as far as practicable, be composed of the following personnel:

- a. One (1) Protected Area Superintendent (PASu) (SG-24)**
- b. One (1) Assistant Protected Area Superintendent (SG-22)**
- c. Technical Personnel, including:**
 - Two (2) Senior Ecosystems Management Specialist II (SEMS II) (SG-18)
 - Two (2) Ecosystems Management Specialist II (EMS II) (SG-15)
 - Two (2) Ecosystems Management Specialist I (EMS I) (SG-11)
 - One (1) Forester II or Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Specialist (SG-15)
 - One (1) Development Management Officer I (DMO I) (SG-11)
 - One (1) Community Development Officer I (CDO I) (SG-11)
 - Two (2) Forest Technician II (SG-8)
 - Two (2) Forest Technician I (SG-6)
 - One (1) Economist
 - One (1) GIS Specialist
- d. Protection and Enforcement Personnel, including:**
 - Four (4) Protected Area Rangers
 - Four (4) Protected Area Protection Officers
- e. Administrative and Financial Support Personnel, including:**
 - One (1) Planning Officer II (PO II) (SG-15)
 - One (1) Administrative Officer (SG-11)
 - One (1) Administrative Assistant (SG-8)
 - One (1) Financial Analyst

or such other positions as may be necessary and approved pursuant to civil service laws, rules and regulations.

Pending the creation or filling of permanent plantilla positions, the DENR may hire contractual or job order personnel, subject to existing government rules and availability of funds.

Personnel assigned to the protected area shall perform duties necessary to ensure effective implementation of the Protected Area Management Plan and enforcement of applicable environmental laws.

SEC. 12. *Community Participation.* – Local communities, particularly municipal fisherfolk, women and children, shall be actively involved in the planning, protection, monitoring and management of the protected area. Sustainable livelihood programs shall be prioritized.

SEC. 13. *Implementing Rules and Regulation.* – Within six (6) months from the effectivity of this Act, the DENR shall promulgate the necessary Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

SEC. 14. *Separability Clause.* – If, for any reason, any part, section, or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 15. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issuances, or part or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 16. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,