

3/21/2018

CLEAR7 Strengthens Inter-Agency Coordination for Tañon Strait Protection

Illegal fishers in the Tañon Strait have a reason to avoid fishing in the protected area. New resolutions tightening enforcement and monitoring efforts approved by the Coastal Law Enforcement Alliance in Region 7 (CLEAR7) will make illegal and destructive fishing within the Strait riskier-than-ever.

CLEAR7 was established in 2000 through a Memorandum of Agreement signed by various government agencies and non-government organizations to pursue a coordinated coastal law enforcement strategy in the Central Visayas.

One of the largest protected areas in the country, the Tañon Strait is known as a hotbed for whales and dolphins, with fishing as the major source of livelihood, where 28,144 marginal fishers reside. Declared a protected area since 1998, the Strait is beset by various challenges such as illegal fishing by commercial fishers, continued use of dynamite, cyanide and fine mesh nets, pollution and unregulated coastal development.

Multisectoral Task Force

In a meeting recently held in Cebu City, CLEAR7 members agreed to set-up a multi-agency, multisectoral task force to develop and implement an operation plan to minimize and eventually eradicate illegal fishing before 2019.

“Illegal fishing is complex. It can only be addressed if all stakeholders work together. We have deployed gunboats and will support any enforcement agencies including our *Bantay Dagat* units within the Strait,” notes the region’s Chief of Naval Civil Military Operations Lt. Carlo Madrid.

Police Regional Office-7 Senior Superintendent Julian Entoma agrees. “We welcome the collaboration of all agencies in enforcing marine environmental laws. We will field personnel to ensure success.”

Permanent Committee Members

All CLEAR7 members will now appoint permanent representatives under the Policy, Monitoring, Control & Surveillance, and Capacity-building Committees. *Policy Committee members* will develop and review interagency enforcement protocols, develop and implement an awards and recognition system and document best practices. *Monitoring, Control & Surveillance Committee members* will coordinate field enforcement operations including maintaining oversight over criminal prosecutions. *Capacity-Building*

Committee members will develop and implement training sessions, seminars, conference and meetings. This ensures cross-cutting capacity to deal with various challenges as members come from a wide range of disciplines. An enforcement plan under a recently-published General Management Plan for the Tañon Strait gives enforcers guidelines for operations.

Rare Philippines' Rizaller Amolo adds that "Communities are reporting an increase in fish catch in the last quarter. While not yet established scientifically, fishers attribute the increase to better enforcement."

Vessel Monitoring Measures within Tañon Strait

The Tañon Strait Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) ratified a resolution last year requiring all commercial-scale fishing vessels that transit the Tañon Strait to possess a functional and approved Vessel Monitoring Mechanism (VMM), to ensure that all commercial-scale fishing vessels that transit, anchor, berth and dock in the Strait will not be tempted to fish inside this protected area.

Non-possession of a functional and approved vessel monitoring technology is a violation of the amended Fisheries Code and other pertinent regulations. CLEAR7 members fully support the management body in its initiative to institute vessel monitoring requirement within the Tañon Strait, while requesting an official representative of the PAMB to orient and distribute copies of the guidelines to all CLEAR7 members. Police units will also disseminate information through local police stations, offices and support units found within the Strait. They will also support the Protected Area Superintendent for enforcement operations against illegal fishers.

"The commitment of other Coastal Law Enforcement Agencies in Region 7 articulated in the presently passed Resolutions will boost the morale of our Protected Area Office in implementing fisheries and other environmental laws to protect one of the biggest protected seascapes in the country. We welcome the translation of these laws into action through multi-agency collaboration to win back the ecological integrity of this special seascape," says Tañon Strait Park Superintendent Prospero 'Am' Lendio.

"These three resolutions approved by CLEAR7 give our enforcement agencies and our artisanal fisherfolk a much-needed boost in fighting illegal fishing within Tañon Strait. They couldn't have come at a better time," concludes Oceana Philippines Vice President Atty. Gloria Estenzo Ramos.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in partnership with nonprofit Oceana Philippines will convene the 3rd Tañon Strait Law Enforcement Summit in December 2018 to evaluate the results of the Operation Plan.

Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation and works in 17 countries to rebuild abundant and biodiverse oceans by winning science-based policies in countries that control one third of the world's wild fish catch. With over 100 victories that stop overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution and killing of threatened species, Oceana's campaigns are delivering results worldwide.



Oceana works across the Philippines to protect the lives and livelihoods of artisanal and small-scale fisherfolk. ([Gregg Yan / Oceana](#))

For More Information:

Mr. Gregg Yan, Director of Communications
Oceana Philippines
Quezon City, Metro Manila
E-mail: Gyan@oceana.org

Atty. Jennifer Ramos, Legal and Policy Director
Oceana Philippines
Quezon City, Metro Manila
E-mail: Jlramos@oceana.org