

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11018



Introduced by **ANG PROBINSYANO**
Party-List Representative Alfred Delos Santos

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bicol River Basin is one of the most significant river systems in the Philippines, serving as a vital source of water for agriculture, domestic use, fisheries, and ecological sustainability in the Bicol Region. It plays a critical role in supporting food security, livelihoods, and regional economic development. However, the basin continues to face persistent and complex challenges, including recurrent flooding, watershed degradation, sedimentation, climate change impacts, and fragmented governance mechanisms.

Despite the existence of various national and local initiatives, the management of the Bicol River Basin remains institutionally fragmented, with multiple agencies exercising overlapping mandates over water resources, irrigation, flood control, environmental protection, and land use. This has resulted in inefficiencies, lack of coordination, and suboptimal outcomes in addressing both environmental and socio-economic concerns.

The Constitution mandates the State to protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology (Article II, Section 16), and to ensure the rational utilization and conservation of natural resources. In line with this, there is a compelling need to adopt an integrated river basin management (IRBM) approach, which recognizes the interdependence of land, water, ecosystems, and human communities within a river basin.

While prior executive issuances, such as Presidential Decree No. 926 and Executive Order No. 359, have established project-level and programmatic mechanisms for the Bicol River Basin, these measures remain limited in scope, continuity, and institutional authority. Moreover, existing structures under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), including the River Basin Control Office, primarily provide policy direction at the national level and

are not designed to function as dedicated, basin-specific coordinating bodies with sustained operational capacity.

This proposed measure seeks to address these gaps through the creation of the Bicol River Basin Management Office (BRBMO), which shall serve as a central coordinating and integrative body for all programs, projects, and policies affecting the Bicol River Basin. The BRBMO is designed not to duplicate or supplant existing agencies, but to harmonize their efforts, facilitate inter-agency collaboration, and ensure a coherent and science-based approach to river basin management.

Consistent with the principle of local autonomy under the Local Government Code of 1991, the proposed Office shall work in close coordination with local government units, ensuring that local development plans are aligned with basin-wide strategies while respecting the powers and functions of LGUs.

Furthermore, the measure institutionalizes multi-stakeholder participation, recognizing that sustainable river basin management requires the active involvement of communities, farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, civil society, and the private sector.

By establishing a dedicated institutional mechanism anchored on integrated, participatory, and science-driven management, this bill aims to enhance the resilience, sustainability, and productivity of the Bicol River Basin, thereby contributing to national priorities on environmental protection, disaster risk reduction, food security, and inclusive development.

It is for the foregoing premises that the approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.



ALFRED C. DELOS SANTOS
Representative, Ang Probinsyano Party-List

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AN ACT
CREATING THE BICOL RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT OFFICE
(BRBMO), DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the “Bicol River Basin Management Office Act.”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to ensure the sustainable development, management, and protection of river basins consistent with ecological balance and climate resilience and promote integrated river basin management (IRBM) through inter-agency coordination and stakeholder participation. Toward this end, the State shall strengthen institutional mechanisms for the Bicol River Basin, recognizing its critical role in flood control, agriculture, water security, and regional development.

SECTION 3. *Creation of the Bicol River Basin Management Office (BRBMO).* The created Bicol River Basin Management Office (BRBMO) shall serve as the central coordinating and implementing body for all river basin-related programs, projects, and policies within the Bicol River Basin.

The BRBMO shall be attached to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for policy and program coordination.

SECTION 4. *Coverage.* - The jurisdiction of the BRBMO shall cover the entire Bicol River Basin, including but not limited to areas in the provinces of

Camarines Sur, Albay, and other adjoining areas as may be determined by the DENR.

SECTION 5. *Powers and Functions.* - The BRBMO shall have the following powers and functions:

- a) Formulate and implement an Integrated River Basin Management Plan for the Bicol River Basin;
- b) Serve as the primary coordinating mechanism among national agencies, LGUs, and stakeholders;
- c) Monitor and evaluate river basin projects and ensure alignment with national policies;
- d) Facilitate flood control, watershed protection, irrigation, and water resource management initiatives;
- e) Promote climate resilience, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable land and water use; and
- f) Exercise such other powers necessary to achieve the objectives of this Act.

SECTION 6. *Organizational Structure.* - The BRBMO shall be headed by an Executive Director, who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines.

The Office shall include technical, administrative, and support staff as may be necessary.

SECTION 7. *Coordination with Existing Agencies (Non-Impairment Clause).* - The BRBMO shall not diminish or impair the mandates of existing agencies, including but not limited to:

- (a) Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
- (b) River Basin Control Office (RBCO)
- (c) National Irrigation Administration (NIA)
- (d) Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)
- (e) Local Government Units (LGUs)

It shall operate primarily as a coordinative, integrative, and policy-aligning body, consistent with existing laws.

SECTION 8. *Consultation with Communities, Local People's Organizations, and Civil Society Organizations.* - The BRBMO shall ensure the meaningful and continuing participation of affected communities, local people's organizations (POs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the planning, implementation,

monitoring, and evaluation of all programs, projects, and policies under this Act. Toward this end, the BRBMO shall:

- (a) Conduct regular public consultations, dialogues, and information campaigns with affected communities, POs, and CSOs prior to the adoption or implementation of river basin plans, programs, and projects;
- (b) Ensure representation of community leaders, POs, and CSOs in relevant planning bodies, technical working groups, or advisory councils created pursuant to this Act;
- (c) Establish accessible mechanisms for the submission of feedback, grievances, and recommendations by communities, POs, and CSOs;
- (d) Give due consideration to the welfare, livelihood, and traditional knowledge of affected communities, including indigenous peoples, farmers, and fisherfolk, in all decision-making processes; and
- (e) Coordinate with LGUs to ensure that community consultations are conducted in a manner that is accessible, culturally appropriate, and inclusive of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Consultations conducted pursuant to this Section shall be documented and shall form part of the official records of the BRBMO.

SECTION 9. *Roles of Local Government Units.* – LGUs within the Bicol River Basin shall:

- a) Participate in planning and implementation;
- b) Align local development plans with the basin plan;
- c) Retain autonomy pursuant to the Local Government Code of 1991.

SECTION 10. *Appropriation.* - The amount necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this Act shall be incorporated in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from effectivity, DENR, in coordination with relevant agencies, shall promulgate the Implementing Rules and Regulations.

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

SECTION 13. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees or issuances, letters of instruction, administrative orders, rules, and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 14. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,