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Environment group wants public green spaces to reopen to the public

Published October 20, 2020, 1:00 PM

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Hoping to promote the physical and mental well-being of Filipinos, an environmental group is pushing for the reopening of public green spaces with the assurance that safety and health protocols are enforced.

With the prioritization of healthcare system caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Nilad Metro Manila Environmental Network campaign coordinator Kevin Paul Aguayon also highlighted the need to carry out a plan to protect and conserve green spaces as a way towards complete recovery and mitigation of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Citing recent studies, Aguayon noted that the main purpose of green spaces is to serve as “lungs” and promote a well-balanced ecosystem.

“The influx of people at the bay walk area in Manila Bay to enjoy the artificial ‘white sand’ beach indicates a demand for the use of parks,” Aguayon said.

“We could have avoided the concentration of people in Manila if other major green parks in Metro Manila are open and people are encouraged to spend time in these open spaces while practicing social distancing and other health protocols,” he added.

He also pointed out that this will not be simply for leisure but a health measure to promote the physical and mental well-being of people.

“Malls and churches are already open. Why not follow this up with the opening of major parks and allow people to enjoy the health benefit of using the open space for physical and mental exercise?,” asked Aguayon.

With the available guidelines for the use of malls, churches, and other public places, he said local government units (LGUs) can adopt similar guidelines to ensure the safe and free use of parks.

LGUs can also mobilize barangay leaders to control and regulate the movement of people inside parks, he added.

“Allowing people to spend time in parks, even for a brief period each day, boosts awareness about the importance of preserving and expanding green spaces. Hopefully, it can also inspire policymakers and urban planners to develop more parks in communities,” he said.

Nilad, together with other environmental organizations, have been campaigning for the protection of green spaces throughout the year with the theme “Protect Our Green Corridors.”

They cited their success in the preservation of green spaces, such as in the Arroceros Forest Park in Manila City with the stoppage of the construction of a gymnasium.

The groups also continue to campaign for the protection of the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat for Eco-tourism Area against massive reclamation and solid waste dump that endanger the life of endemic species.

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