



### OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT



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## DENR FOCUSES ON CONSERVATION OF MARINE RESOURCES FOR OCEAN MONTH, BIODIVERSITY DAY CELEBRATIONS

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The country's richness in marine biological diversity comes to the fore as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) leads in the celebration of May as Ocean Month and May 22 as International Day of Biodiversity (IDBD).

DENR Secretary Ramon J. P. Paje said that the themes, "Buhay Dagat, Buhay Natin" for the National Month of the Ocean and "Marine Biodiversity" for IDBD highlight the importance of the country's marine resources in sustaining human life, and vice versa.

"There is a direct correlation between marine life and human life on land; the survival of one depends on the other. This 'double celebration' for May will therefore aim to raise the awareness level on that relationship," he stressed. He added that the celebrations also support the Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities signed in January of this year by representatives of 65 governments and the European Commission.

Paje stressed that the DENR's Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) has lined up a month-long roster of activities that will highlight issues surrounding the conservation and management of the country's marine life as well as increase practical action among stakeholders.

The celebrations will kick off on Wednesday (May 2) at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center (NAPWC) in Quezon City. Volunteer cyclists led by the Firefly Brigade will open the day at 5:30 AM with a bike tour starting at the NAPWC parking lot, heading for East Avenue, EDSA, SM North Edsa, Monumento and Quezon Avenue, around the Quezon City Memorial Circle and back to the NAPWC amphitheatre for the rest of the opening ceremony.

Paje and PAWB officials will lead participants of the opening ceremony in donning blue shirts for a "Blue Day Campaign" that will drum up awareness on the celebration for the ocean. The month-long activities for IDBD and Ocean Month will also be launched, including the holding of an underwater photo contest in coordination with the Network of Underwater Digital Imagers. The contest is open to all amateur and professional photographers who could best depict ocean conservation through pictures, with winners to be announced and awarded during the Ocean Jam on May 25th.

The kickoff ceremony will end with the inauguration of an exhibit where DENR's partners in marine conservation – such as the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, Conservation International, the Coral Triangle Initiative and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity – will showcase educational materials for the public.

Other Ocean Month activities will include a lecture series on marine biodiversity, as well as workshops on management planning for the Manila Bay Region on May 3-4; "Green Fins Code of Conduct" for responsible diving on May 10-11; national consultation on the Coastal Law Enforcement Manual on May 16; and updates on the State of the Coast report on May 28-29.

Activities directly involving the media include a mangrove tree-planting for media members in Calatagan, Batangas province on May 15; and a live TV interview on Global News Network discussing the topic "Marine Biodiversity and Food Security" on May 21.

Marine experts will gather on the International Day of Biodiversity itself on May 22 to discuss Philippine initiatives on the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Eco-region; the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI); the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area; and the Joint Oceanographic Marine Scientific Research Expedition.

On May 25, about 700 volunteers from different sectors will paint murals on marine biodiversity around the 1,075-meter fence of the NAPWC. The mural, to be called the "Wall of Nature", could be considered the longest in the country upon its completion. The mural painting will be followed by the Ocean Jam, a concert showcasing different musical renditions advocating conservation and protection of the Philippines' coastal and marine environment.

The PAWB will also launch two different websites on coastal and marine ecosystem management, one for the Integrated Coastal Resource Management Project on May 18, and another for the CTI and its National Plan of Action on May 30.

The month of May was declared in the Philippines as the National Month of the Ocean under Presidential Proclamation No. 57 signed in 1999 by then President Joseph Estrada. The proclamation names the DENR and the Department of Agriculture through its Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to spearhead the observance to highlight the protection and sustainable management of the country's coastal and ocean resources.

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**Our** mission is to mobilize our citizenry in protecting, conserving and managing the environment and natural resources.

**It** is our mandate to stop environmental abuses, reverse ecological degradation, conserving remaining natural resources and ensure that they benefit our people.

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