

DENR places 7 more areas under protection

By: Jane Bautista, Philippine Inquirer

Seven more protected areas (PAs) were established under the National Integrated Protected Areas Systems (Nipas) in 2022, bringing the total number of PAs in the country to 248.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Bureau of Biodiversity Management (DENR-BMB), all seven PAs were covered by various legislation.

These areas include Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape (Republic Act No. 11684), Mt. Pulag Protected Landscape (RA 11685), Naga-Kabasalan Protected Landscape (RA 11686), Tirad Pass Protected Landscape Act (RA 11687), Banao Protected Landscape (RA 11688), Tugbo Natural Biotic Area (RA 11806) and Sicogon Island Wildlife Sanctuary (RA 11933).

“The legislation of new PAs also contributes to the achievement of the Aichi Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls for improvement and increase in the number of PAs among the parties including the Philippines,” the agency said in a statement.

Aside from this, 131 PAs have been turned into ecotourism facilities and a total of 171 PAs have established an Integrated Protected Area Fund following the Nipas Act.

“For the past five years, an estimated P386.8 million was generated, wherein 75 percent of the amount was retained to the PAs, which translated to more funds for the sustainable management of these areas,” DENR-BMB said.

Natividad Bernardino, director of DENR-BMB, said the progress in protected area management, along with cave management and wildlife conservation was a testament that communities and policymakers were prioritizing wildlife and natural habitat conservation.

“While we are treading into the postpandemic era, the BMB—together with DENR field offices—continues to be at the forefront of protecting, conserving and sustainably managing the country’s flora and fauna,” Bernardino said.

For cave management, the agency said they have identified 3,432 caves, of which 292 are within PAs.

“Existing or known caves must be identified and shall be supported by providing information such as the local name, general description (elevation, accessibility, etc.) and location using topographic and other maps available,” it said.