

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 20 NOV 2016

DAY : Sunday

# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**



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### ***DENR launches new hotlines***

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has launched new hotlines that the public can call for their environmental concerns.

The hotlines incorporate the agency's acronym – DENR – for easy recall.

Those using landlines can dial #DENR or #3367 from anywhere within the Philippines.

Meanwhile, mobile phone users can lodge inquiries through 0917-868-DENR or

0917-885-DENR.

The public can also email the agency at [aksyonkalikasan@denr.gov.ph](mailto:aksyonkalikasan@denr.gov.ph) and [web@denr.gov.ph](mailto:web@denr.gov.ph).

The hotlines and email provide direct access to the DENR Action Center, which was created as part of a quick-response mechanism to environmental issues and concerns raised by stakeholders.

DENR Secretary Gina Lopez earlier said she wants the public to have easy access to the DENR,

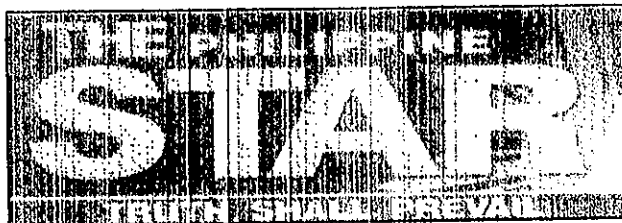
especially if they need to raise particular environmental issues.

She added that she is looking into establishing a civic sector arm in the agency.

"I see the critical role of civil society in protecting the environment," she said.

Lopez said without the help of and reports from civil society, the immediate suspension of notorious mining companies would not be possible.

– Rhodina Villanueva



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### DA highlights role of biotechnology in food security

The government recognizes the beneficial impact of biotechnology to help achieve food security, equitable access to health services, sustainable and safe environment, and industry development.

It has become increasingly important to the research and development of agricultural, medical, environmental and industrial products. Its application in agriculture sustains increased farm yields and productivity, and improved value, quality and suitability of crops.

To highlight its important role in the country's overall development, the Department of Agriculture will lead the 12th National Biotechnology Week on Nov. 21-25 at the Bureau of Soils and Water Management in Quezon City.

The event, which bears this year's theme: "Bioteknolohiya: Kaagapay Para Sa Pangkalahatang Kaunlaran," is a mandated observance by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 1414 in 2007.

According to DA Biotech Program Director Dr. Vivencio Mamaril, the NBW aims to create sustained public awareness, understanding and appreciation of biotechnology and highlight its role in helping achieve and sustain productivity and growth.

He noted that breakthroughs such as development of vaccines, antibiotics and other drugs have made health care accessible, and has helped reduce chemical inputs usage, ensure water

quality and conservation of topsoil, and produce renewable energy sources.

He said that the weeklong observance will help provide public awareness, education and understanding of biotechnology which are essential for its responsible application and regulation.

Activities include a Techno-forum on The Colors of Cellulases, EnviroTech Forum for Mined-out Areas, Global Insight on Policies and Regulations on New Breeding Techniques, forums on effectivity of the dengue vaccine, health and wellness demonstrations, film showing, and lecture series on DNA in the Kitchen.

Pioneers, policy makers, advocates and practitioners of biotechnology will be feted on the Appreciation Night on Nov. 21.

The NBW is co-organized by the Department of Education, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Health, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Science and Technology, and Department of Trade and Industry.

A parallel trade exhibit at the Quezon City Hall will showcase technologies and products, as well as success stories of outstanding individuals who have contributed or benefited from biotechnology.

Simultaneous activities are also slated in Nueva Ecija, Tagaytay City, Gen. Santos City and other parts of Quezon City.



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# Four nations lead way to carbon-free economies

MARRAKECH (AFP) — When it comes to purging fossil fuels from the global economy by mid-century — our only hope of staving off catastrophic climate change — it turns out that you can't get there from here without a good map.

That's the thinking behind detailed, long-term plans for switching from dirty to clean energy unveiled this week by the United States, Canada, Mexico and Germany at UN climate talks in Marrakech.

Overcoming sharp internal debate, the German government led the way with sector-by-sector scenarios that would remove up to 95 percent of its CO2 emissions by 2050, compared to 1990 levels.

Green groups said there were too many sops to big business, but it was a world-first.

The "three amigos" of North America jointly released their blueprints on Wednesday, with the 100-page US "mid-century strategy" for the globe's largest

economy taking center stage.

The US pledge to slash carbon-pollution by four-fifths from a 2005 benchmark dated from the chaotic 2009 Copenhagen climate summit, but had never been spelled out.

"The intent here is to think in the long term, not only in the short term," the Obama administration's top climate negotiator Jonathan Pershing told journalists ahead of the Nov. 7-18 climate meet.

