

DENR3 receives US aid to protect CL forests

By Ric Sapnu (The Philippine Star) | Updated January 19, 2017 - 12:00am

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SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga, Philippines – The Regional Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR3) here recently received more than half a million pesos worth of desktop computers and laptops to further boost forest protection and biodiversity conservation in Central Luzon under the Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System.

The donation came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem Resilience (B+WISER) Program.

Francisco Milla Jr., DENR3 regional director, said the computers are equipped with upgraded forest and biodiversity protection, which is the SMART Connect software that will be used in the Lawin system in the region.

“This upgraded system will synchronize the data gathered from the field by forest protection officers, including threats, forest conditions and indicator species, and will be transmitted on the web or internet server and will be accessible to all levels of forest law enforcement agents (i.e. national, regional, PENRO and CENRO) to ensure that DENR can respond quickly to field reports of threat,” Milla said.

He said the system can collect data from the field and share this in real time. It can also manage and respond to real time alerts and centrally manage SMART deployment at multiple sites, as well as integrate SMART with other systems.

Ricardo Calderon, director of DENR-Forest Management Bureau (FMB), said that Central Luzon is one of the pilot regions for the field testing of SMART Connect for Lawin forest and biodiversity system while the other is the Cagayan de Oro region.

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“We are now moving to the next level. Our forest rangers and data managers are already trained in the Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System. And at this stage, we are now providing them advance technology as their weapon to better protect and safeguard our forest and biodiversity,” he said.

Last year more than 200 forest officers from DENR3 underwent skills enhancement training on forest protection through the application of Lawin.

This is in addition to the 2,000 forest rangers trained last year covering 18 regions in the country, which resulted in the patrolling of more than 6,500 kilometers of forest areas in 170 conservation sites.

Lawin, named after the Philippine hawk eagle, combines science-based planning, low-cost, collaborative, user-friendly technology and indigenous knowledge to protect forest and wildlife. It uses real-time and measurable data that allow environmental law enforcement agencies to act quickly.

SMART Connect for LAWIN system is being supervised by the B+WISER and FMB with support from USAID.

DENR records show that Central Luzon has 942,387 hectares of forestland, of which 589,489 hectares (62 percent) are thickly covered with forests.

Some important plants and animal species that can be found in these forests include the smallest of the giant flower *Rafflesia consueloae*, the premium species of dipterocarpaceae family; Tapulao mice (*Apomys brownorum*), largest flying fox (*Pteropus vampyrus*), giant cloud rat (*Phloeomys pallidus*) and the endangered Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*).

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