

DENR urged to declare Manila Bay as ‘reclamation-free zone’

[Gaea Katreena Cabico](#) (philstar.com) - January 14, 2019 - 3:38pm

MANILA, Philippines — A fisherfolk group on Monday called on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to declare Manila Bay as a “reclamation-free zone” as the agency beefed up efforts to restore the natural harbor to its pristine state.

In a statement, Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas stressed that declaring Manila Bay as a “reclamation-free zone” would help in rehabilitating one of the country’s major fishing grounds, which is currently suffering from environmental degradation stage.

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“While Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu blames Manila Bay residents of disposing garbage and domestic wastes in the sea, he failed to address on the other hand the lethal risk of massive reclamation projects to the marine environment and ecosystem,” Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya national chairperson, said.

Hicap explained that reclamation causes traditional fish and shellfish species in Manila Bay to get extinct because coral reefs and mangrove forests have been destroyed to give way to commercial business districts and private establishments.

One of the long-term effects of reclamation projects is the dwindling fish catch, which drops to two to five kilos every fishing trip, he added.

Hicap, a fisherman in Manila Bay, also stressed that reclamation would lead to the displacements of “hundreds of thousands of fisherfolk and urban poor families.” He cited that at least 30,000 fishing and urban poor families were displaced to construct the SM Mall of Asia, Solaire Resort and Casino and other government establishments situated along Roxas Boulevard.

“We demand the DENR to cease and desist from granting environmental permits to any project that threatens the environment and rights of the fisherfolk,” he said.

The Pamalakaya national chairperson added: “The government should instead promote a genuine rehabilitation program that will not violate the community rights of the fisherfolk and coastal settlers and will restore the traditional use of Manila Bay as a fishing ground.”

Last week, Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año said the agency is mulling a review of all reclamation projects in Manila Bay. The projects involve the reclamation of at least 26,230 hectares of Manila Bay.

The rehabilitation of Manila Bay became the government's "next big target" after the rehabilitation of Boracay.

The planned rehabilitation of Manila Bay would be in three phases—clean-up and water quality improvement, rehabilitation, and protection and sustainability.

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/01/14/1885038/denr-urged-declare-manila-bay-reclamation-free-zone#xXXeXdQvpPvLY7g6.99>