

# DENR protects Tañon Strait from commercial fishers

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BY JAMES KONSTANTIN GALVEZ, TMT ON JANUARY 28, 2017 REGIONS | THE MANILA TIMES

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) expressed support for the protection of Tañon Strait against commercial fishers, and emphasized that over-fishing could lead to an ecosystem collapse.

“We believe that commercial fishing in an unsustainable manner is one of the major threats to our marine environment. Over-fishing, as one of the many negative environmental consequences, is a primary cause of species extinction and ecosystem collapse,” DENR-BMB Director Mundita Lim said in a letter to Oceana Philippines.

The bureau expressed concern over the proposed moratorium on the ban on commercial fishing in the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape (TSPS), one of the largest marine-protected areas in the Philippines. Some Cebu local officials initiated the proposal, which will allow commercial fishing within municipal waters, at 10.1 kilometers away from the coast.

Municipal waters include biologically important near-shore areas where mangroves, seagrass, and coral reefs thrive. Near-shore areas serve as the nesting and breeding ground for fish, and other marine organisms.

“As managers of the said seascape, our positions and decisions will always consider sustainable management of the area, wherein the overall health of the vulnerable marine resources should not be jeopardized and the community benefits will be ensured,” Lim said.

Tañon Strait is a critical marine habitat and important migratory path for 14 of the 27 species of whales and dolphins in the Philippines. It boasts of at least 90 species of fish, 20 species of crustaceans, 26 species of mangroves, and 18,830 hectares of coral reef. The rare chambered nautilus, giant diamond-backed squid and critically-endangered dugong can also be found in its waters.

It is also a rich fishing ground for artisanal or municipal fishers who live along the coastal areas within the 42 cities and municipalities in the provinces of Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Negros Occidental.

(Article retrieved from: <http://www.manilatimes.net/denr-protects-tanon-strait-commercial-fishers/309389/>)