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# DENR enhanced ecosystems project gains \$150m fund through USAID

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is carrying out a \$150 million (P7.25 billion) project for enhanced ecosystems through a bilateral assistance fund from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



As the United States government marks this year its 75th year of bilateral relations with the Philippines, it has further committed to a project to help the country in sustainable development.

The bilateral assistance agreement was signed last February by the Philippines National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and USAID.

“The agreement aims to protect ecosystems, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, and build the capacity of people, communities and institutions to withstand, cope and recover from shocks and stresses so that people and ecosystems thrive,” said Sean Callahan, Acting Mission Director of USAID.

Two of the projects covered by the bilateral agreement are SIBOL and Safe Water Project (SWP). SIBOL or Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans and Landscapes is a five-year, P1.1 billion (\$22 million) project.

The project supports DENR in improving natural resource governance, stimulating public and private sector investments in conservation, and reducing environmental crime, leading to greater ecosystem stability and inclusive green growth. The project also includes provision for communities' access to clean water and sanitation services. SIBOL works with the Biodiversity Management Bureau, Forest Management Bureau, and DENR's field offices in Central Luzon (Region 3), Southern Luzon (Region 4B) and the CARAGA Administrative Region (Region 13).

SIBOL's implementation is led by RTI International, a U.S.-based non-profit organization. It has three decades of experience providing technical assistance, institutional strengthening, programmatic support, and research in a variety of sectors in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, SWP is a five-year worth P870 million (\$18.4 million). It works to improve water security for vulnerable and underserved communities.

Working with both the national and local governments, SWP supports initiatives to increase access to resilient water supply and sanitation services. It aims to improve the sustainable management of water resources that enable long-term water provisioning. Part of SWP's mandate is to strengthen the governance and regulation of the water sector.

SWP's implementation is coordinated with NEDA and with multiple sections of the DENR. These include the Forest Management Bureau, DENR field offices in Southern Luzon (Region 4B), Western Visayas (Region 6), and SOCCSKSARGEN. It also works with the National Water Resources Board.

The project is being implemented by the DAI Global LLC which carries a long history of working in the Philippine water sector.

SWP is also coordinated with local organizations, Orient Integrated Development Consultants, Inc. (OIDCI), Lutheran World Relief, Inc. (LWR), CEST, Inc., Geosciences Foundation Inc., and the Manila Observatory.

"The long history of the partnership between DENR and USAID has been fruitful. We have achieved much in creating a more secure environment that sustains both

ecological integrity and human development,” said Sean Callahan, Acting Mission Director of USAID.

“It has led to the improved management of protected areas and strengthened environmental law enforcement. It has increased public awareness about the challenges of wildlife trafficking and improved water security through integrated watershed management, among others,” Callahan said.

“As USAID and the Philippines mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations this year, I am truly optimistic that these memoranda of understanding will help us achieve many more milestones together as we work toward our shared goal of inclusive and resilient growth for all Filipinos,” he added.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu looks forward to the partnership.

“We always welcome effective collaboration to continue the advancement and sustainability of how we protect our ecosystem and natural resources,” he said. “USAID has always been a consistent and effective ally for the DENR for the past years. They have supported us for years in creating sustainable models which guided us in increasing and strengthening our policies for the management of our ecosystems. That is why we are looking forward to more meaningful years with USAID in advancing our shared goals of environmental sustainability and improving the lives of the Filipino communities.”

Since 2014, USAID has provided more than P5 billion (\$100 million) in assistance to the Philippine government in conserving the country’s biodiversity and protecting its landscapes and seascapes.

<https://www.manilastandard.net/news/national/355570/denr-enhanced-ecosystems-project-gains-150m-fund-through-usaid.html>