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First Protected Area Case Filed Before DOJ

Landmark move to set a precedent for stricter environmental law enforcement

The country's very first case filing at the Department of Justice (DOJ) for violation of environmental laws in a protected area pursuant to National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act, RA-7586, was made recently. This involved alleged commercial fishing done by 13 respondents apprehended in the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape, one of the country's largest marine protected areas.

The DOJ has created a National Task Force of Special Prosecutors pursuant to RA 586, to implement its mandate of efficient, effective and equitable administration of justice with a particular focus on protected areas.

This was borne out of the collaborative efforts of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its Biodiversity Management Bureau, plus the Department of Justice to give life to the mandate of RA 7586 of providing speedy and efficient prosecution of cases specifically for protected areas. The law recognizes that effective administration and sustainable management of protected areas is "Possible only through cooperation among national government, local government and concerned private organizations; that the use and enjoyment of these protected areas must be consistent with the principles of biological diversity and sustainable development."

"This is a landmark moment which should help deter commission of prohibited acts especially in ecologically critical areas such as our protected areas," says Oceana Philippines Vice-president Atty. Gloria Estenzo Ramos. "Illegal and destructive fishing dramatically destroys the vibrance and productivity of our oceans – causing our country to lose about PHP44 Billion in lost fishing revenues yearly."

President Duterte promised to curb illegal fishing through stricter enforcement of marine and fisheries-related laws.

Adds Ramos, "With stricter law enforcement, more of the country's marine resources can be protected to provide food and livelihood for our fellow Filipinos."

Oceana works around the world to restore the productivity of the world's fisheries. (30)

Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation. Oceana is rebuilding 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 like turtles and sharks, Oceana's campaigns are delivering results. A restored ocean means that one billion people can enjoy a healthy seafood meal, every day, forever. Together, we can save the oceans and help feed the world. Visit ph.oceana.org to learn more.

Captioned Images:



Patrol vessels from the Philippine Navy, Coast Guard and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources docked in Dumaguete City during the send-off of the vessels for patrol operations in the Tañon Strait. Oceana and its allies are working to protect the Strait from illegal and destructive fishing – thereby protecting the lives and livelihoods of small-scale fisherfolk dependent on the sea. (Oceana)

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