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Visayan Fisherfolk Honored in 2nd Ocean Heroes Awards

Four fisherfolk from the Tañon Strait were recently recognized as Ocean Heroes for championing conservation, coastal law enforcement and sustainable fisheries in the Visayas.

Recognition was also given to Tañon Strait Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) which are effectively-managed through strong local government and community collaboration. These MPAs are now providing a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits for coastal communities.

“Our Ocean heroes inspire so many, including our enforcement agencies, with their vigor and courage in protecting the Tañon Strait. May their determination and dedication spread, as we work together to protect and conserve our rich yet fragile marine resources,” says Oceana Philippines Vice-president Atty. Gloria Estenzo Ramos.

The 2017 Ocean Heroes are Virgilio Aviso, Renato Buenviaje, Jocelyn Moya-Hekrdle and Mariano Sarcol. They stood out from dozens of candidates for their commitment to protect the Tañon Strait, a 161-kilometer strip dividing the provinces of Cebu and Negros Island. The Strait is one of the largest and most productive Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the country, hosting 63% of the country’s coral species and 14 types of whale and dolphin, while providing food and livelihood for 42 towns, cities and municipalities in Cebu, Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental.

The awards were integrated with the recognition given to the exemplary stakeholders and partners of the province of Negros Occidental, during the culminating activity of the celebration of the 25th year of the establishment of its Provincial Environment Management Office under the leadership of Atty. Wilmon Penalosa. Governor Alfredo Maranon led the public officials and participants in the momentous occasion.

Launched in 2016, the Ocean Heroes Awards is a partnership among Oceana Philippines, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to honor courageous community leaders to ensure the sustainable management of the marine ecosystems of the Tañon Strait. Its first batch of winners were Norlan Pagal, Oliver Dayupay, Veda Raunillo and Roberto Quigay.

This year’s Ocean Heroes Awards expanded with partnerships between the provincial governments of Cebu, Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental, Tañon Strait Protected Area Office and Rare, plus the inclusion of a new category for ‘Best-managed Marine Protected Area’ inside the protected seascape, spearheaded by the Protected Area Office, Rare plus the province of Negros Oriental.

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Mr. Virgilio Aviso, 65, from Amlan in Negros Oriental, led a focused coastal and marine awareness and value-changing campaign for his community, encouraging fellow fishers and their families to adopt practical

conservation measures and proper fishing practices. Through his leadership, the residents are taking ownership and pride in practicing responsible stewardship over the marine resources.

Mr. Renato Buenviaje, 55, from Escalante City in Negros Occidental, has served as a fish warden for over a decade. Buenviaje also led a large mangrove rehabilitation program in his community, while ensuring the establishment of the local fisheries council to oversee the rehabilitation of Marine Protected Areas and other marine habitats.

Ms. Jocelyn Moya - Hekrdle, 51, from Toboso in Negros Occidental, led the establishment of environmental associations and spearheaded activities on marine conservation to protect the marine resources and habitats in and around her home community. She is extremely active in promoting fisheries law enforcement in the Tañon Strait.

Mr. Mariano Sarcol, 60, from the coastal municipality of Barili in Cebu, was recognized for his advocacy in establishing MPAs, protecting municipal waters against the encroachment of illegal commercial fishers, plus continuously enforcing fishery laws. "I just want to ensure a steady and sustainable supply of wild fish and shellfish. By reducing illegal fishing, I can ensure that our coastal communities will always have food," he shares.

Oceana works around the globe to promote sustainable fisheries and science-based coastal resource management. (30)

Captioned Images:



From left to right: Rocky Sanchez Tirona, Vice-President for Rare Philippines; Regional Director Emma Melana of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Central Visayas (DENR-7); Regional Director Allan Poquita of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Central Visayas (BFAR-7), Atty. Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Vice President for Oceana Philippines; with Ocean Heroes Awards 2017 judges Dr. Maria Cecilia Gastardo – Conaco, head of the Social and Political Psychology Research Laboratory in UP Diliman and Dr. Porfirio M. Aliño of the University of the Philippines -Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), with the 11 finalists of the Ocean Heroes Awards 2017. (Oceana)



[Renato Buenavaje](#), 55, from Escalante, Negros Occidental has served as a fish warden for more than 10 years, and has led a large mangrove rehabilitation program in his community. **(Mary Ann Mayo / Oceana)**



[Virgilio Aviso](#) from Amlan, Negros Oriental has led the coastal and marine awareness and value-changing campaign in his community. **(Mary Ann Mayo / Oceana)**



[Mariano Sarcol](#) from Barili, Cebu worked to protect municipal waters against the encroachment of illegal commercial fishers in their coastal community. **(Mary Ann Mayo / Oceana)**



[Jocelyn Moya-Herkdle](#) from Toboso, Negros Oriental led the establishment of environmental associations and spearheaded activities on marine around her home community. **(Mary Ann Mayo / Oceana)**

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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 www.oceana.org to learn more.