

DENR: Protect Kaliwa River Forest Reserve

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THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has backed the passage of a proposed bill declaring the Kaliwa River Forest Reserve as a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas).

Rizal Rep. Emigdio "Dino" Tanjuatco 3rd filed House Bill 5055, which seeks to establish the Kaliwa River Forest and Wildlife Sanctuary (KRFWS).

According to the DENR, the government supports all efforts to further protect and preserve the Kaliwa River Forest Reserve and the rest of the Sierra Madre Mountain Range.

Republic Act (RA) 7586 or the "Nipas Act," as amended by RA 11038 or the "Expanded Nipas Act of 2018," mandates the DENR to implement measures to sustain the perpetual existence of all native plants, animals and natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The proposed KRFWS, which has a total area of 31,883 hectares, is under the jurisdiction of the municipalities of Tanay, Rizal and General Nakar, Quezon.

It is regarded as the home of various endangered wildlife species such as the Northern Philippine hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus philippensis*), Philippine Brown Deer (*Rusa marianna*), Philippine Warty Pig (*Sus philippensis*) and the Northern Rufous Hornbill (*Buceros hydrocorax*), among others. It is also the habitat of the critically endangered Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*), a species endemic to the Philippines.

The proposed KRFWS has 12,147 hectares of remaining forest with approximately 172 types of plant species, 39 of which are endemic and 17 are classified as threatened. Some species that can be found in the area are *Rafflesia* (*R. philippinensis* and *R. lagascae*) and Tayabak or Jade Vine (*Strongylodon macrobotrys*).

Endemic species

A recent study led to the discovery of a new species of Pungapong (*Amorphophallus funtarumii*), which was first found in a portion of the proposed KRFWS. This new species has been classified as highly endangered due to the threats of forest degradation and destruction.

DENR Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) Regional Director Nilo Tamoria said that the aforementioned species are endemic, can only be found in the Philippines and are considered "keystone species, with crucial roles in defining an entire ecosystem. Once legislated, fund support for the management of the KRFWS is assured and stringent regulations will be implemented."

Apart from its rich biodiversity, the Kaliwa River Forest Reserve is also home to the Indigenous Peoples of the Dumagat-Remontado of the Sierra Madre who play an important role in the conservation and protection of the environment and natural resources within the area.