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**SENATE**

P. S. Res. No. 1020

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Introduced by Senator Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid

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**RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES IN THE SENATE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE RAPIDLY INCREASING NUMBER OF JANITOR FISHES INFESTING OUR MAJOR WATER BASINS THAT SERIOUSLY THREATEN THE LIVELIHOOD OF THOUSANDS OF FISHING FAMILIES WHO DEPEND ON THESE WATERS FOR THEIR SUBSISTENCE**

*WHEREAS*, Article 2, Section 16 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";

*WHEREAS*, being archipelagic in nature, our country's major river basins provide a significant role in providing fish stocks and food for our population. Our country's major river basins provide fish and other aquatic products and support other strategic economic activities such as transportation, recreation and tourism;

*WHEREAS*, recent reports have indicated that janitor fishes have become invasive in the Marikina River in Metro Manila, Lake Paitan in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija and Laguna de Bay. Reports have also indicated sightings of these janitor fishes in Zamboanga City, Aparri, Cagayan and in the Agusan Marsh in Agusan del Sur;

*WHEREAS*, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) reported that there are currently two (2) species of the "janitor fish" found in the country namely: *Pterygoplichthys pardalis* found in the Marikina River and Lake Paitan in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija, and the *Pterygoplichthys disjunctivus* found in Laguna de Bay;

*WHEREAS*, originally introduced in the Philippines in the early 1990s as an aquarium fish to clean algae, janitor fishes escaped into our natural bodies of waters. As an algae-eater, janitor fishes compete for food supply with other marketable fishes in the river thus leading to the displacement of native species. Its breeding behavior contributes to water turbidity since it creates deep burrows at the bottom of the lake and in riverbeds. Janitor fish competes for food with the native catfish, carp, mudfish, tarpons, mullets, tilapia and other fish species found in the Laguna de Bay. It also competes with bivalves and gastropods for food;

*WHEREAS*, reports indicate that janitor fishes have already spread to Marikina River and Laguna de Bay, and are now poised to infest the ecosystem of Asia's largest

marshland, the Agusan Marsh in Agusan del Sur. Recently, a major daily reports that Marianne Hubilla, a volunteer fisheries researcher with the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro) from the University of Philippines in the Visayas (UPV), and Ferenc Kis, a Hungarian consultant on wetland management, accidentally discovered the spread of the janitor fish in the Agusan Marsh;

**WHEREAS**, it is important to highlight that in the case of the Laguna de Bay, which is located on the outskirts of eastern Manila and covers more than 90,000 hectares (222,300 acres), tens of thousands of fishing families get their food and income mainly from it;

**WHEREAS**, janitor fishes cause extensive damage to fishing gear and aquaculture structures. The uncontrolled proliferation of these invasive species is not only a threat to the livelihood of thousands of small-scale fishing families, but also to the lakes' biodiversity. Since these janitor fishes are opportunistic and voracious feeders, they may cause their numbers to increase enough to disrupt the vulnerable ecosystem in our major water basins by displacing the native fish species, and causing the reduction of native fish catch;

**WHEREAS**, there is an urgent need to conduct a thorough study and analysis of janitor fishes so that the benefits from alternative use of these species in fisheries and aquaculture can be maximized and the risks that they pose can be managed.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY**

**RESOLVED**, that the Senate of the Philippines direct the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and other appropriate Committees in the Senate to conduct an inquiry, *In Aid of Legislation*, into the rapidly increasing number of janitor fishes infesting our major water basins that seriously threaten the livelihood of thousands of fishing families who depend on these waters for their subsistence.

**Adopted,**

  
**MANUEL "LITO" M. LAPID**  
Senator