

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



Senate
Office of the Secretary

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SENATE

P. S. Res. No. 422

RECEIVED BY:

Introduced by Senator Loren B. Legarda

RESOLUTION
URGING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT
AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO REPORTS OF
VIOLENCE, LAND-GRABBING, AND ILLEGAL LOGGING AND
QUARRYING NEGATIVELY IMPACTING THE MASUNGI
GEORESERVE, AND THE REST OF THE UPPER MARIKINA RIVER
Basin Protected Landscape

WHEREAS, the Masungi Georeserve is a conservation area tucked in the rainforests of the Southern Sierra Madre range in Rizal. It sits inside the 26,124-hectare Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL), one of the 94 protected areas established under Republic Act No. 11038 or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Area Systems (E-NIPAS) Law;

WHEREAS, in 1969, Presidential Proclamation 573 declared the area as part of the Kaliwa Watershed Forest Reserve;

WHEREAS, the Department of Environment & Natural Resources (DENR) and the Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI) entered into a Memorandum of Agreement dated 25 April 2017, which seeks to protect, conserve, rehabilitate, and sustainably develop the Masungi Georeserve that covers 2,700-hectare of lands covered by Presidential Decree No. 324 and the Greater Masungi Karst Area located in Rizal Province, including parts of the UMRBPL and the Kaliwa Watershed Forest Reserve;

WHEREAS, in 1973, Presidential Decree No. 324 excluded from the Marikina Watershed Reservation under the administration of the former National Waterworks and Sewerage Authority, now Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, certain parcels of land embraced therein and opened the same to exploitation under the provisions of the Public Land Act;

WHEREAS, the development of a geopark, such as the Masungi Geopark Project, is the future of environmental protection, conservation, and sustainable development. A Geopark is a UNESCO designation of a single or unified area where a site or landscape of geological significance is managed with a holistic concept of protection, education, and sustainable development;

WHEREAS, the youth-led project, Masungi Geopark Project, bagged local and international awards in recognition of its efforts in fighting deforestation and climate change through geo-tourism, such as the International Ranger Award by the International Union for Conservation of Nature-World Commission on Protected Areas, Model for Balanced Man-Nature Interactions in World Conservation Congress 2016; Inspire Category Winner, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) Action Awards 2022; First Place in Water ChangeMaker Awards; Finalist of the 15th Tourism Awards United Nations World Tourism Organisation; Best Conservation Organization awarded by the Department of Tourism; Sustainability Initiative Category Winner, Bett Asia Awards 2022; Exploration Grantee, National Geographic Society; among others;

WHEREAS, Global Witness reports that the Philippines is one of the deadliest places for nature defenders, citing that out of the 228 reported killings globally in 2020, thirty (30) of which occurred in the Philippines;

WHEREAS, on 19 September 2022, more than 30 armed men, reportedly belonging to a private security agency, encamped along the Marikina-Infanta Highway near the Masungi's conservation site and the Kaliwa Watershed protected area;

WHEREAS, the armed men belonging to the private security agency were hired by the people who allegedly bought the property;

WHEREAS, Masungi Georeserve forest rangers who guard and patrol the nature reserve against illegal encroachment and destruction had previously found themselves in dangerous situations. In particular, two forest rangers were threatened and assaulted in Baras, Rizal, in February 2021. Two other forest rangers had also been shot;

WHEREAS, the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL), which is home to over 400 species of flora and fauna as well as the site of 60-million-year-old limestone formations, is also plagued with illegal activities such as kaingin, quarrying, logging, land-grabbing, and development of illegal resorts at the site;

WHEREAS, the continued threats and attacks against the land and environmental defenders, accompanied by bold illegal activities within the UMRBPL, display an alleged disregard for environmental laws and human rights;

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon Congress and the appropriate government agencies to determine the truth given the situation's disregard for the country's laws in the face of environmental degradation and violation of human rights.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to strongly urge the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation into reports of violence, land-grabbing, and illegal logging and quarrying negatively impacting the Masungi Georeserve, and the rest of the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape.

Adopted,



LOREN LEGARDA