

# SBMA backs World Wetlands Day, steps up eco preservation drive

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Subic Bay Freeport — This premier Freeport teeming with marshlands and wildlife, joined the world-wide celebration of the World Wetlands Day through the Subic Bay Wetlands Celebration on Wednesday.

Known for its beautiful mangrove forests, Subic Freeport celebrated the wetlands day by holding a two-day seminar that included trainings for some 150 employees and environmental officers from various investors here.

They also toured a mangrove forest on the second day where they helped plant saplings.

SBMA Administrator Wilma Eisma said the activity, spearheaded by the agency's Ecology Center is aimed at educating the participants on the importance of wetlands to the coastal communities, the environment and marine life.

"We appreciate the participants for sharing their time in raising public awareness on the importance of the wetlands and contribute to the conservation and protection of our mangrove forests," she said.

Inside the Freeport's Binictican-Malawaan Mangrove Area, participants were divided into groups: one group assigned to pick-up, identify and record trash and garbage found inside the mangrove area, and another to plant mangrove samplings on vacant portions of the area.

Another group was assigned to count and record how many living crustaceans they could find in the selected one square meter-area of the wetland to determine the biodiversity in the area.

SBMA Ecology Center head Amethya Dela Llana-Koval said the records will be used as reference in formulating a mangrove management plan that will define guidelines and policies related to the protection and conservation of all mangrove areas in the Freeport.

There is an estimated 62 hectares of wetlands in Subic Freeport located in Boton, Binictican-Malawaan, Triboa A, Triboa B, Nabasan and Ilanin, where 37 species of mangroves are found and serve as feeding, spawning and nursery grounds to many marine life and considered as nature's buffer to natural hazards such as flooding caused by storms, cyclones, storm surges and tsunamis.

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