



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

Second Regular Session



House Bill No. 10733

Introduced by Representatives

Sergio C. Dagooc, *APEC Party-List*

Presley C. De Jesus, *PhilRECA Party-List*

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 16, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates 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.”

For decades, environmental legislation in the Philippines has operated primarily under a human-centered framework—treating nature as mere property, a repository of natural resources, or an object to be exploited for economic advancement, provided that regulatory minimums are met. However, the escalating global climate crisis, biodiversity loss, deforestation, marine degradation, and severe weather disturbances demonstrate the clear limitations of this traditional approach.

This bill introduces a transformative legal framework: the legal recognition of the Rights of Nature. By conferring legal personality upon natural ecosystems and processes, this proposed measure shifts our jurisprudence from viewing nature as property to recognizing it as a rights-bearing entity possessing the inherent right to exist, persist, regenerate, and be restored.

Recognizing the rights of nature does not oppose human development; rather, it guarantees that human activities, economic growth, and technological innovation remain in dynamic balance with the carrying capacity of the Earth. Protecting nature's right to regenerate is, in truth, the

ultimate defense of human rights and the well-being of future generations of Filipinos.

In view of the urgency of safeguarding our natural heritage and securing an ecologically sustainable future for the nation, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

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


SERGIO C. DAGOOC
APEC Party-List


PRESLEY C. DE JESUS
PhilRECA Party-List



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS

Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 10733

Introduced by Representatives
Sergio C. Dagooc, APEC Party-List
Presley C. De Jesus, PhilRECA Party-List

AN ACT
TO RECOGNIZE AND PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF NATURE

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “Rights of
2 Nature Act.”

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the
4 State to recognize and protect natural ecosystems and processes, or distinct
5 and identifiable portions thereof, as legal entities possessing certain
6 fundamental and inalienable rights. The State shall provide simple, effective
7 and expeditious mechanisms for the protection and enforcement of these
8 rights. Such rights shall be founded on the following:

- 9 a) **Interconnectedness** of all creation bound by a common living source
10 and all activities in the ecosystem—land, air, water, and sea live and
11 function according to their respective roles to create and sustain the
12 web of life shall at all times be respected.
- 13 b) **Harmony.** All human activities, within the framework of plurality and
14 diversity, should achieve a dynamic balance with the cycles and
15 processes inherent in Nature.
- 16 c) **Collective good.** The interests of society shall be fulfilled consistent

1 with the rights of Nature and shall involve all human activities.

- 2 d) **Guarantee of the regeneration of Nature.** The State, at its various
3 levels, and society, in harmony with the common interest, must ensure
4 the necessary conditions in order that Nature may regenerate,
5 recognizing that ecosystems are limited in their ability to regenerate,
6 and that humans are limited in their ability to undo their actions.
- 7 e) **Multiculturalism.** The exercise of the rights of Nature requires the
8 recognition, recovery, respect, protection, and dialogue of the diversity
9 of feelings, values, knowledge, skills, practices, skills, transcendence,
10 transformation, science, technology and standards, of all the cultures
11 of the world who seek to live in harmony with nature.
- 12 f) **Co-existence of Human Rights and Rights of Nature.** All rights
13 guaranteed under the Constitution and international human rights
14 treaties and laws, shall be exercised in harmony and consistent with
15 the Rights of Nature.
- 16 g) **Promotion of ecologically-sound innovation.** The promotion of
17 ecologically sound innovation shall be in line with the rights of Nature
18 and shall be actively pursued by the State.
- 19 h) **Indispensable role of the IPs/ICCs.** The State recognizes the
20 indispensable role of the indigenous peoples/indigenous cultural
21 communities in the protection and promotion of the rights of nature.

22 **SEC. 3. Definition of Terms.** — As used in this Act, the following terms
23 are defined as follows:

- 24 a) **Nature** refers to the physical world, which encompasses all the biotic
25 and abiotic components and their interactions. It also refers to the
26 meanings in which different groups attribute to the physical
27 environment to make sense of the world.
- 28 b) **Natural Ecosystems** refer to the complex and dynamic communities
29 of plants, animals, microorganisms, species, and other beings and
30 their environment, both living and non-living, where human
31 communities and the rest of nature interact as a functional unit
32 under the influence of climatic, physiographic, and geological
33 factors, as well as production practices, Filipino cultural diversity,
34 and the worldviews of nations and indigenous peoples/indigenous
35 cultural communities.
- 36 c) **Ecological renewal and restoration** refer to the process that will
37 enable the recovery of an ecosystem previously damaged by natural
38 or anthropogenic causes.
- 39 d) **Ecological debt** refers to what a country incurs when its ecological
40 footprint exceeds its biocapacity. This means that the countries
41 make use of the resources of other countries to fulfill their

consumption needs.

