

- **ENVIRONMENT**

# DENR moves to protect Mt. Mantalingahan, dev't of \$5.5 billion resources with land use plan

By

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File photos from Incredible Palawan through the Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service (FASPS) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

A Land Use Plan (LUP) has been drawn up for the Mt. Mantalingahan Protected Landscape (MMPL) in Palawan in order to guarantee its protection and the optimum development of its resources economically valued at \$5.5 billion.

In an issued statement recently from the Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service (FASPS) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), it reported that 206,567 hectares of Mt. Mantalingahan's protected landscape had already been zoned.

**Nearly 300 upland farmers now practise sustainable agriculture in Mt. Mantalingahan while protecting the forests and producing agricultural commodities and forest products. (Photo by FASPS-DENR)**

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The development was under the department's technical assistance program called Protect Wildlife Project funded by the United States Agency for International Development ((USAID), the statement added.

The zoned area also includes forest lands outside the protected landscape of 153,836 hectares.

The DENR claimed in the statement that the mapping of the MMPL is an effective technique for determining which activities are suitable for each zone. It specifies what is and is not permitted in each region.

With its 120,457 hectares of forest, Mt. Matalingahan is the headwater for 33 watersheds.

The department said preserving Mt. Mantalingahan means also protecting many significant animal species, including the Philippine cockatoo, talking mynah, blue-naped parrot, and Philippine pangolin, as well as many more critically endangered fauna, which rely on its environment.

According to the DENR, the FLUP (Forest Land Use Plan) in Southern Palawan has designated production areas totaling 82,469 hectares of protected area and 71,367 hectares of conservation area.

Jeanne G. Tabangay, general director of the Palawan Biodiversity Conservation Corridor (PBCC), said in the press statement that the ecosystem services from MMPL's abundant natural resources provide economic benefit to the community valued at \$5.5 billion or P265 billion.

"This was based on a 2008 study conducted by Conservation International. The study was conducted as there were claims that the mining resources in Palawan bring huge

economic value. But this study showed the natural resources themselves have value for ecosystem services,” Tabangay was quoted as saying.

The USAID’s Protect Wildlife Project aims to protect approximately 750,000 hectares of ecologically important land. Protected areas, forestlands, watersheds, mangrove forests, and coastal and marine regions are only a few examples.

A Conservation International (CI) research said the most valuable ecosystem services in MMPL are indigenous people’s (IP) land-based livelihood (P2 billion), water resources (P83 billion), and ecotourism (P84 billion). Marine biodiversity’s indirect use was valued at P13 billion and carbon, P34 billion. Ecosystem services of tropical forests were valued at P108 billion and recreation, P6 billion.

The Water Wildlife Project project leveraged P368 million of commitments from private and public sector partners to fund conservation activities, including support for sustainable livelihood, and social enterprises.

Mt. Matalingahan is the highest peak in Palawan, straddling the towns of Bataraza, Brooke’s Point, Rizal, Quezon, and Sofronio Espanola. One of the important roles it plays is being a flashflood deterrent.

However, even Mt. Matalingahan faces natural and man-made threats from illegal logging, wildlife poaching, mining, and kaingin (slash and burn). It also faces risks of high poverty incidence; unclear or inconsistent regulatory policies on resource uses; communities that lack tenure rights; weak enforcement systems; and the vulnerability to climate risks such as drought and intense rainfall, according to the USAID.

The Protect Wildlife Project aligned the LUP with prevailing policies.

“Protect Wildlife found that there were several areas where actual land uses differed from what policies prescribed. This has caused much of the degradation within the protected area and adjoining forest lands,” said the USAID in the statement.

The LUP now complies with the policies on the Environmentally Critical Areas Network (ECAN) plan for Palawan, the National Integrated Protected Areas Systems Act (NIPAS), the Forestry Code, the Local Government Code, and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA).

Forest lands are divided into three categories: protection, conservation, and production. Agriculture, tourism, and special regions are all sub-zones inside the production zones.

“Each zone and sub-zone has corresponding evidence-based land and resource use prescriptions—the rules for how an area of land may be legally used. Zoning decisions are derived from spatial analysis but also consider socioeconomic and political realities,” reported the USAID.

“Land use zoning provides a solid basis for LGUs (local government units) and the DENR to make informed decisions for investments on natural assets enhancement, restoration, basic infrastructure, social services and enterprises,” it said further.

DENR said the project has partners for livelihood programs. These are Lutheran World Relief, Abraham Holdings, Inc., and Sunlight Foods Corporation. They are supporting the establishment of enterprises in five LGUs in the MMPL.

Also participating now in an ube (purple yam) production are upland communities in tenured areas in Bataraza, Brooke’s Point and Sofronio Española.

Fourteen communities with a total of 1,500 households are into conservation agriculture and agroforestry.

[https://palawan-news.com/denr-moves-to-protect-mt-mantalingahan-devt-of-5-5-billion-resources-with-land-use-plan/?fbclid=IwAR3hXPm0zzi8aqyHQHweVIUU5qxWvy1ldlsePkLOHhoZxqiufI\\_xO5AFarM](https://palawan-news.com/denr-moves-to-protect-mt-mantalingahan-devt-of-5-5-billion-resources-with-land-use-plan/?fbclid=IwAR3hXPm0zzi8aqyHQHweVIUU5qxWvy1ldlsePkLOHhoZxqiufI_xO5AFarM)