

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



'22 JUL 13 P1:11

SENATE
S. No. 491

RECEIVED BY

Introduced by Senator Loren B. Legarda

**AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR URBAN AND COUNTRYSIDE GREENING IN THE
PHILIPPINES THROUGH MANDATORY TREE PLANTING AND ADOPTION
OF A FOREST SANCTUARY BY PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNDER THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 16, Article II 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."

The Philippines is recognized to be one of the most vulnerable countries to face dangerous consequences of climate change such as increasing frequency and severity of droughts, fires, floods and storms, damage to ecosystems, and biodiversity loss. It is indeed high time for the Philippine archipelago and the local communities to be the voice of the vulnerable by addressing these challenges through pursuing green growth in preventing and reducing the adverse impacts climate change.

The increase of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere contributes to global warming and climate change. As reported by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is an important heat-trapping (greenhouse) gas, which is released through human activities such as deforestation.¹

¹ <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/carbon-dioxide/>

According to the Land Management Bureau (LMB), the Cadastral Survey completed in 2015 revealed that the country has an estimated total land area of 29,704,230 hectares: 14,194,675 hectares (47.79%) are alienable and disposable lands, while 15,509,555 hectares (52.21%) are forest lands.

However, Global Forest Watch² reported that the Philippines lost 158,000 hectares of primary forest from 2002 to 2021, or 12% of its total tree cover loss.³ During the same period, 92% of tree cover loss occurred in areas where the dominant drivers of loss resulted in deforestation.

Trees and forests act as effective carbon sinks and help improve air quality. According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), a single tree can sequester 0.56 metric tons of carbon dioxide in its lifetime. Thus, integrating tree-planting in our environmental agenda is a must and encouraging the youth, as the most active partners in challenging development norms, to actively participate in this cause will strengthen our initiatives towards the greening of urban and the countryside in the Philippines.

This measure seeks to empower the youth as effective catalysts for change, as well as the academe as the medium to disseminate information, as they adopt or create forest sanctuaries or gardens both in urban areas as well as in the countryside. With more than twenty million students in the public school sector planting trees the whole year round, the country's forests can surely be revived in the shortest time possible. More than the actual number of trees we plant, what is more important is to instill in the minds of present and future generations that we must save the environment while there is still time.

² <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/country/PHL/>

³ Tree cover loss is defined as the complete removal of tree cover for any reason, including human-caused loss and natural events. Loss of tree cover may be permanent or temporary; for example, temporary tree cover loss may occur when trees are harvested for wood production and the land is subsequently replanted or allowed to naturally regenerate. Deforestation, on the other hand, typically refers to human-caused, permanent removal of natural forest cover. (<https://research.wri.org/gfr/forest-extent-indicators/forest-loss>)

In view of the foregoing considerations, the immediate passage of this measure is sought.


LOREN LEGARDA

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
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'22 JUL 13 P1:12

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

1 Section 1. *Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Forest Sanctuaries Act of
2 2022."

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - Recognizing the vital role of trees and plants in
4 ecological stability, it is hereby declared the national policy to ensure sufficient
5 greenery in urban and countryside areas and to promote the right of the people to a
6 balanced and healthy ecology.

7 Sec. 3. *Scope.* - This Act shall apply to all barangays, municipalities, cities, and
8 provinces, particularly in all public parks and public school grounds in urban and
9 rural areas, idle public lands, unless otherwise identified to be used for other
10 purposes, and privately-owned land whose proprietors voluntarily subject their
11 properties to the provisions of this Act, upon the creation of appropriate agreements
12 with the schools implementing this Act.

13 Sec. 4. *Objectives.* - Pursuant the policy declared herein, it is the objective of this
14 Act:

- 1 a. To build, adopt, develop maintain forest or sanctuaries public elementary
2 and secondary schools;
- 3 b. To require the planting of trees and shrubbery as well as provision of
4 financial, physical, and technical support by national agencies and local
5 government units;
- 6 c. To promote environmental consciousness by encouraging active
7 participation in tree-planting activities in the community, especially among
8 students, youth, other civic action groups, and the academe; and
- 9 d. To protect trees from harmful human activity and increase the country's
10 forest cover.

11 Sec. 5. *National Forest Sanctuary Committee.* - A National Forest Sanctuary
12 Committee is hereby created with the Secretary of the Department of Education
13 (DepEd) as Chairman and the respective secretaries of the Department of
14 Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Tourism (DOT),
15 Department of Interior and Local Government DILG), and the Department of
16 Agriculture (DA) as members.

17 The National Forest Sanctuary Committee shall promulgate the pertinent rules
18 and regulations as may be necessary to fully implement the objectives and purposes
19 of this Act not later than ninety (90) days after the approval of this Act.

