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OF THE PHILIPPINES
First Regular Session

7 SEP 25 2018

SENATE
P. S. RES. 145

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by Senator Villar

RESOLUTION

URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT TO CONDUCT AN OMNIBUS INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATE OF PHILIPPINE MARINE LIFE AND BIODIVERSITY, IN THE LIGHT OF THE REPORTED SERIOUS STATE, ITS BAD SHAPE STATUS AND NEAR DEATH OF THE COUNTRY'S CORAL REEFS

Whereas, maintaining ecological equilibrium is a significant policy of the government, as declared in "[t]he 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" (Article II, Section 16, The 1987 Philippine Constitution);

Whereas, the Philippines is home to some of the most splendid and spectacular marine sanctuaries: the Tubbataha Reefs Marine Park in Palawan, Apo Island in Negros Oriental, Apo Reef in Puerto Galera, Mindoro and Verde Island Passage off Batangas;

Whereas, it has been reported that close to a decade after El Nino phenomenon hit the country, the Philippine coral reefs --- the second largest in Southeast Asia --- remain in bad shape;

Whereas, the latest statistics of Reef Check, the world's largest reef conservation organization, revealed that the Philippines' less than five percent (5 %) of the estimated 27,000 square kilometers of coral reefs are considered in excellent condition and that it is in its most seriously threatened state;

Whereas, accordingly, the 1998 El Nino phenomenon has caused the most serious impact in the dissipation of marine life, as it resulted in coral bleaching or the death of twenty percent (20 %) of the country's coral reefs;

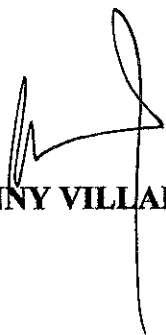
Whereas, human activities contributed to aggravate the degradation of coral reefs in the country with incidences of over-fishing, marine pollution and dynamite and dangerous chemical-aided blast fishing;

Whereas, biodiversity and the health of the Philippine marine life are in alarming danger as manifested in the density of Napoleon wrasse in Philippine coral reefs at almost zero and such Philippine sea staples as bump-head parrotfish, sweetlips, snappers and moray eels are hard to find and in low abundance state;

Whereas, an urgent intensified preservation efforts must be done by both government and the private sector to save the Philippine coral reefs: Now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate of the Philippines, To urge the Committee on Environment to conduct an omnibus inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the state of Philippine marine life and biodiversity, in the light of the reported serious state, its bad shape status and near death of the country's coral reefs.

Adopted,



MANNY VILLAR

RP coral reefs, second largest in Asia, in bad shape

By KATHERINE ADRANEDA

Close to a decade after the El Niño phenomenon hit the country in 1998, Philippine coral reefs – the second largest in Southeast Asia – remain in “bad shape,” and the situation continues to be “bleak” unless intensified protection and preservation efforts are done to save them, according to an international reef conservation group.

In the latest data of Reef Check, the world’s largest reef conservation organization, only less than five percent of the country’s estimated 27,000 square-kilometer of coral reef are considered in “excellent condition.”

Among them are world-famous destinations like Tubbataha Reefs Marine Park in Palawan, Apo Island in Negros Oriental, Apo Reef in Puerto Galera, Mindoro, and Verde Island Passage off Batangas, Domingo Ochavillo, country director of the California-based group, noted that the larger areas of coral reefs are unable to recover from the adverse effects of El Niño and the impact of human activities such as blast fishing and marine pollution over the years.

“In general, the coral reefs in the Philippines are still in bad shape,” Ochavillo said, pointing out that the 1998 El Niño resulted in coral bleaching, or the death of 20 percent of the country’s coral reefs. The El Niño phenomenon is an abnormal warming of surface ocean waters in the eastern tropical Pacific.

Reef Check said the density of Napoleon wrasse in Philippine coral reefs has been consistently low and almost always zero.

The same observation on barramundi cod has been noted by the conservation organization.

Although the densities of grouper fish (Lapu-lapu) are in a slightly better state, Reef Check said these are nevertheless considered low.

“This group of fishes is highly targeted especially in the live reef fish trade to account for their low densities. Although these fishes are naturally low in abundance in the wild, over-fishing has pushed their densities much lower,” Reef Check stressed.

Moreover, the group said that it is now very hard to find bump-head parrotfish in fished coral reefs.

Sweetlips, snappers and moral eels are all very low in abundance as well.

However, Reef Check data have indicated that these fishes are more abundant in protected reef areas.

Meanwhile, Reef Check said the trends in the highly targeted invertebrate indicators are likewise not better.

It said that sea cucumbers, lobsters, triton shell, and pencil urchins are very low in abundance.