- e) **Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities** (refer to the definition under the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act / IPRA).

SEC. 4. The Fundamental Rights of Nature. — Natural ecosystems shall have the right to exist; to the maintenance of the vital cycles, functions and processes that ensure their continued sustainability and well-being; to the conditions necessary for their ecological renewal and restoration; and to adequate and effective representation vis-à-vis the protection and enforcement of these rights. These rights shall be in addition to, and shall not impair or limit, any other right or remedy available under existing law, administrative regulations or jurisprudence. A violation of any existing environmental law or regulation shall be deemed a *prima facie* violation of these rights.

The State likewise recognizes that there are limits on the ability of natural ecosystems and processes to regenerate as well as on the ability of humanity to undo and reverse any damage it has caused to the environment. Thus, all development that affects or modifies natural ecosystems and processes must guarantee and uphold the rights secured in this Act, be sustainable, ensure the maintenance of critical ecosystem services, and respect intra- and intergenerational equity.

SEC. 5. Legal Personality of Natural Ecosystems and Processes. — The legal personality of natural ecosystems and processes, including all of their living and non-living elements, as well as any distinct and identifiable portions, aggregations or components thereof, shall be recognized under law. In any action for the protection or enforcement of the rights recognized herein, the natural ecosystem or process involved shall be considered the real party-in-interest. Only natural ecosystems as defined in this Act, including those under Section 14, shall be deemed to have legal personality and entitled to protection under this Act. Likewise, the rights of nature secured in this Act shall not be interpreted to confer liabilities, duties, obligations, or responsibilities on nature.

SEC. 6. Obligations of the Government. — The Government shall take all necessary actions to fully protect and enforce the rights recognized by this law including, but not limited to, the following:

- a) Develop and implement policies and regulations to guarantee and uphold the rights recognized in this Act, including, but not limited to, decision-making criteria for all government actions and authorized activities that will guarantee and uphold these rights, including prevention of harm to natural ecosystems and processes

1 before harm happens, early warning systems to ensure any potential
2 or ongoing harm is stopped, robust enforcement of these rights in
3 courts of appropriate jurisdiction, protection and restoration of
4 natural ecosystems and processes, and the exercise of precautionary
5 measures to prevent human activity from causing the extinction of
6 living populations, the alteration of the cycles and processes that
7 ensure life, and the destruction of livelihoods and cultural systems
8 that are intertwined with natural ecosystems and processes;

- 9 b) Promote balanced forms of production and patterns of consumption
10 that, while satisfying the needs of the Filipino people, safeguard the
11 regenerative capacity and integrity of natural ecosystems and
12 processes;
- 13 c) Protect natural ecosystems and processes from the exploitation of
14 their components, the commodification of living systems or the
15 processes that support them, and the structural causes and effects
16 of global climate change;
- 17 d) Ensure long-term energy sovereignty, increased efficiency and the
18 gradual incorporation of clean and renewable alternative sources
19 into the energy matrix;
- 20 e) Demand international recognition of ecological debt through the
21 financing and transfer of clean technology compatible with the rights
22 recognized in this Act;
- 23 f) Promote peace and the elimination of all weapons of mass
24 destruction; and
- 25 g) Promote the recognition of the rights of natural ecosystems and
26 processes in multilateral, regional, and bilateral international
27 relations.

