

# Private sector, LGU commit to rehabilitate Mahiga River

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A total of 28 private companies and organizations in Cebu have committed to rehabilitating the heavily-silted Mahiga River in the Province of Cebu, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Sunday.

This as DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, together with Mayors Edgardo C. Labella of Cebu City and Jonas C. Cortes of Mandaue City, signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) last July 21 in Cebu City with representatives of companies and organizations taking part in the Mahiga River rehabilitation efforts.

The MOA was also signed by the chairmen of six barangays where the 9.1-kilometer river traverses: Apas; Banilad (Cebu City); Kasambangan; Banilad (Mandaue City); Mabolo; and, Subangdako.

The parties agree to develop a Comprehensive Rehabilitation program to reduce the pollution load of the Mahiga River and its tributaries.

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According to Lormelyn Claudio, director of the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau in Region 7, the Mahiga River Creek is a critical waterway in the city "and its current condition requires intensified actions from all stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of all rehabilitation measures."

Claudio said the river's deterioration has reached the point where it has posed a threat to the safety and health of the communities along its banks and which the residents and the government can no longer address effectively without help from the private sector.

She said the DENR sought assistance and commitment from donor-partners and private entities and organizations to improve solid, hazardous and wastewater management of the river and for the surface cleanup of its specific segment.

They will also assist in the information, education and communication (IEC) campaign and community mobilization activities of the DENR and local government units (LGUs) to foster harmonious relations with the community and solicit their participation, cooperation and support for the program, among others.

Meanwhile, the Cebu LGUs, in collaboration with EMB 7, shall ensure the establishment of integrated solid, health care and household hazardous waste management pursuant to existing environmental laws at the barangay level.

For its part, the DENR—through Region 7 Executive Director Paquito D. Melicor, the Provincial and Community Environment and Natural Resources Offices and EMB 7—shall intensify the monitoring of industrial and commercial establishments, and undertake regular water quality monitoring of selected points within Mahiga River and its tributaries, to determine improvements in water quality.

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