

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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DENR

IN THE NEWS

P.1

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'More irresponsible mining firms face suspension, possible closure'

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez is determined to stop irresponsible mining operations. An environmental advocate, Lopez said she would continue to visit mining-affected communities to talk to the people as part of the ongoing mining audit that has so far claimed four nickel-mining companies as among the first casualties.

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'More irresponsible mining firms face suspension, possible closure'

Lopez had vowed to stop irresponsible mining operations that cause environmental destruction and people to suffer. Since assuming the top Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) post, Lopez had so far suspended four nickel-mining operations—two in Zambales and two in Palawan.

Maintaining her pro-environment stance, Lopez debunked claims by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) that mining has improved the economic conditions of people in host communities. In fact, she said some of the areas she visited showed that people are suffering because of the adverse impact of environmental degradation caused by mining operations that include reduced rice yield and dwindling fish catch.

The DENR chief said the mining audit includes environmental and social impact on top of the usual technical or physical mining audit criteria. She added that even mine sites with ISO 14001 certification, a requirement under DENR Administrative Order 2015-07, would not be spared if their operation proved to cause environmental problem that make people in the communities to suffer.

An initial assessment made by the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) revealed that almost half of the 40 large-scale operating mines are "frequent" violators of mining and environmental laws.

But MGB Director Leo Jasareno said companies, mostly engaged in nickel mining, are "minor offenders" who commit not-so-serious offenses, such as good housekeeping rules, failure to put signage in strategic location or failing to keep their facilities clean, that warrant suspension

ranging from one to three months and corresponding fines between 2012 to 2015.

The companies that committed "major violations," he added, were the nickel-mining companies operating in Zambales in 2014.

On Tuesday Lopez met with farmers from Cagayan Valley region to listen to their concerns related to mining activities, particularly OceanaGold and Golden Summit.

"We will coordinate with authorities and [enforce] the rule of law. If these mining companies have violated the law, we...[assure] their suspension, revocation of permits or even closure," she warned.

The farmers demanded an immediate halt on the Cagayan Valley operations of OceanaGold, an Australian mining firm, whom they accused of causing water pollution and deforestation in its area of operation, harassing people and violating human rights. They also complained about the mining company Golden Summit, which they claimed was operating illegally in Isabela.

"We will put money in reforestation and agro-forestry. It is not enough that you plant trees. After you plant, you should take care of them. The money will go to the farmers," Lopez added.

Nueva Vizcaya farmers asked to be included in the long list of DENR partners for the implementation of the National Greening Program (NGP). The DENR chief also promised to act swiftly on the concerns raised.

As an initial step, Lopez said she would discuss the case of OceanaGold with the Australian ambassador in their upcoming meeting.

Meanwhile, Lopez vowed to take swift action on the lumad's complaints about the impact of mining

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'more irresponsible mining firms face
suspension possible closure'

operations in Mindanao.

"The common good remains my non-negotiable stand. I promise to act on your concerns, especially those that directly affect your livelihood and your homes," she said.

The indigenous people (IP) have complained about how destructive mining and illegal-logging activities have caused superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering to poor communities in Mindanao.

The lumad's primary concern is the rampant human-rights violations allegedly perpetrated by large mining and logging firms, which they want to be stopped immediately.

The IP group also called for an immediate probe on the disappearance of one of their members, which they claimed has something to do with DMCI logging project in Sultan Kudarat.

The group also asked for a halt on the operation or cancellation of the mining permit granted to Sagittarius Mines Inc.

Lopez added if the results of the ongoing mining audit by the DENR would show that there were indeed violations, she would either suspend the operation or cancel the permits of erring mining firms depending on the gravity of the violation.

"I will not allow people to suffer because these big companies want to do business," Lopez said. "This is beyond my conscience and will not be tolerated by this administration."

On behalf of the lumad, Pya Macliing Malayao the Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas gave Lopez a copy of the Indigenous People's Agenda, which lists their demands on key issues related to the recognition and respect

of the collective rights of the IPs to their ancestral land and resources, human rights, and social services and development.