28 **SEC. 7. Obligations of Juridical Persons.** — All juridical persons shall
29 take all necessary actions to protect and enforce the rights recognized by this
30 law including, but not limited to, the following:

- 31 a) Embed the Right of Nature policy in their by-laws and organizational
32 processes upon submission of their application for registration to
33 the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC);
- 34 b) Undertake regular reporting to the Department of Environment and
35 Natural Resources (DENR) of their impacts on specific ecosystems
36 where they are conducting their business operations;
- 37 c) Conduct environmental and human rights assessment prior to
38 conducting their operations or whenever there is significant change
39 in their operations such as merger or closure of business, which
40 demonstrate that their activities are not violating the rights
41 recognized in this Act or harming nature, *Provided*, that, such

1 assessment demonstrating that the rights of nature are not being
2 violated shall be a prerequisite for the issuance of the Environmental
3 Compliance Certificate (ECC) by the DENR.

4 **SEC. 8. Representation and Standing.** — Any Philippine resident may
5 file an action to enforce the rights or obligations recognized under this Act.
6 Upon the filing of any such action, the Court shall issue an order which shall
7 contain a brief description of the cause of action and the reliefs prayed for,
8 requiring all interested parties to manifest their interest to intervene in the
9 case within a reasonable amount of time from notice thereof.

10 **SEC. 9. Reliefs.** — If warranted, the court shall issue a judgment in
11 favor of the natural process or ecosystem on whose behalf an action for the
12 protection and enforcement of the rights recognized herein was filed, which
13 shall include measures for its protection, preservation, ecological renewal and
14 restoration, as well as the payment of attorney's fees, costs of suit and other
15 litigation expenses. Monetary damages to be awarded shall be the amount
16 necessary to fully rectify or repair the damage done to natural ecosystems and
17 processes by the defendant.

18 **SEC. 10. Trust Fund.** — Any monetary award that any Court may
19 award in defense of the rights of Nature shall not accrue to the benefit of the
20 representative but it will be deposited to a Trust Fund, *Provided, however,*
21 that any expenses incurred by the representative shall constitute a lien to the
22 monetary award.

23 All monetary awards shall be deposited in the Trust Fund under the
24 administration of the Conservation Committee provided for in this Act, which
25 shall be used to implement the measures for protection, preservation,
26 ecological restoration, or renewal ordered by the court.

27 **SEC. 11. Appointment of Conservation Committee.** — To administer
28 the trust fund and implement the measures necessary for protection,
29 preservation, or ecological renewal and restoration of the natural ecosystem
30 or process on whose behalf an action pursuant to this Act was filed, the Court
31 shall appoint a conservation committee from the stakeholders concerned. The
32 Court shall give preference to indigenous cultural communities from the same
33 area, people's organization, non-governmental organization, or any public
34 interest group accredited by or registered with any government agency. Under
35 no circumstances shall a person or entity responsible for a violation of the
36 rights recognized herein be appointed to a conservation committee.

37 **SEC. 12. Designation of Courts and Promulgation of Procedural**
38 **Rules.** — The Supreme Court shall designate the court or courts that will hear

1 and resolve cases brought under this Act and shall promulgate the rules of
2 pleading, practice and procedure to govern the proceedings brought under
3 this Act.

4 **SEC. 13. Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPP).**

5 — A Strategic Lawsuit against Public Participation (SLAPP) is any action filed
6 to harass, vex or exert undue pressure against any person or legal entity that
7 has taken legal action or made a public communication of any kind in
8 connection with the enforcement or protection of the rights recognized herein
9 or any other environmental law or regulation. The defendant in a SLAPP may
10 file a special motion to dismiss at any point of the proceedings alleging that
11 the case is a SLAPP. This special motion to dismiss shall be resolved within
12 thirty (30) days after it is heard. If the court dismisses the SLAPP, it shall
13 award damages, attorney's fees, and costs of suit. The dismissal shall be with
14 prejudice.

15 **SEC. 14. Territories of Life.** — All ancestral domains of the IPs/ICCs

16 shall be deemed as Territories of Life, as it is grounded on nature's intrinsic
17 value and their customary belief in the sanctity of the land and oneness with
18 nature. As such, all ancestral domains shall be deemed to have rights as
19 provided under Sections 4 and 5 hereof. Likewise, all protected areas declared
20 under the E-NIPAS, including those declared by the local government units
21 (LGUs) as protected areas, are deemed Territories of Life subject to the
22 protection under this Act. National development planning under the NEDA
23 and Local development planning of the LGUs shall integrate the appropriate
24 development framework consistent with the rights of nature. The Protected
25 Area Management Board shall ensure that the management plans in all PAs
26 are aligned with the objectives of the Act.

