

DENR implements Asean-wide GEF-funded marine ecosystems project

By: Public Square, Manila Times

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) held an inception workshop as it prepares for an extensive Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) collaborative project on Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) which faces serious threats amid their vast marine resources.

The project "Effectively Managing Networks of Marine Protected Areas in Large Marine Ecosystems (LME) in ASEAN" (ENMAPS) is being deliberated for implementation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Director Al Orolfo of the DENR Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service (FASPS) joined the National Inception Workshop at the Crowne Plaza Manila Galleria in Quezon City on July 13, stressing the project's importance to sustainable development.

LMEs in Asean are a huge source of livelihood and jobs for struggling fishers. The workshop validated data and gathered inputs from stakeholders from the national and regional government agencies, private sector, non-government 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, Thailand, and South China Sea.

The Asean ENMAPS project will be executed by the Asean Center for Biodiversity (ACB) in collaboration with the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) under GEF funding.

"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 marine protected area network approach," Orolfo said.