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Edd Gumban

Roy Cimatu: 'Cut down on plastics that clog oceans'

477 SHARES 

[Rhodina Villanueva](#) (The Philippine Star) - March 12, 2019 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu has called upon Filipinos to cut down on the use of plastics that often end up in oceans and threaten marine life.

Cimatu, who made the appeal during the department's celebration of World Wildlife Day (WWD) 2019, noted that plastic pollution is one of the greatest threats to ocean health worldwide, with an estimated eight million tons of plastic waste finding its way into oceans every year.

"The task of reversing this issue is as big and wide as the ocean, but small actions can make a huge difference," he said as he urged people to become "stewards of marine life" by reducing the use of plastics.

According to Ocean Conservancy, at least eight million tons of plastic enter the ocean each year on top of the 150 million tons of plastic that already circulate in it. This contributes to the loss of species and contamination of the food chain.

In the 2017 International Coastal Cleanup report, the top polluting items found in the oceans were cigarette butts, plastic bottles and caps, straws and stirrers and plastic bags. It also indicated that such waste could harm one million seabirds, 100,000 sea mammals as well as marine turtles and countless fish annually. The harm brought to these creatures is either due to ingestion or entanglement.

Citing a United Nations report, Cimatu said the Philippines is one of Top 5 contributors of plastic waste in the world's oceans, accounting for about half of the total plastic leakage.

"We produce 2.7 metric tons of plastic waste every year," Cimatu said. "Following this trajectory of plastic production and mismanagement, UN reports predict that by 2050, there would be more plastic in the oceans than there are fish."

Meanwhile, the DENR, through its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), gave out 44 medals during the 6th Wildlife Law Enforcement Awards to the men and women who defended the "voiceless wildlife species" against illegal collectors and traders.

The awardees consist of 21 officers from the National Bureau of Investigation; 14 from the Bureau of Customs; six from the Philippine National Police; two from the city government of Cebu; and one from the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Animal Industry.

BMB director Crisanta Marlene Rodriguez said that annually, the DENR “bestows official recognition to partners who have valuable contributions in the enforcement of wildlife laws, rules and regulations.”

“For the past five years, the DENR has conferred the Wildlife Law Enforcement Awards on at least 365 men and women,” she said.

WWD 2019 carries the theme “Life below water: for people and planet,” featuring a formal awarding ceremony for the recipients of grants from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for graduate students pursuing further studies aligned with the project’s research priorities in conserving biodiversity in the Philippines.

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/03/12/1900786/roy-cimatu-cut-down-plastics-clog-oceans#cj8i9708IX0Oxjiy.99>