

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



Senate
Office of the Secretary

'13 JUL -8 A8 :23

SENATE
S.B. No. **525**

RECEIVED BY: *ju*

Introduced by Senator LOREN LEGARDA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill declares the province of Palawan as the ecological tourism capital of the Philippines with the corresponding government support and grant of autonomy.

The concept of ecological tourism is consistent with the State's policy on the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology.

Section 16, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states 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. In the 1993 landmark case of *Oposa vs. Factoran*, the Supreme Court ruled that the right to a balanced and healthful ecology carries with it the correlative duty to refrain from impairing the environment.

Ecotourism focuses on local culture, wilderness adventures, volunteering, personal growth, and learning new ways to live on the planet; typically involving travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. Responsible ecotourism includes programs that minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment, and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, an integral part of ecotourism is in the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for the local communities

Palawan is the biggest province in the Philippines and is composed of 1,768 islands and islets. The island-province first attracted foreign attention in the 1970's when it became a United Nations Vietnamese Refugee Center. Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park is Palawan's most popular attraction and covers 5,349 hectares of lush forest, dark mountains, caves and white beaches. The Park is inscribed in the prestigious list of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage.

Ecology awareness is at a high level throughout the province. Puerto Princesa prides itself as the cleanest city in the Philippines. To protect its mega-diversity, only eco-friendly programs are adhered to by tourist establishments. And there are strict ordinances against dynamite fishing, with only net and line fishing allowed. Palawan may have opened itself to tourism but it has also taken serious efforts to preserve this last frontier.

This proposed measure seeks to provide the necessary support to such efforts of the province of Palawan by declaring it the ecological tourism capital of the Philippines. By this, there shall be created an Ecological Tourism Office whose governing board shall be co-chaired by Representatives of the legislative districts of the province and the Governor of Palawan. The membership of the board shall be composed of representatives from the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Tourism (DOT), the private sector, the non-governmental organization, and the local government units. This Office shall rationalize all efforts pertaining to environmental protection and making the tourism industry a major source of livelihood and an avenue for the generation of employment.

In view of the foregoing, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly requested.



LOREN LEGARDA

Senator



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AN ACT
DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF PALAWAN AS THE ECOLOGICAL
TOURISM CAPITAL OF THE PHILIPPINES AND OTHER PURPOSES

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

1 **SECTION 1. Title.** This Act shall be known as "An Act Declaring the
2 Province of Palawan as the Ecological Tourism Capital of the Philippines."

3
4 **Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy.** It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 promote a sustainable tourism industry. Towards this end, the country shall
6 rationalize all efforts pertaining to environmental protection and making the
7 industry a major source of livelihood and an avenue for the generation of
8 employment. Henceforth, aggressive measures seeking to restore the country's share
9 in the Asian tourist market shall be consistent with the preservation of the existing
10 ecosystem and natural environment.

11
12 **Sec. 3. Ecological Tourism Capital of the Philippines.** Pursuant to public
13 policy, the Province of Palawan including the city of Puerto Princesa is hereby
14 declared an eco-tourism zone and shall be called the Eco-Tourism Capital of the
15 Philippines.

16
17 **Sec. 4. Creation of an Eco-Tourism Office.** Within a year from the approval of
18 this Act, there shall be created an Eco-Tourism Office whose governing board shall
19 be co-chaired by Representatives of the legislative districts of the province and the
20 Governor of Palawan. The membership of the board shall be composed of
21 representatives from the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), the
22 Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of

1 Tourism (DOT), the private sector, the non-governmental organization, and the local
2 government units.

3
4 **Sec 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** The PCSD, DENR and DOT shall
5 prepare an eco-tourism master plan and promulgate the necessary rules and
6 regulations to be approved by the President of the Philippines upon
7 recommendation of the board.

8
9 **Sec. 6. *Appropriation.*** The amount necessary to carry out the provisions of
10 this Act shall be taken from the current appropriation of PCSD and shall be
11 included in the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment into
12 law and thereafter.

13
14 **Sec. 7. *Separability Clause.*** If any provision of this Act shall be held
15 unconstitutional, any other provision not otherwise affected shall remain in full
16 force and effect.

17
18 **Sec. 8. *Repealing Clause.*** All laws, executive orders, rules and regulations, or
19 parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby amended,
20 repealed or modified accordingly.

21
22 **Sec. 9. *Effectivity.*** This Act shall take effect after its complete publication in at
23 least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

24
25 Approved,
26