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## US, PHL advance ties for biodiversity protection and water sanitation

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Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu and USAID Deputy Mission Director Sean Callahan sign a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen the partnership between the US and Philippine governments in protecting the country's natural resources.

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Marking the 75th year of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have agreed to advance their cooperation to protect the Philippines' rich natural resources and improve access to clean water and sanitation, a statement from the US Embassy said.

In February, USAID and the Philippine government, through the National Economic and Development Authority, signed a four-year agreement worth P7.25 billion (\$150 million) to protect the environment, promote sustainable use of natural resources and reduce risks from natural disasters.

Under this agreement, USAID and the DENR signed on May 27 the sub-agreements for two projects: Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans and Landscapes (SIBOL) and Safe Water Project.

SIBOL is a five-year project worth P1.1 billion (\$22 million) to improve natural resource governance, stimulate public and private sector investments in conservation and reduce environmental crime, which lead to greater environmental stability and inclusive green growth.

The five-year Safe Water Project worth P870 million (\$18.4 million) will help improve water security for vulnerable and underserved communities.

Working with both the national and local governments, Safe Water supports increased access to resilient water supply and sanitation services, improves the sustainable management of water resources and strengthens governance and regulation of the water sector.

“The long history of the partnership between the DENR and USAID has been fruitful, and together we have achieved much in creating a more secure environment that sustains both ecological integrity and human development,” said Acting USAID Philippines Mission Director Sean Callahan.

DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said: “Given the pandemic, the DENR is committed more than ever to address the country’s environmental challenges. USAID, a consistent and effective ally of the DENR, has also supported us in creating sustainable models that guided us in

managing our ecosystems. Through these projects, we will advance our shared goals of environmental sustainability and improving the lives of Filipino communities.”

Since 2014, USAID has provided more than P5 billion (\$100 million) to help conserve the Philippines’ biodiversity and protect its natural resources.

Image courtesy of US Embassy photo

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