

MANP-PAMB to create committee to protect Mt. Apo

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The Mt. Apo Natural Park-Protected Area Management Board (MANP-PAMB) will create a multi-sectoral committee on forest protection to ensure that similar massive fire last year will not recur as the Mt. Apo reopens next week.



The peak of Mt. Apo, the Philippine's highest reflects in the serene water of Lake Mirror in Mt. Apo Highland Resort in Kapatagan, Digos City in the province of Davao del Sur. (Alexander D. Lopez)

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) 11 director Ruth Tawantawan said this committee will be tasked to propose measures for the protection of the country's highest peak, most especially overseeing the current plans of the local government units in combating forest fires.

"We are hoping that there will be changes in the implementation as well as on the enforcement of the recommendations. We will give our best on what should be done for the Mt. Apo via the PAMB," he said.

Under the current set-up, she said it is the eco-tourism committee, chaired by Kidapawan Tourism officer Joey Recimilla, who handles both the protection and promotion tourism activities.

The eco-tourism committee pushed for the reopening of the Mt. Apo as proposed by Manobo tribal leaders, a year after it was closed indefinitely due to the massive fire incident last year that razed 115 hectares of grasslands and forest, and gutted some century-old trees.

A MANP-PAMB resolution approved on March 23, 2017 stated that Manobo tribal leader Datu Rogelio Manapol was the one who raised a motion to reopen Mt. Apo and duly seconded by Datu Samuel Asicam.

Tawantawan said DENR 11 wanted to do a study last year on the vulnerability of the Mt. Apo Natural Park related to fire and its carrying capacities but no experts were willing to take up the work for P100,000, most especially from the academe.

Interface Development Interventions (IDIS) acting executive director Chinkie Pelino-Golle said the creation of a new committee is just fine but they should be careful in choosing its members.

Tawantawan said they assured all policies are enforce well this time to prevent such incident from happening again.