20 The National Forest Sanctuary Committee shall convene every quarter to hear
21 the reports or performance from the Regional Committees.

22 Sec. 6. *Specific Functions of the Executive Department.* - The following are the
23 specific functions:

- 24 a. The DENR shall provide the technical, scientific, and physical support in:
 - 25 1) determining of the suitable species of trees and provision of seeds or
26 samplings to be planted in existing forest/mangrove sanctuaries or
27 areas where a forest mangrove sanctuary or urban garden is to be
28 established;
 - 29 2) classifying and determining of existing forest mangrove sanctuaries,
30 proposed forest mangrove sanctuaries and urban gardens;
31 and
 - 32 3) tree planting activities.

- 1 b. The Local Government Units (LGUs) shall:
- 2 (1) in partnership with DENR and DA , aid in the determination of suitable
- 3 areas for the proposed forest mangrove sanctuaries urban gardens;
- 4 (2) mobilize all concerned local agencies and communities to ensure prompt
- 5 and effective implementation of this Act in all public schools within their
- 6 jurisdiction;
- 7 (3) mobilize non-government organizations, foundations and other private
- 8 entities or corporations provide financial, physical or other kinds of support
- 9 for the implementation of this Act; and
- 10 (4) effect the apprehension for the consequent prosecution of all persons
- 11 violating the penal provisions of this Act.
- 12 c. The DILG shall coordinate all local government units to ensure prompt and
- 13 effective implementation of this Act.
- 14 d. The DOT shall assist in the conceptualization and site-evaluation and
- 15 cooperate in the maintenance or creation of forest/mangrove sanctuaries
- 16 and urban gardens and provide additional funding from its resources.
- 17 e. The DA shall aid in the determination of suitable areas for the proposed
- 18 forest/mangrove sanctuaries/urban gardens and provide the technical and
- 19 scientific support i.e. the necessary tools, equipment, and manpower to
- 20 effect the implementation of this Act.
- 21 f. The DepEd, as lead agency of this Act, shall coordinate all tree-planting
- 22 activities of all public elementary and high schools and integrate the tree-
- 23 planting activities into the school curriculum to promote environmental
- 24 consciousness. It shall also undertake relevant projects for the promotion of
- 25 these activities.

26 Sec. 7. *Tree Planting Guidelines.* - Tree Planting in duly qualified areas shall

27 comply with the following guidelines:

- 28 a. Considering the classification and condition of the soil and the total land
- 29 area of the site, suitable species of forest trees or fast-growing trees shall be
- 30 planted in the identified areas;

- 1 b. In cases where multiple trees can be planted, the trees should be planted in
2 clusters not more than four (4) meters apart from one another; and
3 c. The DepEd and DENR shall facilitate and supervise all the tree planting
4 activities and the consequent maintenance of the same within its
5 jurisdiction. The government agencies concerned shall perform their duties
6 and responsibilities as indicated in Section 6 this Act.

7 Sec. 8. *Prohibited Acts.* - All forest mangrove parks or sanctuaries or urban
8 gardens established under this Act shall be protected and maintained by all concerned
9 public schools, the DENR, DepEd, and other government agencies and local
10 governments. These forest mangrove sanctuaries shall not be destroyed, except when
11 the cutting and destroying of the same is necessary for public safety.

12 Sec. 9. *Penalties.* - Any person found guilty of violating Section 8 of this Act shall
13 be punished with imprisonment of not less than six (6) months to not less than one (1)
14 year or a fine not less than Three Thousand Pesos (Php 3,000.00) to not more than Ten
15 Thousand Pesos (Php 10,000.00), or both imprisonment and fine, at the discretion of
16 the court.

17 Sec 10. *Submission of Reports.* - The National Forest Sanctuary Committee shall,
18 within ninety (90) days after the approval of this Act, submit periodic reports to both
19 houses of Congress of the Philippines.

20 Sec. 11. *Funding.* - The fund needed for the implementation of this Act shall be
21 taken from any available appropriation in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of
22 the year of its implementation; Provided, that funds for this purpose shall also be
23 included in every annual GAA; Provided further, that there shall be equitable and
24 proportionate appropriations of funds annually for this purpose for all barangays,
25 municipalities, cities and provinces. In addition, adequate portions of financial grants
26 and concessional loans extended by foreign governments and multilateral agencies
27 every year, the amount to be determined by the President, shall be allocated to
28 augment the annual appropriations until this Act is fully implemented.

29 Sec. 12. *Separability Clause.* - All laws, decrees, rules and regulations, or parts
30 thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

1 Sec. 13. *Effectivity Clause*. - This Act shall take effect upon its publication in at
2 least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,