

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8719



Introduced by **Representative ERIC G. YAP**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to establish a ten kilometer (10 km) municipal fishing buffer zone beyond the existing fifteen kilometer (15 km) limit of municipal waters. It amends Section 4 and 18 of Republic Act No. 8550, otherwise known as the “*Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998*”, as amended, to expand the spatial protection accorded to small-scale fishers and to ensure that fishing activities within this buffer zone primarily benefit local fishing communities.

The 2017 National Stock Assessment Program of the National Fisheries and Research Development Institute reported eighty seven percent (87%) of Philippine marine fisheries stocks are now classified as overfished¹. A recent fisheries assessment further shows a sustained decline in the country’s fisheries from 2010 to 2023, with total losses reaching 591,136 metric tons of fish². This reflects resource depletion in nearshore waters, where municipal fisherfolk depend most. It compels them to venture into deeper and more hazardous waters to maintain their catch, while intensifying conflict with commercial operators that possess greater capacity to exploit marine resources.

This bill ensures that the proposed buffer zone prioritizes municipal fisherfolk, who rely on fishing for subsistence rather than large-scale profit. It reinforces equitable access to fishing grounds and supports the role of municipal fisheries in sustaining local food systems and coastal economies.

¹ OCEANA. (2025, July 9). *A troubling tide: The problem of illegal fishing and declining catch*.

² OCEANA. (2025, September 14). *PHILIPPINE FISHERIES ASSESSMENT: A Glimpse of RA 10654’s 10-Year Implementation*.
<https://ph.oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2026/02/Philippine-Fisheries-Assessment.pdf>

The establishment of this buffer zone also serves as a climate adaptation measure for coastal communities. Healthy coral reefs and seagrass beds within these areas function as natural barriers against storm surges and as critical habitats for fish reproduction. As climate risks intensify, protecting these ecosystems strengthens ecological resilience and secures the long-term productivity of municipal fishing grounds. It also preserves the traditional knowledge of sustainable practices of artisanal fisherfolk, which remain essential to the country's maritime heritage.

This vital piece of legislation affirms that municipal waters must remain primarily for small-scale artisanal fishers, whose livelihoods and welfare depend on fair and sustained access to maritime resources.

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



HON. ERIC G. YAP

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HOUSE BILL NO. 8719

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A TEN-KILOMETER MUNICIPAL FISHING BUFFER
ZONE BEYOND MUNICIPAL WATERS, PROTECTING MUNICIPAL
FISHING AND ARTISANAL FISHERFOLKS, AMENDING FOR THE
PURPOSE SECTIONS 4 AND 18 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8550,
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS "THE PHILIPPINE FISHERIES CODE OF
1998", AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

Section 1. Section 4 of Republic Act (RA) No. 8550, otherwise known as the "*Philippine Fisheries Code Of 1998*", as amended by RA No. 10654, is hereby further amended to read as follows:

"Sec. 4. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Code, the following terms and phrases shall mean as follows:

"x x x

"57. Municipal fishing – refers to fishing within municipal waters **OR WITHIN MUNICIPAL WATERS BUFFER ZONE** using fishing vessels of three (3) gross tons or less, or fishing not requiring the use of fishing vessels.

"58. Municipal waters - x x x

"58-A. **MUNICIPAL WATERS BUFFER ZONE. – MARINE WATERS INCLUDED BETWEEN TWO (2) LINES DRAWN PERPENDICULAR TO THE GENERAL COASTLINE FROM POINTS WHERE THE BOUNDARY LINES OF THE**

MUNICIPALITY TOUCH THE SEA AT LOW TIDE AND A FOURTH LINE PARALLEL TO THE THIRD LINE THAT SERVES AS BOUNDARY OF THE MUNICIPAL WATERS AND TEN (10) KILOMETERS FROM SUCH THIRD MUNICIPAL WATERS BOUNDARY LINE.

“x x x”

SEC. 2. Section 18 of the same Act is hereby amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 18. *Users of Municipal Waters.* – All fishery related activities in municipal waters **OR IN MUNICIPAL WATERS BUFFER ZONE**, as defined in this Code, shall be utilized by municipal fisherfolk and their cooperatives/organizations who are listed as such in the registry of municipal fisherfolk **AND SHALL BE LIMITED TO MUNICIPAL FISHING.**

“The **DEPARTMENT, WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE** municipal or city government, however, may, through its local chief executive and acting pursuant to an appropriate ordinance, authorize or permit small [and medium] commercial fishing vessels to operate within the [ten point one (10.1) to fifteen (15) kilometer area from the shoreline in] municipal waters **BUFFER ZONE** as defined herein, provided, that all the following are met:

“x x x

“(c) prior consultation, through public hearing, with the M/CFARMC has been conducted; [and]

“(d) the applicant vessel as well as the shipowner, employer, captain and crew have been certified by the appropriate agency as not having violated this Code, environmental laws and related laws[.]; **AND**

“(E) **THE APPLICANT VESSEL IS EQUIPPED WITH A VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM (VMS) THAT IS CONSISTENTLY REPORTING ITS LOCATION PRESCRIBED BY AND REGISTERED WITH THE DEPARTMENT.**

“x x x”

SEC. 3. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 4. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders and rules, and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 5. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,