

# DENR urged to cancel permits in Ilocos watersheds

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Candon City, Ilocos Sur – A day after commending Secretary Regina Lopez for the cancellation of 75 mineral production sharing agreements (MPSA), the Ilocos Network for the Environment (DEFEND Ilocos) asked her to include MPSAs that straddle watersheds supporting Ilocos rivers.

“We urge Sec. Lopez to include in the cancellation order all applications that cover watersheds areas in the region and in other parts of the Cordillera,” said the group.

Sherwin de Vera, regional coordinator of DEFEND Ilocos, explained that the region suffers from dry spells and drought almost annually and “mining operations in watershed areas will increase the suffering of the people, especially the farmers who largely depend on creeks, streams and rivers for irrigation.”

Based on the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, seven companies have applied for permits covering key watershed areas in Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte, namely, Cordillera Exploration Company, Inc., Newmont Philippines, Olpaten Resources Corporation, Diamond Drilling Corporation, Rhenzel Resources Corporation, Benguet Corporation, and Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company.

“The cancellation of MPSAs in Baay-Licuan, Abra and Mankayan, Benguet are commendable since streams and rivers in these locations drain to the Abra River but the surface water system in the region remains under threat because applications and permits of other companies remain active,” said De Vera.

He added that Lopez should support the clamor of environmental groups to repeal the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and passage of the People’s Mining Bill to realize watershed protection against corporate plunder.

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