

DENR enforcing Asean GEF-funded project on Large Marine Ecosystems

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is implementing an extensive Asean collaborative project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-on Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) which face serious threats amid their vast marine resources.

The project “Effectively Managing Networks of Marine Protected Areas in LMEs in Asean [Enmaps]” was deliberated in an inception workshop as it prepares for for implementation of the United Nations Development Programme, the DENR said in a news release.

LMEs in Asean are a huge source of livelihood and jobs for struggling fishers.

They are huge marine areas extending beyond boundaries among countries which make collaboration important.

Enmaps has a cost of \$77.596 million. Of this, \$12.548 million consists of GEF grant.

The workshop validated data and gathered inputs from stakeholders from the national and regional government agencies, private sector, nongovernment organizations and academe.

The project’s concept will be elaborated during the full proposal development.

The Coastal and Marine Biodiversity of Asean is known to have 20 percent of the world’s seagrass beds, a third of world’s mangrove forests with 45 to 75 true species, and a third of the world’s coral reefs with more than 75 percent of species of coral, and 40 percent of fish species.

Enmaps will involve at least five countries in Asean, including the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, and South China Sea.

The workshop also provided the opportunity to discuss the project partners’ potential role and contribution in project implementation.

The Asean Enmaps project will be executed by the Asean Centre for Biodiversity in collaboration with the DENR’s Biodiversity Management Bureau under the GEF funding.

It aims to develop and improve the management of networks of marine protected areas and marine corridors within selected LMEs in the Asean region for the conservation of globally significant biodiversity.

It will support sustainable fisheries and other ecosystem goods and services.

As the oversight office for foreign-assisted and special projects, the DENR Foreign Assisted and Special Projects Service with Director Al Orolfo, highlighted the importance of the establishment of MPAs.

Orolfo pointed out the need for management of the Asean network as an effective approach to address challenges, such as climate change, marine pollution and biodiversity loss.

“The project is expected to complement our existing efforts in the Philippines toward productive partnerships with the neighboring countries in terms of scaling up management under the regional MPAN (marine protected area network) approach,” Orolfo said.

GEF has been concerned that the world’s oceans have been reaching their ecological carrying capacity, a limit to their ability to produce fish for food.

“More than 75 percent of world fish stocks are already fully exploited, overexploited, depleted or recovering from depletion,” according to GEF web site.

GEF has supported sustainable governance of 23 LMEs involving collaborative work of many countries. The world’s oceans divided into 66 LMEs.

This area covers 7.7-million sq km with 173,000 km of coastline.