

WAY FORWARD

With the lessons learned in 2023, the Region remains steadfast and resolute in its commitment to carry out the mandate of the Department to be responsible for the conservation, management, development and proper utilization of environment and natural resources (ENR) which aligns with the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where the priorities of the government are also anchored as embodied in Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028 and streamed in the Regional Development Plan (RDP) 2023-2028, particularly Accelerate Climate Action and Strengthen Disaster Resilience (Chapter 16).

The changes of the DENR's concern in RDP will most likely result in the adjustment of some of the activities to address the agenda on climate action and resiliency on disaster. In consonance with the RDP's framework, the DENR 6 will focus on the assessment of vulnerable communities specifically those situated in forestlands and foreshore areas through the preparation and updating of site characterization and vulnerability assessment. Convergent efforts will be conducted for capacity-building activities on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction by the DENR and other agencies, LGUs and communities across the region. In so doing, priority interventions are identified to be translated into preparation or updating of plans, i.e. Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs), Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plans (DRRMPs). Environment and Natural Resources plans such as Protected Area Management Plan, Forest Land Use Plan, Ecotourism Management Plan, Foreshore Management Plan, and Community Resource Management Framework will be revisited and updated taking into consideration climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the concerned communities and as well as the whole region.

Socio-economic assessment and monitoring of communities in protected areas and forestlands will be conducted to identify the interventions that would benefit these communities.



Moreover, integrated and ecosystem-based approach in rehabilitation, protection and conservation of biodiversity and natural ecosystems should be adopted. The existing PAs will be maintained, while new ones will be established to secure funds for protection. The marine protected areas (MPAs) of the region will expand with the declaration of the Guimaras Strait as a protective area. This is in addition to Sagay Marine Reserve (SMR) and Tañon Strait Protected Seascape. Capacitating the PAMBs and its members and updating of PAMB manual of operations will ensure protection of these PAs.

Capacitation needs to extend to Watershed Management Councils and pursue creation of more watershed management areas particularly in major rivers and environmentally-critical water bodies.

The continued maintenance and protection of established enhanced National Greening Program will be sustained and its gains be documented not only the economic benefit it provides to the contractors as well as to the environment. Intensified forest protection can be attained through hiring of more forest protection officers and funding for patrol operations with the strengthened partnership with LGUs, POs and communities. Enhanced management of wildlife resources and Ramsar site will be done to ensure existence and prevalence of the wildlife.

Knowledge management is expected to improve in accord with the government's objective to yield accurate information for science and research-based decision in the management, conservation and protection of the environment and natural resources through various programs and projects. On the other hand, the involvement of academe and private will enhance ENR studies including data generation management, hence it will be strengthened.

Promotion of a sustainable green and blue economy including creation of blue and green jobs through Biodiversity friendly enterprises (BDFEs) as one of the activities to be undertaken and seen not only to provide assistance to the communities but recognized to aid in the realization of the Department's mandate where partnership among these beneficiaries will be



established. Ecotourism will also be promoted including opportunities for sustainable energy generation from wind, solar and water power will be pursued. This too will create more green jobs for host communities.

To maximize the income generation capacity of the managed areas, the region will provide capacity buildings to LGUs, POs, communities and management bodies of forestlands, PAs, watershed councils among others.

Strengthening of activities on ENR-related advocacies especially to address low carbon economy emission will be strengthened among ENR stakeholders through intensified IEC on ENR laws such as Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Act as well as Mining Law among others.

Improve land administration and property rights will also be pursued through processing and issuance of residential, agricultural, and special patents. Fasttrack resolution of land claims and conflict cases thru alternative dispute resolution and conduct of rapid land tenure appraisal. Demarcation of legislated PAs, management of foreshore areas through issuance of lease contracts, enforcement of forestry and other natural resources and environmental laws will be ensured. Further, as an instrument for conservation, issuance of tenurial instrument in PAs, forestlands and foreshore areas will be carried out.

With the gigantic responsibilities that the DENR in Western Visayas have to undertake, collaboration and partnership through forging of Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ENR partners such as other government agencies, NGOs, POs, academe, business sector, and private entities will be fortified.

Trainings and learning events will also be provided to the DENR's workforce including recognition of their milestones as a form of motivation for encourage increase in work productivity.