"At the moment, what we

have from the world are commitments for 2025 or 2030, but we know that by 2050 we've got to have deep decarbonization."

Those medium-term, national CO2 reduction pledges — annexed to the landmark 196-nation Paris Agreement, which went into force earlier this month — are not nearly enough to cap global warming at two degrees Celsius (3.6F) above pre-industrial era levels, the planet-saving goal set out in the treaty.

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## 5 nabbed as Caraga cops seize illegally cut lumber

BY MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

CAMP RAFAEL C. RODRIGUEZ,  
Butuan City – Elements of the North-eastern Mindanao Police Regional Office 13 (PRO 13) seized illegally-cut “iron” wood, and also arrested five persons in separate anti-illegal logging operations in Agusan del Sur and Agusan del Norte on Thursday and Friday.

In a report submitted to the regional headquarters of PRO 13 here yesterday, police operatives of Agusan del Sur Police Provincial Office and Prosperidad Municipal Police Station (MPS) seized 1,341 pieces, or an estimated volume of 900 board feet of illegally-cut “iron” wood trees, after unidentified concern villagers tipped-off that “Magkuno” lumber are set to be transported to Butuan City.

Police immediately responded and launched an operation that also resulted in the arrest of Jay Alabaran, 44, and his still unidentified driver. They were on a Mitsubishi Canter truck, which was loaded with the undocumented forest products, when they were apprehended at Barangay Poblacion, Prosperidad town on Thursday.

The next day, operatives of Buenavista MPS arrested three motorcycle drivers, namely, Jimmy Sernal, Danilo Cellero, and Marcial Toda, after they allegedly attempted to transport 114 pieces of dipterocarp lumber with a total volume of 631 bd. ft. in Barangay 5, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte.

The arrested suspects are now facing charges of violating the Forestry Code of the Philippines, PRO 13 Regional Director Chief Supt. Rolando B. Felix said.

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VICTIMS of Supertyphoon Yolanda (international code name Haiyan) on November 8, 2013, look for their belongings around destroyed houses on the outskirts of Tacloban on Leyte Island. The region was the worst affected by the typhoon, causing widespread damage and loss of life. Caritas is responding by distributing food, shelter, hygiene kits and cooking utensils. EOGHAN RICE-TROCAIRE/CARITAS/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## Church arm hits plan of Yolanda victims in

**T**HE Catholic Church's social-action arm is opposing a government plan to tear down houses in "danger zones" in Tacloban City.

Considered the most powerful storm to be recorded, it hit the Philippines in 2013, killing 6,300 people.

The plan to demolish the houses came after an order from President Duterte.

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### Cebu City executive order

ON November 15 Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña signed an executive order for the protection of shark and ray species, making the entire island-province of Cebu the first shark and ray sanctuary in the Philippines.

Along with environmentalists, scientists and interest groups, local officials in Cebu are now calling for the protection of sharks and other marine species at a national level through the creation of interconnected ocean sanctuaries.

Greenpeace Southeast Asia Oceans campaigner Vince Cinches, cofounder of Save Sharks Network of the Philippines, lauded and welcomed Osmeña's action.

"The decision of Mayor Tomas Osmeña is important as it turns the whole of Cebu into a shark and ray sanctuary," he said.

### Shark summit

GREENPEACE Southeast Asia led various stakeholders in holding the second Shark Summit in Dumaguete City early this month. The summit saw participants signing an agreement toward the protection of all shark and ray species.

According to Cinches, what was gained in Cebu and the implementation of the listing of sharks and rays in Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will not work unless protection is taken at the national level.

"The Philippine government needs to hasten the revision and passage of Senate Bill 905, which seeks to protect all shark and ray species found within the country's exclusive economic zone," he said.

Organized along with Save Philippine Seas and Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines, the summit builds on the successful listing of thresher, mobula and silky sharks for protection under Appendix II of the Conference of Parties to the CITES.

The listing doubled to 20 percent the proportion of sharks targeted by the fin trade that are now regulated internationally.

It also means the species are now protected in the Philippines under Section 102 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Philippine Fisheries Code.

### Market intervention

BIMBO FERNANDEZ, executive assistant of the Office of the Mayor on Special Concerns, said Cebu City has always put the protection of key marine habitats within its jurisdiction as a priority.

He said market intervention is crucial to the overall efforts of protecting sharks, rays and the marine environment, as he called on the national government to pass a measure to sustainably manage shark and ray species.

Cebu City hosts the biggest fish market in the region, where catch from other parts of the country are being landed.

However, Cebu is the only province in the Philippines that bans the catching, selling, possession and trading of all shark species and its derivatives.

Greenpeace claims that Monad Shoal, near the island of Malapascua in Cebu's Daanbantayan municipality, is the only place in the world where thresher sharks can be viewed with certainty.

