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DENR explains why the sudden increase in the number resorts in Laguna has become problematic

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The sharp increase in the number of resorts in Laguna the past few years has been worrisome as far as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is concerned.



WATER-INTENSIVE BUSINESS—Resorts flourish in Laguna, but their effects on the sustainability of the Mount Makiling watershed is worrying DENR. (Photo from DENR)

The agency bared on Sunday, May 30 that it is putting up water conservation policies in the Mount Makiling Forest Reserve (MMFR) as the water-intensive resorts in the protected area threaten water resource sustainability in Laguna.

The policies—to be implemented by the city governments of Los Baños and Calamba City—will address the threat on water resources that can arise from the influx of tourists visiting the resorts.

DENR, through its project dubbed “Economics, Policies and Institutions of Groundwater Use by Resorts in Los Baños and Calamba, Laguna”, is now employing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to analyze the spatial distribution of resorts in the two areas. It also involves the formulation of a mechanism by which tourists could be charged with a fee for their use of Laguna’s environmental resources.

“The project employs economic methods to analyze the willingness-to-pay of visitors for improved water conservation practices by resorts and the conservation of MMFR to secure water services,” the DENR said in a statement.

Between 2014 and 2020, the number of resorts in Los Baños jumped from 42 to 171. The growth was more frenetic in Calamba, as the number of resorts ballooned from 466 to 855 during the same period.

The watershed of Mount Makiling is important in supporting the domestic, agricultural, and industrial water requirements of Los Baños and Calamba City, the DENR said.

“Mount Makiling is a dormant volcano. This is the reason why its underground water gives rise to hot springs. Thus, it encouraged the establishment of numerous resorts with the natural hot spring water in swimming pools and baths,” it explained.

The agency said that while resort operations have generated income for the owners and gave livelihood opportunities to local via tourism-oriented businesses like restaurants, food stalls, convenience stores, “this has brought about negative side effects, such as that of the use of water resources by the industry.” The DENR project aims to ensure sustainable water operations despite the continuing existence of the resorts.

If its any indication, the DENR bared that the majority of visitor-respondents have expressed their willingness to pay for the conservation of the groundwater resource from Mount Makiling.

“They want to contribute to the conservation efforts. they agreed that current practices are wasteful because groundwater is indeed limited,” it said.

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/05/30/denr-explains-why-the-sudden-increase-of-resorts-in-laguna-is-problematic/>