It also includes points covered by the mandate of the DENR, including the revision of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and the National Integrated Protected Areas Systems Law, or Nipas, of 1992; moratorium on the grant of all mining permits; and make mining and logging companies liable for the destruction of natural resources in their areas.

The agenda would be officially submitted to the Office of the President on August 8 as part of the commemoration of the World Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Lopez first met the lumad representatives at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Manila, where they had the chance to air their complaints to the new DENR chief.

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• **Church welcomes aid for lumads**

The Diocese of Tandag in Surigao del Sur lauded government efforts to address the problems faced by the displaced lumads or the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the Caraga region, particularly in Surigao del Sur. Rev. Fr. Antonio Galela, social action director of the diocese said, the displaced lumads in Mindanao have been suffering for a long time. He expressed hope that the IPs will soon be able to go back to their ancestral land to resume their lives. "Aside from violence and unrest, mining is also one of the reasons that drove the lumads out of their homeland. We are hoping that the action being done by the current administration particularly the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will finally solve the problem," Galela said over Church-run Radio Veritas. (Christina I. Hermoso)

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Visit mining communities, DENR chief urged

Group says poor live outside their jurisdiction

By Ronnel W. Domingo

FILIPINOS in mining communities are living above the poverty threshold and satisfied with their lives and Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Regina Lopez should pay them a visit to see for herself, according to the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP).

The COMP said this as Lopez accused the group of "twisting the truth" about poverty statistics.

"In mining communities which are within the area of jurisdiction of the mining operations, households are provided with free housing, water, education, health and other services and these noncash benefits make the households' disposable income enough to enjoy a quality of life that is not available

to farmers, fisherman, factory workers and other wage earners," COMP executive vice president Nelia C. Halcon told the INQUIRER.

The industry group and the head of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have engaged in a word war, using data from the Philippine Statistical Authority's 2015 Family Income and Expenditure Survey—among other data sets—to support their arguments.

Lopez—a staunch antimining advocate—had reiterated that there was poverty wherever there are mining activities. Halcon said PSA data disproved such statement.

"She (Lopez) should visit mining communities and talk to mining households to see for herself that people living inside the mining companies' jurisdiction are contented with their way of life and are not suffering as she has been insinuating repeatedly," Halcon said.

"She may be talking about unemployed people who are living outside the host mining community, people hoping to get employed in the mine as most mining operations become a magnet for migrants in their quest for a good life," Halcon added.

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Visit mining communities, DENR chief urged

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Halcon maintained that mining activities helped reduce poverty in host communities since mining firms complemented the government's social services.

Even then, the COMP official said it was the local government units (LGUs) who had the responsibility of implementing anti-poverty policies "since they are the ones who can identify the many faces of poverty at the local levels, not the mining companies."

"Mining operations only complement LGU programs in easing poverty at the periphery of the host communities," she said.

Earlier this month, COMP—comprising the biggest and smaller mining companies in the country—said none of the 10 poorest provinces in the country, as listed by the

PSA, hosted an operating mine, contrary to Lopez's claim the poorest places in the Philippines were mining areas.

However, Lopez argued that one just had to go to Caraga, Eastern Visayas or Compostela Valley "to see that mining has not only failed to help lift poor Filipinos from poverty but has added to their socioeconomic difficulties."

She said Eastern Visayas and Caraga had the second- and fourth-highest rates of poverty incidence in the country and were host to some of the biggest mining operations.

Citing data from PSA's 2015 Family Income and Expenditures Survey, Lopez said in Eastern Visayas, "where there are mining operations in Leyte and Eastern Samar," 47

percent of the population was poor. "The poverty incidence is 46.7 percent in Leyte and 50 percent in Eastern Samar, nearly twice the national average of 26.3 percent," she said. "In Caraga, where there is mining in all provinces, 43.9 percent of the people wallow in poverty," she said.

In June, Lopez had told the INQUIRER that there was no such thing as responsible mining, especially with the open-pit method.

"If there is responsible mining, why is it that wherever there is mining, there is poverty," she had said.

On Thursday, Lopez said people from areas hosting mining operations came to the DENR "every day in droves, bewailing their suffering, and you tell me mining does not cause suffering?"

