

## **DENR vows to reforest 1.8K-hectare of Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape**

by Jel Santos, Manila Bulletin

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As the government intensifies its fight against climate change, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has vowed to reforest a 1,800-hectare area within the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape (UMRBPL).

This came after Environment Secretary Antonia “Toni” Yulo-Loyzaga and Prime Infra-led WJI Chairman Enrique K. Razon Jr. inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) — which seeks to integrate water security, watershed protection, and forest carbon and biodiversity management in UMRBPL— in Makati City on Monday, Feb. 20.

“This particular endeavor will actually ensure that we will be supplying for over 500,000 households in the East soon, and we’re very grateful that some of our work in terms of keeping our forest whole in generating blue forest will be part of the work of this group as well,” the DENR chief said in a statement.

UMRBPL, according to the environment department, is a 26,126-hectare basin that was declared a protected area in 2018, covering the city of Antipolo, and the municipalities of Baras, Rodriguez, San Mateo and Tanay.

The DENR noted that the basin is crucial in controlling the water flow to the densely populated National Capital Region and offers ecological services like protection from landslides and floods.

Under the terms of the MOU, both parties will conduct joint site assessments, surveys, mapping, and planning activities in accordance with the DENR’s mandate and Prime Infra’s Environmental, Social, and Governance framework, which incorporates sustainability thinking in resource management and decarbonisation strategies.

The DENR has agreed to design, develop, and implement afforestation, reforestation, and revegetation programs within UMRBPL based on internationally accepted voluntary carbon standards as part of its mission to integrate strategies for science-based, risk-informed, ethical, and equitable stewardship of the country’s environment.

The National Climate Change Action Plan and the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of the national government are both complemented by WJI’s initiatives based on science-based interventions, the DENR noted

“The partnership also affirms the commitment of DENR and WJI to exert only the best practices in stakeholder consultations with the involvement of the local community and indigenous peoples,” the department said.

For his part, Razon said that this “MOU for environmental stewardship between government and the private sector reflects the commitment of both parties to develop and implement science-based strategies in support of sustainable development.”