

23 FEB 27 P3:23

SENATE

S. No. 1927

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by **SENATOR CYNTHIA A. VILLAR**

AN ACT
DECLARING THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN MARIANO AND THE
MUNICIPALITY OF PALANAN, PROVINCE OF ISABELA, AS ECOTOURISM
ZONES, TO BE JOINTLY KNOWN AS THE SAN MARIANO-PALANAN
ECOTOURISM CORRIDOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The municipalities of San Mariano and Palanan, Province of Isabela, host an array of high-potential ecotourism attractions on either side of the majestic Sierra Madre Mountains, within a single day's drive from Metro Manila.

The Municipality of San Mariano is home to a pristine system of virgin waterfalls, forest areas for hiking, swimming, camping and other sports, and even a crocodile conservation sanctuary. The San Mariano Rearing Station in Barangay Minanga and the Philippine Crocodile Conservation Center at the ISU-San Mariano Campus are jump-off points to a distinctive wildlife and nature thrill that offers total eco-tourism experience. The amazing circuit of pristine waterfalls notably, the Amisan Falls in Barangay Del Pilar, Minangaoan Falls, Disusuan Falls and Cadsalan Falls showcases an array of well-preserved attractions teeming with rare flora and fauna. Barangay Marannao has a small water impounding area perfect for water sports and lake cruising.

Meanwhile, the Pacific Ocean-facing Municipality of Palanan is home to one of the longest and widest stretches of white sand beach found in Luzon. Due to poor

infrastructure, the rest of the nation is deprived of access to its enchanting Blue Lagoon and pristine white beaches, notably Dicotcotan and Didagungan. The Kanasangyan Creek and Cave, Digoyo Lake and Disadsad Falls accent the surrounding rainforests and the protected marine resources with a magical and unforgettable charm. For extreme adventure with a historical twist, the Aguinaldo Trail which traverses San Mariano and Palanan could be developed as a trail sports route which also commemorates a significant moment in Philippine history.

Despite their great potential, however, these tourism attractions are severely underdeveloped due to lack of attention and low levels of investment from the national government and private stakeholders. While it is true that more infrastructure projects have been recently allocated to improve access to Palanan, it is still a paltry sum of the needed investment to transform the San Mariano-Palanan zone into a vaunted self-sustaining ecotourism corridor. This is also a decisive step towards the actual and inevitable future of the District. Just as we are extending resources to tap the ecotourism potentials of our rainforests and hidden shores, the cultivation of the San Mariano-Palanan ecotourism corridor has found its due time.

This legislation seeks to break this cycle of inattention and outright neglect by declaring the municipalities of San Mariano and Palanan, respectively, as a single unified Ecotourism Corridor using the nomenclature of existing tourism laws and regulations. Their hope is that the clear mandate of this bill, if passed into law, will push the national government to prioritize the development of much-needed tourism infrastructure in these areas. This is timelier than ever considering the Department of Tourism's re-orientation towards domestic tourism promotion in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It cannot be overemphasized that the development of San Mariano and Palanan as an ecotourism corridor will serve to jumpstart the local economy, generate jobs, and provide livelihood to families who are still suffering under the pandemic.

This is the Senate counterpart measure of HB No. 5962 principally authored by Hon. Ed Christopher Go, the Representative of the Second District of Isabela.

In view of the foregoing, I recommend the approval of this measure.



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

1 Section 1. The Municipality of San Mariano and the Municipality of Palanan in
2 the Province of Isabela are hereby declared as ecotourism zones, to be jointly known
3 as the San Mariano-Palanan Ecotourism Corridor. Pursuant thereto, the development
4 of the San Mariano-Palanan Ecotourism Corridor shall be prioritized by the
5 Department of Tourism (DOT), subject to the rules and regulations governing the
6 development of ecotourism zones.

7 Sec. 2. Within one (1) year after the approval of this Act, the municipal
8 governments of San Mariano and Palanan shall, in coordination with the DOT,
9 Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Public
10 Works and Highways (DPWH), Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority
11 (TIEZA) and concerned agencies of the government, prepare a comprehensive
12 tourism development plan for the San Mariano-Palanan Ecotourism Corridor. The
13 development plan shall include the identification, validation, construction, installation
14 and maintenance of such appropriate facilities and infrastructure to enhance
15 ecotourism in the areas: *Provided, That* said development plan shall ensure the

1 preservation of the cultural heritage of the areas and the conservation of its
2 biophysical assets, and incorporate strategies and programs to promote sustainable
3 economic opportunities for the local communities: *Provided, further,* That the
4 implementation of the tourism development plan shall be included in the respective
5 budgets of the municipal governments of San Mariano and Palanan.

6 The municipal governments of San Mariano and Palanan, The DOT, DPWH
7 and TIEZA shall prioritize the construction and completion of the San Mariano-
8 Palanan Road in order to ensure the accessibility of tourists.

9 Sec. 3. The DOT shall assist the municipal governments of San Mariano and
10 Palanan in the implementation of the tourism development plan by providing
11 technical assistance in tourism capacity building. It shall also include the San
12 Mariano-Palanan Ecotourism Corridor in its national and regional promotion
13 programs.

14 Sec. 4. The funding for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the
15 respective annual budgets of the municipal governments of San Mariano and
16 Palanan. The DOT may augment such allocation with internally-generated funds.

17 Sec. 5. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the municipal
18 governments of San Mariano and Palanan shall, in consultation with the DOT and
19 concerned agencies of the government, promulgate rules and regulations to
20 implement this Act.

21 Sec. 6. If any provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or
22 invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

23 Sec. 7. All laws, rules, regulations, executive orders, proclamations,
24 presidential decrees and other issuances inconsistent with any of the provisions of
25 this Act are hereby deemed repealed or amended accordingly.

26 Sec. 8. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the
27 Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,