27 **SEC. 15. Role of the Indigenous Political Structure (IPS).** — All IPS

28 where present, as mandated by existing law, shall have the following duties
29 and functions in relation to the protection of the rights of nature and
30 implementation of this Act:

- 31 a) Represent the interest of ecosystems and processes within the
32 respective jurisdiction of the LGUs where their AD is located, including
33 the participation in the local development planning;
34 b) Ensure that IPs are consulted and give Free, Prior and Informed
35 Consent (FPIC) for any development that may affect ecosystem in the
36 Territories of Life;
37 c) Promote indigenous ecological values and practices by coordinating
38 with the Department of Education for its inclusion in the curriculum.

39 **SEC. 16. Allocation of Funds from Other Sources.** — The DENR is

1 hereby mandated to allocate funds for the implementation of this Act sourced
2 from the various funds that the existing law allows it to collect and disburse,
3 such as the Integrated Protected Area Fund (IPAF) under the E-NIPAS and the
4 Forestry Code, among others.

5 **SEC. 17. Protection of Individuals and Communities Dependent on**
6 **the Environment for their Livelihood.** — Nothing in this Act shall be
7 interpreted to diminish or limit the rights of those whose livelihoods are
8 dependent on the benefits derived from the environment such as IPs,
9 fisherfolk, farmers and the like, except to the extent that their acts violate the
10 rights of nature provided in this Act. They shall likewise be deemed stewards
11 of nature in areas where they habitually reside, taking into account their local
12 knowledge and practices in enhancing the health and protection of nature.
13 Any development projects, whether public or private, shall undergo the
14 consultation required under Sections 26 and 27 of the Local Government
15 Code of 1991. Individuals and communities referred to in this SEC. shall be
16 indispensable parties in any consultation or conduct of any study in relation
17 to the proposed development project.

18 **SEC. 18. Review of the Environmental Impact Assessment Study**
19 **System.** — The DENR in consultation with the public and private sector,
20 including the IPMRs and local communities referred under Section 17 shall
21 conduct a review of the EIASS to align this System with the rights under the
22 provisions of this Act, to ensure that no public or private projects or activities
23 are approved or authorized which would violate the rights secured in this Act.

24 **SEC. 19. Education.** — The Department of Education and the
25 Commission on Higher Education shall integrate into the curriculum of all
26 levels the respect for and recognition of the inherent and inalienable rights of
27 natural ecosystems.

28 **SEC. 20. Enforcement and the Implementing Rules and**
29 **Regulations.** — The provisions of this Act shall be effective immediately upon
30 its adoption. The Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, in
31 coordination with the Commission on Human Rights, the Department of
32 Social Welfare and Development, Department of Education, Commission on
33 Higher Education, Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian
34 Reform, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change
35 Commission, and associations or organizations representing environmental
36 advocates shall issue the Implementing Rules and Regulations to guide the
37 efficient implementation of this Act within ninety (90) days from the effectivity
38 thereof.

39 **SEC. 21. Appropriations.** — The amount necessary for the initial

1 implementation of the provisions of this Act shall be charged against the
2 current year's appropriations of the Department of Environment and Natural
3 Resources.

4 **SEC. 22. Penalties.** — Any person who violates any of the provisions
5 of this Act or its Implementing Rules and Regulations shall, upon conviction
6 by final judgment, be punished by imprisonment of not less than six (6)
7 months nor more than two (2) years or a fine of not less than Five Million
8 pesos (PhP 5,000,000), nor more than Ten Million pesos (PhP 10,000,000), or
9 both, at the discretion of the court. If the violation is committed by a juridical
10 person, the officer responsible therefor shall serve the imprisonment when
11 imposed. If violation is committed by an alien, he or she shall be immediately
12 deported after service of sentence, without need of further proceedings.

13 **SEC. 23. Separability Clause.** — If any provision or part hereof is held
14 invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law or the provision not
15 otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

16 **SEC. 24. Repealing Clause.** — Any law, presidential decree or
17 issuance, executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or
18 regulation contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are
19 hereby repealed, modified or amended accordingly.

20 **SEC. 25. Effectivity.** — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
21 its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation

22 *Approved,*