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Mining ops in Surigao gold rush area stopped

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY—The provincial government of Surigao del Sur has ordered a total stop to all small-scale mining operations in the gold rush area of Tambis in Barobo town.

Surigao del Sur Governor Vicente T. Pimentel Jr. ordered the immediate suspension of small scale mining operations “in an effort to stop the further destruction of the environment and avert the loss of lives due to landslides brought about by indiscriminate illegal

mining.”

Pimentel’s order came after Mines and Geo-Science Bureau Regional Director Alilo C. Ensomo appealed to local governments and law enforcement agencies in the province to help stop small scale mining operations in Tambis area, Barobo town where an estimated 1,000 illegal miners are operating

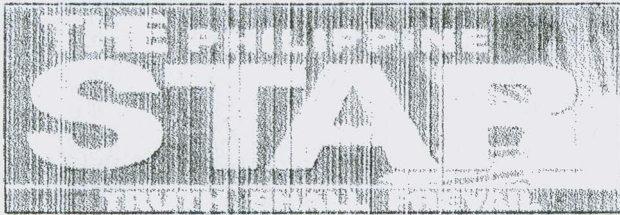
Three financiers are reportedly operating in the area.

Pimentel issued a cease and desist order (CDO) on Monday for the three illegal operators in Tambis while vowing to put a stop to all small-scale mining

operations there.

A team from the provincial environment and natural resources office (PENRO) and municipal environment and natural resources office (MENRO), along with elements of the Army’s 402nd Infantry Brigade served the CDO on Tuesday.

The operators, reportedly associated with the Chinese nationals as financiers, had no choice but to follow the CDO, leaving their mining equipment along the barangay road in Tambis area under the close watch of the police and military.



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OceanaGold eyes start of underground mining

Australian-owned OceanaGold Corp. is eyeing to start underground mining operations at the Didipio mine by end-next year even as it faces possible suspension amid the ongoing review of its mine.

"Mining of Stage 5 of the open pit was completed during the second quarter, ahead of schedule while development of the underground continues to advance well," OceanaGold president and CEO Mick Wilkes said.

OceanaGold expects production from the underground operations by the end of next year.

The Didipio mine, located

in Nueva Vizcaya, is a high grade gold-copper mine which is approximately 270 kilometers north of Manila.

The MGB ordered a review of OceanaGold's operations following complaints from the residents of the province.

MGB director Leo Jasareno earlier said there was a formal request to junk the request for renewal of the company's exploration permit for five years.

But OceanaGold Philippines chairman Joey Leviste said they have yet to receive a copy of the suspension order.

"We can't comment further

because we have a legitimate permit from the government," he said.

The permit issued by the MGB in March this year authorized the company to conduct exploration activities in the broader region surrounding Didipio in the next five years.

The company's mining claims cover about 15,000 hectares and around 900 hectares have already been explored.

OceanaGold acquired the Didipio project in the Philippines through its 2006 merger with Climax Mining.

— Louise Maureen Simeon

The Manila Times

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AMID SUSPENSION CONTROVERSY

OceanaGold eyes Didipio underground mining in late 2017

AUSTRALIAN miner OceanaGold Corp. expects to start underground mining operations by the end of next year once it has completed mining of Stage 5 of the open pit at the Didipio copper-gold mine in Nueva Vizcaya.

The company, however, is currently facing regulatory review following complaints from Nueva Vizcaya residents about the possible expansion of the company's operations.

"Mining of Stage 5 of the open pit was completed during the second quarter, ahead of schedule, while development of the underground continues to advance well," said Mick Wilkes, OceanaGold president and chief executive officer.

OceanaGold holds significant exploration tenements in the Philippines and its Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) covers approximately 158 square kilometers located in the provinces of Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino.

Joey Leviste, OceanaGold Philippines chairman, said they have yet to receive a copy of the order from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) over the possible suspension of their exploration permit.

"We will wait for the official order if true," Leviste said, noting that news of the suspension came from anti-mining groups.

Leviste also clarified that current operations at Didipio are separate from the five-year exploration permit award from the MGB.