According to Greenpeace, threshers have become the main feature of the scuba-dive tourism

### Welcome development

TEODY NAVEA of Sanlakas, which represents municipal fishermen from various coastal communities in Cebu, said declaring the entire

province a shark and rays sanctuary is a welcome development.

He said the shark and rays population have dwindled over the years because of hunting for food.

"We, from the municipal fishing communities, welcome this decision, as our livelihood and food is heavily dependent on the health of the seas. We haven't seen them for years and we admit to hunting them down for food, as we are being robbed of the most important species every time commercial fishing operators cast their nets down in our waters," he said.

Navea said protecting sharks and rays means protecting their fishing grounds and securing the future of their community.

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## PROTECTING SHARKS AND RAYS

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

**I**N 2014 the Marine Wild Fauna Watch of the Philippines published the *Philippine Aquatic Wildlife Rescue and Response Manual Series*. The publication, one of which focuses on sharks and rays, aims to help address gaps and issues on threatened marine wildlife to protect and conserve marine biodiversity in the Coral Triangle.

The manuals seek to provide a standard to deal with responders of sharks and rays caught in nets or stranded, the common cause of their death, besides hunting for food. While sharks and rays are feared creatures, these seemingly dangerous predators are, in fact, endangered species. Among the threats to these marine wildlife are hunting for food and accidental catching or by-catch.

Rays are turned into a dish from Bicol called *kinunot* (literally, shredded) in coconut milk. Dried meat of sharks and rays were also popular for local consumption in the Visayas, until the fishing of giant manta ray and whale shark were banned in 1998.

### Ecological functions

WHILE these marine wildlife are feared because of their sheer appearance, their size or known feeding habits, sharks and rays have important ecological functions.

According to the country's top biodiversity official, they are, in fact, ecosystem indicators.

"If you see sharks and sting rays, it only means that the marine ecosystem is healthy," Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the

rays, there is a need to strengthen the country's protected areas system where they thrive along with other marine species.

Environmental advocates, meanwhile, underscore the need to conserve the population of marine wildlife including sharks and

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The value of world trade in shark commodities each year, according to UN Food and Agriculture Organization

Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said. Lim said sharks, being on top of the food chain, plays an important role in maintaining a balanced marine ecosystem.

"Without these sharks, the population of certain species of fish would eventually grow and it will result in ecological imbalance," she said.

While the protection of sharks and rays fall under the mandate and jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the DENR's BMB is mandated to ensure the protection of key biodiversity areas through the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas) Act.

Lim said to protect sharks and



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### Historical decision

DR. Alessandro Ponzo of the Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines said protecting sharks and rays is a welcome development for scientists.

"For us in the scientific community, the decision of Cebu City government is historical as shark and ray science points to an unprecedented decline of these species," he said.

Despite progress made in science, there is a dearth of knowledge in shark and ray species diversity, habitat, biology and threats, Ponzo explained.

He said new species are being discovered during expeditions and market surveys.

"Rare species are even documented in Philippine waters, such as the megamouth shark, the country having the third-highest number of reports worldwide, and the critically endangered sawfish. We need to have science to inform us, in the best possible ways, on shark management," he said.

According to Ponzo, moving forward as a country together is a must to reverse this trend in sharks and rays population decline. "If there are problems along the way, we can always fix it," she said.

At the summit in Dumaguete City, Anna Oposa, executive director of Save Philippine Seas, underscored the need to

engage various stakeholders, from policy-makers, scientists, advocates and youth to ensure sustainable management and conservation of sharks and rays.

The summit aims to review the accomplishments and gaps based on the commitments crafted during the 2014 Shark Summit, identify solutions and stakeholders to address gaps and other issues on shark management and conservation, and review and enhance proposed policies on shark protection.

"By bringing an interdisciplinary, multistakeholder group together, the Shark Summit is expected to play a significant role in strengthening the conservation of shark species in the Philippines, and ensuring that the plans created during the week are supported by commitments, enforceable legislation and management," Oposa said.

### National plan

THE Philippines already has in place a National Plan of Action for Sharks, which provides the minimum requirement in shark conservation. According to Moonyeen Alava, executive director of Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation Inc., the government needs to focus its attention to ensuring that these species, as crucial indicator of a healthy marine ecosystem, will be sustainably managed and protected.

AA Yaptinchay, director of the Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines, said shark tourism is becoming more and more popular in the Philippines.

Sites, like Donsol for whale sharks, Tubbataha reefs for reef sharks and Monad shoal for thresher sharks, have become popular tourist spots, which only proves that protecting these marine wildlife species has direct socioeconomic benefits.

"Many more sites have this potential if only we could find a way to reduce the threat of unmanaged fisheries to their populations. This move is also critical to keep marine ecosystems healthy," he said.