

# DENR chief vows help for residents at closed mine site

Published April 26, 2017, 10:00 PM

*By Philippines News Agency*

Sipalay City — Secretary Gina Lopez of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pledged to provide alternative livelihood for residents at a closed mining site in this southern Negros city.

Sipalay, located about 170 kilometers south of Bacolod City, is the site of the Maricalum Mining Corp. copper mine which stopped operations about 10 years ago.

Lopez arrived here Tuesday afternoon after visiting another mine site in Basay town in Negros Oriental.

She rode a helicopter to survey Maricalum's open-pit mine in Barangay San Jose.

After the inspection, Lopez expressed dismay over the destruction, describing it as horrible.

"It looks like hell to me. Everything is horrible," Lopez said.

She talked with about 100 residents at Sipalay City Hall.

Lopez assured the residents and the city government of assistance from DENR if they commit to do their part.

She added that the DENR can help set up ecotourism projects anchored on her Genuine Economic Growth program which engages both the people and environment.

Lopez presented models of successful area development in various communities, including Ugong Rock in Puerto Princesa City, where ecotourism improved the lives of the people.

"If Palawan can do it, so can you," she told the forum participants.

For his part, Mayor Oscar Montilla said it is difficult to find jobs for his constituents since the mine shut down, since there are no other industries in Sipalay except tourism.

Sipalay attracts tourists to its white sand beaches and dive sites.

Earlier, Lopez said that in the past months, the DENR has worked with closed mine communities to find sustainable solutions that balance livelihood and ecological protection.

She also said the DENR is working with the Department of Labor and Employment and Department of Tourism for eco-tourism initiatives along with the Department of Social Welfare and Development for social safety nets.

<http://news.mb.com.ph/2017/04/26/denr-chief-vows-help-for-residents-at-closed-mine-site/>