"We can't comment further because we have to see if there really was a suspension. Because we have a legitimate permit from the government," the executive stressed.

The MGB issued the permit to OceanGold in March this year, allowing the company to conduct exploration activities in the broader region surrounding Didipio in the

next five years.

OceanaGold's mining claim covers around 15,000 hectares, but the company has only explored and developed around 900 hectares.

OceanaGold operates the Didipio mine, a high-grade gold-copper open pit and underground mine located around 270 kilometers north of Manila.

The mine is one of the lowest-cost gold mines in the world, with nominal production of 100,000 ounces of gold and 14,000 tons of copper. It has an estimated reserve of 1.59 million ounces of gold and 210,000 tons of copper. It had its full-year of operation in 2014.

Over the past few years, previous geochemical sampling has identified several gold and copper soil anomalies in close proximity to the Didipio operation.

Meanwhile, Wilkes announced another strong result for OceanaGold for the first half, attributed to slightly higher gold prices which offset high production costs.

For the first half of 2016, the company reported revenue of \$330.8 million and net profit of \$63.2 million while EBITDA was \$155.2 million.

In the second quarter alone, the company recorded revenue of \$169.8 million and net profit of \$39.7 million.

"After a strong first half of the year, the company is well positioned to achieve its production and cost guidance for the year," Wilkes said.

"We will continue to operate safely while seeking to unlock the organic growth potential of our assets. As ever, we are strongly committed to working with all of our stakeholders to deliver meaningful benefits to communities and superior returns to shareholders, as we have done so in the last several years," the executive added.

JAMES KONSTANTIN GALVEZ

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ABRA

NPA's raid small-scale mining site, burn drilling equipment

By **ZALDY C. COMANDA**

CAMP DANGWA, Benguet — A small-scale mining site was attacked by suspected New People's Army (NPA) rebels who burned drilling equipment being used in the mining operation in Lacub town, Abra, a report reaching the Police Regional Office-Cordillera yesterday said.

The Lacub Municipal Police Station (MPS) reported the mining site in Sitio Angagan Balaoang, Barangay Guinabang, Lacub, Abra and owned by Remato Reyes was attacked at 3 p.m. last Wednesday.

Around 20 heavily-armed NPA guerrillas arrived at the site, stopping a dump truck being driven by one Rene Eduarte and rounding up miners from the tunnel that included a certain Peter Wackal Sabado, 40, and a Gerald Manuel Garcia, 29.

The rebels held a meeting with the miners for about 15 minutes and then began burning the mining equipment.

Destroyed were two generator sets, a welding machine, a rock drill, a chain block, a blower, and a compressor. Police did not give an estimated cost of the burned equipment.

The small-scale miners kept mum on what transpired during their meeting with the NPA, but investigators believe the NPA rebels might have been demanding revolutionary taxes.

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PH manufacturers told to shift to lead-free paint production

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLORE**

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it wants all paint manufacturers in the country to move into lead-free paint production, a desire that is so far backed only by a chemical control order issued by the agency a few years ago.

Director Gilbert Gonzales of the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) said that at the very least, paint manufacturers should comply with the prescribed limit of lead in paint products, particularly for architectural, decorative and household use by the end of 2016.

But really, the desire is to tell the manufacturers to produce lead-free painting materials.

This is after Boysen and Davies recently obtained their Lead Safe Paint mark under a newly launched global certification program.

The DENR said that Boysen and Davies, among the country's top paint makers and exporters, are the first two companies in the world to apply and ob-

tain the Lead Safe Paint mark from the California-based SCS Global Services.

Their paint products were certified to have no added lead, a toxic substance associated with irreparable brain and central nervous system damage, it added.

"May Boysen and Davies influence and encourage our paint industry to shift to lead-free production. These two companies serve as models and we welcome efforts by the industry to make and shift and follow their examples," Gonzales said.

Pacific Paint (Boysen) Philippines Inc. acquired Lead Safe Paint certificates for its Boysen, Nation, Titan and Virtuoso brands (a total of 430 paint products), while Davies Paints Philippines Inc. obtained certification for its Davies brand (a total of 379 paint products).