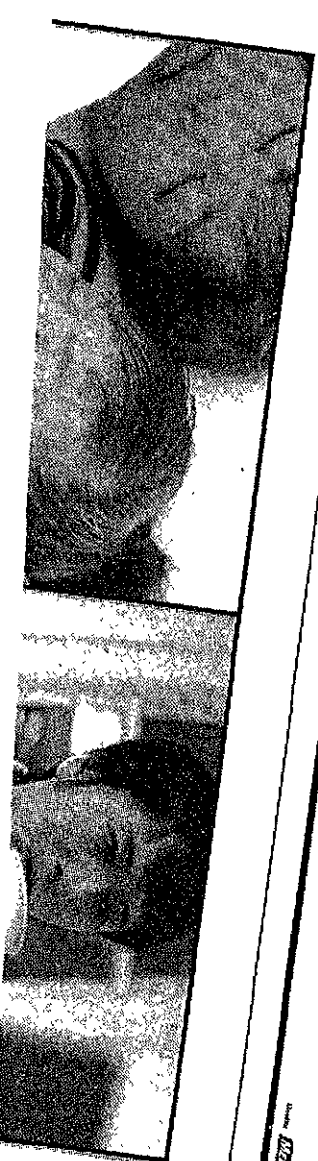
“The triton shell and the pencil urchin ...”

coral reef cover in the Philippines has been on a decreasing trend.

In 1997, he said citing records, the Philippines’ live hard coral reef cover was at 60 percent. But this went down 40 percent in 1998; more than 20 percent in 1999; around 30 percent in 2000; 20 percent in 2001; more than 20 percent in 2002 to 2005; and around 30 percent in 2006.

Ochavillo emphasized that the best way to ensure the protection and preservation of Philippine coral reefs is the establishment of more marine protected areas (MPAs) since this mechanism makes sure that fishing and other human activities are regulated or even banned.

Reef Check underscored recovery in a number of protected reefs, where there is an existing “no-take policy.” These areas include the Apo Island and Danjuran Island in Negros.



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in the latest data of Reef Check, the world's largest reef conservation organization, only less than five percent of the country's estimated 27,000 square-kilometers of coral reef are considered in "excellent condition."

Among them are world-famous destinations like Tubbataha Reefs Marine Park in Palawan, Apo Island in Negros Oriental, Apo Reef in Puerto Galera, Mindoro, and Verde Island Passage off Batangas.

Domingo Ochavillo, country director of the California-based group, noted that the larger areas of coral reefs are unable to recover from the adverse effects of El Niño and the impact of human activities such as blast fishing and marine pollution over the years.

"In general, the coral reefs in the Philippines are still in bad shape," Ochavillo said, pointing out that the 1998 El Niño caused the "most serious" impact as it resulted in coral bleaching, or the death of 20 percent of the country's coral reefs. The El Niño phenomenon is an abnormal warming of surface ocean waters in the eastern tropical Pacific.

"It can be said that it might have even turned for the worse, as it's a very bleak situation for the coral reefs in the Philippines," Ochavillo added.

According to Reef Check's latest survey, the threats to Philippine coral reefs are similar to most developing countries that have high population growth rates and with local coastal communities contributing a significant portion of the national population.

Reef Check said this "continued burgeoning of the country's population" is definitely increasing its negative impact on the health of the coral reefs as shown in the group's indicators.

The group said so-called "high-valued" indicators have very low densities based on their long-term data, and "they seem to have not recovered yet."

An example, the group survey stressed, is the decreasing density of Napoleon wrasse, a fish species listed under the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species.

(Lapu-Lapu) are in a slightly better state, Reef Check said these are nevertheless considered low.

"This group of fishes is highly targeted especially in the live reef fish food trade to account for their low densities. Although these fishes are naturally low in abundance in the wild, over-fishing has pushed their densities much lower," Reef Check stressed.

Moreover, the group said that it is now very hard to find bump-head parrotfish in fished coral reefs.

Sweetlips, snappers and moral eels are all very low in abundance as well.

However, Reef Check data have indicated that these fishes are more abundant in protected reef areas.

Meanwhile, Reef Check said the trends in the highly targeted invertebrate indicators are likewise not better.

It said that sea cucumbers, lobsters, triton shell, and pencil urchins are very low in abundance.

"The triton shell and the pencil urchins are in fact very hard to find now in fished reefs. These organisms have been highly targeted by fishermen for the curio trade. Giant clams and banded shrimps are still found in many reefs but the impact of over-fishing for the curio and the ornamental trade will continue to drive their abundance much lower," Reef Check said.

Decreasing trend

Natural disturbances constitute a significant factor that negatively impacts the health of coral reefs. But while typhoons are a normal occurrence in the Philippines, El Niño events seem to be more frequent leading to the warming of the coastal waters and subsequent coral bleaching that in turn cause widespread and increased mortalities of coral reefs, the group said.

However, Ochavillo lamented that human activities continue to aggravate the degradation of coral reef in the country with incidences of over-fishing, dynamite fishing, and marine pollution. Ochavillo noted that since 1997, the

to 4000), and around 30 percent in 2006. Ochavillo emphasized that the best way to ensure the protection and preservation of Philippine coral reefs is the establishment of more marine protected areas (MPAs) since this mechanism makes sure that fishing and other human activities are regulated or even banned.

Reef Check underscored recovery in a number of protected reefs, where there is an existing "no-take policy." These areas include the Apo Island and Danjugan Island in Negros.

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