

# Pasig River 8th in top 20 polluting rivers

By **BusinessMirror**  
September 17, 2017



In Photo: The tour highlighted the chokepoints and documented the pollution along the Pasig River and feeding into Manila Bay. The groups also released a GPS-equipped buoy to track the movement of marine debris, such as plastic waste, from Pasig River into open waters.

Environment groups held a boat tour last week that showed the magnitude and trajectory of plastic waste from tributary San Juan River to the Pasig River's mouth.

The tour, led by Greenpeace Philippines and the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC), highlighted the chokepoints and documented the pollution along the Pasig River and feeding into Manila Bay.



Abigail Aguilar (left), Greenpeace campaigner, and other campaigners hold the banner that reads “Ban single-use plastic” during the boat tour hosted by Greenpeace and the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission to show the magnitude and trajectory of plastic waste from tributary San Juan River to the Pasig River’s mouth.

The groups also released a Global Positioning System-equipped buoy to track the movement of marine debris, such as plastic waste, from Pasig River into open waters.

The boat tour is a prelude to the Manila Bay beach clean-up and brand audit, organized by Greenpeace Philippines and its partners, to highlight the intensity of plastic pollution in Manila and identify the brands that are most responsible for plastic pollution.

The clean-up and brand audit will be at Freedom Island, Parañaque City, from September 11 to 20.

“We need to more thoroughly examine the state of our water bodies and underscore the impacts of prevailing practices, such as discarding single-use plastics into the Pasig River, which eventually contributes to pollution in Manila Bay,” said Abigail Aguilar, detox campaigner of Greenpeace Philippines.

Aguilar added: “It’s urgent that we all understand that the root problem is the production and promotion of single-use packaging, when we should be developing more sustainable habits instead.”

She said the pollution in our water bodies is also a manifestation of the “dismal implementation of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and the urgent need for a national law banning the use of single-use plastics altogether.”

In a June 2017 report, the Pasig River was ranked eighth in the top 20 polluting rivers as predicted by the global river plastic inputs model. The study said the river dumps up to 63,700 tons of plastic into the ocean each year.

San Juan River is a major river system in Metro Manila and tributary of the Pasig River. It traverses five cities, namely, Quezon City, San Juan City, Mandaluyong City, Pasig City and Manila City, all highly urbanized areas, which also suggests high generation of wastes. The accumulated volume of solid and liquid wastes from domestic, commercial and industrial establishments surrounding the 37.4-meter-wide river significantly contributed to its failing water quality.

Greenpeace said Pasig River’s surrounding areas are prone to flooding due to siltation in San Juan River where most of the garbage flow from upstream Quezon City, collects further and travels down through San Juan, Mandaluyong and Manila, and ending up in the Pasig.

Despite being the shortest river of the three tributaries, San Juan River is consistently the most polluted main tributary of the Pasig River.

A report from the PRRC showing the annual average water quality data from 2009-2016 indicates that the biochemical oxygen demand concentration in San Juan River frequently exceeds 100 milligram (mg) per liters, which seriously exceeds the required Class C standard of 7 mg per liters, Greenpeace said.

PRRC has launched numerous projects to revive and develop the river and its tributaries. Its current initiative, the San Juan River Dredging Project, aims to increase the depth of the river through the removal of accumulated debris and contaminants and aims to improve the economic, environmental and health status of San Juan River through dredging activities.

“I live in San Juan, so I see it every day suffering greatly from toxic pollution. Did you see bubbles of methane gas upwelling from the river? I fear not only for my health but for the health of my family and our community, so I am determined to lead the rehabilitation of San Juan River through the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission,” PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio E. Goitia said.

“If we succeed in cleaning the San Juan River, then we also succeed in cleaning the Pasig River,” he added. The plight of the Pasig River mirrors the status of the world’s oceans, with reports on plastic pollution in water bodies often looking very dim. The Philippines ranks third-worst polluter, with 1.88 million metric tons of mismanaged plastic waste per year, with China as No. 1, followed by Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia in the top 10 countries with mismanaged plastic waste, Greenpeace said in a news release.

Except for China, these countries are all classified as developing economies, benefiting from economic growth, reduced poverty and improved quality of life. But this new found spending power has led to “exploding demand for consumer products that has not yet been met with a commensurate waste-management infrastructure.”

“Manila is on the brink of crisis. If we continue dumping and trashing our waterways, and if big companies continue business-as-usual by producing single-use plastic, then it won’t be long before our oceans are no longer able to sustain life,” Aguilar said. <https://businessmirror.com.ph/pasig-river-8th-in-top-20-polluting-rivers>