

DENR eyeing multipurpose water supply infrastructure

Jonathan L. Mayuga, Business Mirror

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will work closely with various national government agencies (NGA) to look into the possibility of building public water supply facilities for multiple usage that will include irrigation, power generation, industrial and commercial use as well as domestic consumption, DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said on Wednesday.

The DENR, which is mandated to manage the country's natural wealth, was also tasked to head the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) created by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. by virtue of Executive Order No. 22.

Aside from the WRMO, other water-related agencies like the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), River Basin Control Office (RCBO) are under the DENR.

"We are looking at our respective budgets and our programs to see how we can design multipurpose infrastructure to actually serve the different needs of agriculture, power, water for domestic use, and for industry," Yulo-Loyzaga said in a news statement.

The plan, according to the country's steward of the environment and natural resources, is part of the move to refocus the government's water security strategy to optimize and maximize utilization of the country's water resources through infrastructure that enables "multi-tasked" usage of the national resource.

This even as the government is also looking to tap water from other sources and to promote wastewater recycling on account of the need for stable and steady water supply increases on the back of growing demand and threats from the El Niño weather condition.

Yulo-Loyzaga said the DENR and DPWH are jointly studying the construction of more water collection and impounding systems as well as flood control structures as mitigation measures in face of climate change and its impacts.

Yulo-Loyzaga added that water conservation and efficiency, along with multipurpose water infrastructure such as dams, reservoirs, sewage treatment plants, associated irrigation canals, and water supply networks may be used for more than one purpose for economic, social and environmental activities will address the different dimensions of water security in the country.

The DENR is also working with the Department of Finance to see how the government can incentivize public-private partnerships for bulk water supply and other projects that can deliver water where it is most needed.

Meanwhile, the World Bank has expressed interest in funding multipurpose infrastructure to address sectors that are critically in danger because of climate change.