Gonzales said he hopes that the initiatives of the two paint makers would "increase the customers' confidence, expand business transactions, allow uniform labeling" in the country.

In 2013, the DENR issued a chemical control order (CCO) for lead to limit, regulate, restrict and even prohibit its

importation, distribution, use, manufacture and disposal.

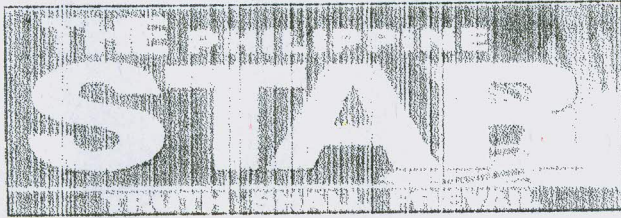
DENR Administrative Order No. 2013-24 establishes 90 parts per million as threshold limit for lead in paint used in pigment, drying agent or for some intentional use.

It also sets a three-year phase-out period from 2013 to 2016 for lead-containing architectural, decorative and household paints, and six-year phase-out period from 2013 to 2019 for lead-containing industrial paints.

"As a toxic substance, the lead regulation covers not only the manufacturing process, but starts at the importation and distribution of this chemical and even up to treatment, storage and disposal of lead-containing wastes," Gonzales said.

Gonzales said the CCO also prohibits the use of lead in the production of packaging for food and drink, fuel additives, water pipes, toys, school supplies and cosmetics.

Non-compliance to the law is subject to sanctions and penalties under Republic Act No. 6969, or the Toxic Substances, Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act.



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Marine conservation groups proposes creation of ocean, fisheries department

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Marine conservation groups reiterated their call for the creation of a separate agency that will oversee the country's fisheries and oceans.

They said the proposed agency, which shall be removed under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, would address food security issues in the country.

"We are still in the planning stage. We continue to look for champions in the Senate and Congress," Greenpeace Philippines' Abigail Aguilar said on the sidelines of the Green Thumb Coalition press conference.

Aguilar said they were considering asking Senator Cynthia Villar to help them in their cru-

sade.

"Senator Cynthia Villar is very consistent in helping us in issues like this and we are hoping for her continued support," she added.

In a separate interview with **The STAR**, Oceana Philippines vice president Gloria Ramos said they have high hopes that a separate agency would be established to manage fisheries and oceans following the statements of support from Senator Francis Pangilinan.

"Many of our senators understand the need for this. We hope to have more champions and we are cognizant of the process but we are determined to do this," Ramos said.

"This is actually long overdue considering that the Philippines has one of the longest coastline in the world and is a center of global marine biodiversity," she added.

Ramos said the DA should focus more on the terrestrial domain or the farmers, and the creation of a Department of Oceans and Fisheries.

"We forget that the poorest of the poor are living in the coastline areas and we need to prioritize food security in the country," she said.

Latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed poverty incidence among fisherfolks reached 39.2 percent, the highest among the basic sectors of the society.

BULGAR

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Magsama-sama tayo sa pagpapabalik ng dating ganda at linis ng Laguna de Bay

KINALAKIHAN ng bayaning si Jose Rizal ang Lawa ng Laguna sa Calamba. Ilang tula ang kanyang kinatha tungkol sa matulaing lawa. Ano kaya ang hitsura ng Laguna de Bay noong mga panahong 'yun? Mayroon kayang mga sari-saring basura tulad ng mga balutang plastic at mga styrofoam cup? Eh, mga sari-saring patay na hayop o kaya ay mga taong nai-salvage? Dumadaloy kaya noon sa Laguna de Bay ang 'di kanaisnais na nagpaparumi at nagpapaitim sa Ilog-Pasig mula sa mga pagawaan at lalo't higit sa mga palikuran? Nagsimula na kayang magtirik ng mga kawayan na binalot sa lambat upang bumuo ng mga fish pen na paglalagyan ng mga bangus at tilapiyang patatabain upang ibenta sa mga palengke't lansangan? Nariryan na kaya noon ang salot ng "janitor fish" na pilit na hinahanapan ng gamit o pakinabang ng naperhuwisyong mga mangingisda?

