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Tañon Strait heroes honored on World Oceans Day

Outstanding leaders of fishing communities who have made significant contributions in the conservation and protection of Tañon Strait Protected Seascape were named Ocean Heroes last June 8, celebrated globally as World Oceans Day.

“Today, as we celebrate World Oceans Day, we acknowledge our heroes who have passionately pursued the advocacy to protect our marine resources. May they continue to inspire us, and serve as an example, on how we can work together for our seas,” said lawyer Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Vice President for Oceana Philippines.

The Ocean Heroes Award seeks to honor and acknowledge residents in Tañon Strait who have consistently worked for its protection, fought against destructive projects and illegal fishing in the area, ensured enforcement of fisheries laws and protection of habitats and species, and influenced others to take action for oceans conservation and effect policies geared towards sustainable fisheries management.

Three winners were chosen from each province in Tañon Strait– Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Negros Occidental-- and one from the women’s sector.

The winner for Cebu is Norlan Pagal, who hails from San Remigio, in the northern part of Tañon Strait. Oliver Dayupay, a fisherman in Ayungon who recently passed away, is the recipient of the award from Negros Oriental. For Negros Occidental, the awardee was Roberto Quigay, a local fisherfolk leader in San Carlos City. For the women’s sector, Vida Raunillo from Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental was chosen as the winner.

The judges for the Ocean Heroes Award are Dr. Mundita Lim, director of the Biodiversity and Management Bureau; Atty. Benjamin Tabios Jr., Assistant Director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR); and Dr. Maria Cecilia Gastardo-Conaco, head of the Social and Political Psychology Research Laboratory at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

“This event strengthens the relationship of government and civil society, such as Oceana, who are working together for the common good and well-being of the Filipinos,” Tabios said.

“This event is an important gathering of stakeholders. The sustainability of Tañon Strait depends on the participation and involvement of stakeholders in terms of management

and protection,” said Isabelo Montejo, regional director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Central Visayas.

One of the campaign goals of Oceana in the Philippines is eradicating illegal commercial fishing in the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape, the largest marine protected area in the Philippines. The body of water between the islands of Negros and Cebu is a critical habitat for 14 of the 27 species of whales and dolphins in the Philippines. It is also an important fishing ground for coastal dwellers in 42 cities and municipalities.

Threats such as overfishing, unregulated coastal development, and pollution persist despite the area’s protected status, damaging fish habitats and adversely affecting the livelihoods of artisanal fisherfolk, who are the country’s poorest of the poor.

Click this link for photos: <https://goo.gl/59TIHo>

Video profiles of the four awardees may be viewed here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCuUpXL0fj_pKm2ODhtlVqw

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Oceana is the largest international organization focused solely on ocean conservation. Oceana wins policy victories for the oceans using science-based campaigns. Since 2001, we have protected over 1.2 million square miles of ocean and innumerable sea turtles, sharks, dolphins and other sea creatures. Global in scope, Oceana has offices in North, South and Central America, Europe and Asia and more than 600,000 followers all over the world. For further information, please visit www.oceana.org.

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