

# Government draws up masterplan for Laguna Lake rehabilitation

*By Louise Maureen Simeon*

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MANILA, Philippines - The government is crafting a masterplan to rehabilitate and repopulate Laguna Lake, the country's largest body of freshwater, to improve local marine productivity.

Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Pinol said local government officials of Laguna and Rizal, the provinces which surround the lake, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will meet with him on May 2 to finalize the plan to rehabilitate the lake.

The plan will cover the finishing touches of the Department of Agriculture's Balik Sigla sa Ilog at Lawa (BASIL) project that will identify major lakes and river basins nationwide that need to be seeded with fingerlings.

"The seeding of Laguna Lake with millions of fingerlings will mark the start of a nationwide program which intends to repopulate the country's inland waters, including rivers and streams with indigenous fish species," Pinol said.

The DA will seed an initial five million fingerlings at the Laguna Lake. By the end of the Duterte administration, the DA is targeting to seed about 210 million fingerlings nationwide.

Part of the rehabilitation plan is the massive clean up of the lake to be supported by the DA through the distribution of fiber glass fishing boats.

"The local government units will also be asked to monitor the continued dumping of industrial wastes and effluence into the lake by factories," Pinol said.

The Agri chief also urged the Laguna Lake Development Authority to make recommendations to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources on where to establish fish landings and fish ports for an easy delivery to major markets.

"The fisherfolks as stakeholders will also be engaged in establishing hatcheries for the production of fingerlings to make the production sustainable," he said.

Clearing and dismantling operation at the 90,000-hectare Laguna Lake started this month and is expected to be finished in time for the second State of the Nation Address of President Duterte.

Fish pens in the area cover almost 13,000 hectares while the ideal carrying capacity of the Laguna Lake is around 9,000 hectares only.

Data showed there are over 1,000 legitimate fish pen operators in Laguna Lake while unregistered operators number to about 2,200.

Laguna Lake supplies close to 40 percent of the total fish demand in Metro Manila.