Mahigit isandaang taon na ang lumipas mula kay Rizal hanggang ngayon, hindi nawawalan ng problema ang lawa mula sa kapabayaang pag-abuso ng mga tao, subalit, halos hindi mapapansin ang epekto nito noon kaysa ngayon. Kakaunti ang mga tao noon. Maliliit at walang maituturing na industriya ang mga bayan-bayan. Tiyak na masarap pang mamasyal, mamangka, lumangoy, mangisda at kumatha ng tula at kuwentong nagtatanghal sa hiwaga at kadakilaan ng Laguna de Bay.

Ibang-iba na ngayon ang panahon, pati ang politika. Kung mayroon pang paggalang at pagpapahalaga sa kalikasan, partikular na sa Laguna de Bay, napalitan na ito ng kabaligtaran.

Wala na halos paggalang at pagpapahalaga ang marami para sa 'di masusukat na kahalagahan ng lawa na bahagi lamang ng malawak na katotohanan ng kalikasan. Nagsimula na ang mga panukalang baguhin, "pagandahin daw" ang Laguna de Bay; lagyan ang palibot nito ng malapad at mahabang daan na magpapadali at "magpapaganda" sa buhay at kabuhayan ng mga tagaroon. Dalawa ang idudulot na buti ng proyekto, ang naturang "disaster mitigation" o ang pagpapababa ng posibleng kapahamakan (mula

kalikasan). Una, mapoprotektahan daw ng panukalang daan ang mga bayan sa palibot ng lawa mula sa biglaang hampas ng bagyo at sa biglang pagtaas ng tubig. Pangalawa, dahil magkakaroon ng mabilis at maginhawang bagong kalye na mag-uugnay sa lahat ng bayan ng

Laguna at Rizal sa mga karatig na bayan mula Parañaque hanggang Makati at Maynila.

At magkano ang proyekto? Saan at kanino uutangin ang pera? Matagal na bang pinag-aralan kung paano makatutulong at 'di makatutulong ang naturang proyekto? Nagsimula na ang iba't ibang grupo, mga samahan at kilusan na pag-aralan ang banta at problema. At sa mga nagdaang panahon, nabuo na ang Save Laguna Lake Movement. Mula nang isulong ng nakaraang administrasyon ang Public Private Partnership o PPP,

isinilang ang napakaraming proyekto na inilalagay sa panganib ang iba't ibang bahagi ng kapaligiran at ng kalikasan. Napakaraming mga malalaking korporasyon na mayroong malaking pondo at maglunsad ng proyekto na sa isang banda, pawang luntian at makatutulong sa marami na hindi sumisira sa kalikasan. Subalit, iilan lamang ang mga tunay na makakalikasan.

Marami nang naipasang proyekto ang DENR, DTI at iba pang mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan na sa unang tingin ay makatutulong ng malaki subalit, pagkatapos ng maingat at malalim na pagsusuri, kapwa ilalagay ang kalikasan at ang tao sa panganib. Isang ahensiya na partikular na tumitingin, tumatanggi at nag-aaprubang mga proyekto sa lawa ng Laguna ay ang Laguna Lake Development Authority. Marami nang naging manager ang LLDA subalit, tuloy pa rin ang mga mali, abusado at nakasisirang gawain sa palibot ng lawa ng Laguna. Marami na tayong natanggap na reklamo hinggil sa LLDA at sa mismong DENR na sa halip na protektahan ay pinapayagang sirain ang lawa ng Laguna at ang iba pang lawa tulad ng 7 Lakes ng San Pablo City.

Dahil sa lahat ng nabanggit, magkakaroon ng malaking pagkilos ngayong Sabado sa San Pablo City upang hikayatin ang mga mamamayan at pamahalaan na kumilos, ipaglaban at itaguyod ang lawa ng Laguna at unti-unti itong ibalik sa kalagayang ikinagalak at nagbigay ng malalim na inspirasyon at pagasa kay Jose Rizal kasama ng mga mamamayang Pilipino.