DENR, DA to dredge 4 rivers

TO AVERT heavy flooding, President Rodrigo Duterte has approved recommendations to start the dredging of four heavily-silted rivers which cause floods that destroy crops and properties every year, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said Wednesday.

"[The President] directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture to work with the Department of Public Works and Highways to implement the dredging," Piñol said in a Facebook post.

"The dredging operations will be a stop-gap measure to avert flooding in the areas where the rivers pass through," he added.

Rivers that will be dredged are the Agusan River which flows from the mountains of Davao and ends up in Butuan City which recently overflowed its banks and damaged an estimated 50,000 hectares of farmlands, Rio Grande de Mindanao which flows out of Cotabato City from the plains of Central Mindanao passing through the Liguasan Marsh, Pampanga River which causes flooding in Pampanga Province every year destroying crops and Cagayan River, the country's longest and biggest river which flows from Quirino Province and ends up in Aparri, Cagayan.

The long-term solution agreed by the DENR, DA and DILG during a meeting Monday was to implement the President's directive of a total log ban in the headwaters of the rivers and to reforest the mountains.

Two weeks ago, heavy floods hit the Agusan River Basin, Davao del Norte and the Central Mindanao causing heavy damage to agriculture.

Duterte ordered for the creation of a tripartite committee to study the possible implementation of a nationwide log ban in the country.

A moratorium on logging in natural or residual forests throughout the country is currently in place through Executive Order No. 23 signed by former President Benigno Aquino III in 2011.

The EO, however, does not provide for a total log ban since it allowed logging companies with unexpired licenses to continue logging. It also allowed logging in plantation forests, or forests planted by man.