

Marcos signs law seeking to measure Philippines' natural resources

By: Rappler

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MANILA, Philippines – President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has signed into law on Wednesday, May 22, a bill seeking to measure the Philippines' natural resources.

Republic Act No. 11995 or the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) Act seeks to establish “a comprehensive information system and accounting framework that will take into consideration the role of our natural capital” and its impact on the economy.

“We are happy to learn about the PENCAS being signed into law,” Environment Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga said on Friday, May 24.

“We have anticipated its signing and, in fact, the DENR is ready with our natural resources database that will be used for accounting our natural capital.”

Natural capital refers to resources, such as plants, animals, air, water, soils, ores, and minerals, and ecosystem services, like air and water filtration, flood protection, and carbon sequestration.

Before the approval of the bill, Loyzaga had often repeated that there's a need to “measure what we treasure.”

Loyzaga had said in 2023 that PENCAS will “enable strategic planning for sustainable development and climate and disaster resilience by establishing the baseline accounts for the Philippine Development Plan.”

Why is this important?

Natural resources like minerals and timber power industries help a country's economy grow. However, the depletion of these assets is not properly tracked and measured.

Natural capital accounts can provide a picture of how much these resources and ecosystem services contribute to the economy and how the economy affects them. Ideally, it is meant to aid legislators and government officials in crafting policies and managing resources better.

The World Bank has estimated that low-income countries could expect a 10% decline in gross domestic product when ecosystem services fail.

These accounts can assist in determining the scale of loss and damage when disaster strikes and help compute how much the Philippines can demand from rich nations responsible for majority of the world's emissions.

The law tasked the Philippine Statistics Authority to oversee the implementation of PENCAS.

Other government agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Science and Technology, are expected to collect, generate, and analyze data on the country's natural capital.

The law was passed in the Senate on November 22, 2023, and was adopted by the House of Representatives on March 6, 2024. – Rappler.com