

Minutes of the 89th TPAMB Meeting
Zoom Conference, ID No. 857 3320 4803
26 May 2022

1. Call to Order. Atty. Adelina B. Villena, PCSDS representative, was elected to preside over the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 3:09PM

Present:

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| 1. Atty. Adelina B. Villena, PCSDS | Presiding Officer |
| 2. Mr. Marco Angelo J. Ancheta, PCSSD, DOT | Member |
| 3. Commo Rommel A Supangan, CGD-Pal | Member |
| 4. Col. Gerald L Naldoza, Western Command | Member |
| 5. Atty. Vicente V. Escala, Office of the Gov | Member |
| 6. Capt Brendo J Casaclang PN (GSC), NFW | Member |
| 7. Ptr. Jehu Cayaon, Tambuli ta mga Kagayanen | Member |
| 8. Ms. Agnes Acosta- Magdaug, 3 rd District | Member |
| 9. Dr. Roger Dolorosa, Western Philippines University | Member |
| 10. Ms. Jeanne G. Tabangay, CI-Phils | Member |
| 11. Ms. Katherine Custodio, WWF-Phils | Member |
| 12. Hon. Sergio S. Tapalla, LGU-Cagayancillo | Member |
| 13. Ms. Elena Basaya, BFAR | Member |
| 14. Mr. John Sebastian B. Fabello, 2 nd District | Member |
| 15. Ms. Marilyn Cruz, Committee on Appropriations | Member |
| 16. Ms. Rhodora Ubani, DENR | Member |

Absent:

- | | |
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| 1. Hon. Franz Josef George E. Alvarez, 1 st District | Member |
| 2. Mr. Albert G. Rama, ENR Comm, Province | Member |
| 3. Mr. Rommel L. Carbonell, Saguda Palawan | Member |
| 4. SB Jerry Buncag, ENR Comm, Cagayancillo | Member |
| 5. Dr. Ramon P. Docto, Palawan State University | Member |

Guest:

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| 1. Mr. Robin Pagatpatan, DENR-MIMAROPA |
| 2. Ms. Princess E. Duque, PCSSD- DOT |
| 3. Ms. Tin Barrameda, PCSSD-DOT |

2. Review of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting/Matters Arising Out of the Minutes. The minutes of the previous meeting was shared onscreen for reference. The board reviewed and unanimously approved the minutes. The highlights of the previous meeting and actions taken were reported as follows:

Highlights/Major Concern	Action Taken
Hope Spot Designation	PASu authority to sign granted by ExeCom during 18 May meeting
PSFI MOA Signatory	Approved
TRNP Trust Fund Signatory	Approved
LAMAVE Research	Research permit approved

Gratuity Pay to TMO Staff for 2021	Released to TMO Staff
2022 Diving Season	Diving season underway (4 weeks left)
MPIF MOA Signing Schedule	Online MOA signing held on 11 March 2022

3. Agenda

3.1 Admin Order #4 s 2022 Banning Unlicensed Divers from Scuba Diving in TRNP. The members of the Board supported the issuance of a resolution banning unlicensed divers from scuba diving in Tubbataha. Some of the point that were raised were:

- Scuba diving is a high-risk activity, therefore proper certification is required for those who will engage in it.
- Scuba diving certification is required as a matter of international standard. The PCSSD IRR, which is being finalized, will include the ban.
- Introductory diving or try scuba diving, even with the supervision of qualified professionals should not be allowed because of the high risk to people and the reefs.
- The Narayana incident of 22 May 2022 *involving an experienced diver in a diving accident*, underscores the need for stricter rules on scuba diving in TRNP.

Executive Director (ED) Ancheta, PCSSD said that diving without a license is a violation of safety protocols and presented the classification of offenses and their penalties in the draft PCSSD IRR, as follows:

Classification of Offense	Particulars	Penalty
Light offense	Violation of health and safety protocols that did not cause any damage or harm to anyone	P2,500.00
Medium offense	Violation of health and safety protocols that caused damage of harm	P5,000.00
Grave offenses	Violation of health and safety protocol that caused irreplaceable damage on reefs or people	P10,000.00

The Board resolved to approve the resolution contingent upon the addition of penalties commensurate to the offense. The Executive Committee was assigned to discuss and add the penal provisions to the resolution. It was also agreed that ED Ancheta be invited to the said ExeCom meeting to share his experience in drafting the PCSSD IRR.

3.2 Amendment of AO No. 1 s 2017 (Rule 14.2 Visitor Entry). The rule says that visitors returning within the same year shall be entitled to a 50% discount. The PASu recommended that the discount be removed as it will add to revenues even if there are very few returning guests within the same year.

The Board unanimously approved the amendment and the issuance of a resolution on the matter.

3.3 Tourism Progress Report. Christa Feliz Michaela Sta. Cruz of TMO rendered the tourism progress report covering the start of the season on 12 March to 02 June 2022. The data was based on actual entries and the schedule provided by dive operators.

- 1240 guests from 82 trips (179 trips by this time in 2019)

- Vessels: 12 commercial boats, 2 private vessels,
- Gender: 62.3% males, 37.3% female.
- Age group: 12-29 (28%) 40-59 (44%) 60-89 (25%)
- Nationality: US highest (28%) Asia highest based on region (35%)
- Income: P6,158,900 (P15,133,100 during the same period in 2019)

Incident Reports:

- Covid case on Philippine Aggressor on 28 April with 14 guests (out of 26) and 1 crew (out of 12) testing positive. Contacted IMT with the help of TMO. Quarantined in Skylight Hotel and Sunlight Hotel.
- Second covid case involving Philippine Aggressor with 14 guests, one crew and one diving professional testing positive.
- Near drowning incident in M/Y Narayana, 22 May 2022. Patient hospitalized and due to be discharged today.

Ptr. Cayaon suggested that the media be prohibited from broadcasting news such as the Covid cases in the park, without first consulting the Board or the TMO to avoid negative impacts on Tubbataha. The members agreed that a communications protocol, to form part of a TRNP Communications Plan, should be issued by the TPAMB. Ms. Princess Duque, Deputy ED of PCSSD, who has extensive experience in communications, agreed to lead the formulation of the Communications Plan.

The Board resolved that an ad hoc committee, headed by Ms. Duque of PCSSD, be formed to formulate the Tubbataha Communications Plan. TMO was instructed to discuss next steps with PCSSD, to formalize the composition of the ad hoc committee and its schedule of work, present the draft document to the Executive Committee for its review, and submit the same to the TPAMB for ratification.

3.4 DENR Grant. Grace Barber, TMO Admin Officer, refreshed the Board regarding the Php5M proposal to DENR that it approved during December 2021 meeting. The amount of P3,770,800 was approved by DENR covering the cost of seabird and fish and benthos research, relieving trips, and salaries for four TMO staff under Job Order with DENR. The 'unutilized allocation' amounting to P444,000.00 representing salary of CMEMP Officer, P132K for food and antigen test for research and relieving trip, may no longer be accessed.

Ms. Ubani interjected that 'unutilized allocation' is not an accurate term because the fund can still be used until December for any activity or supplies of TMO as long as the cost is under MOOE. TMO merely needs to prepare a Purchase Request, she added.

TMO will work on the documents to access the remaining funds.

3.5 Carrying Capacity Study for TRNP. The carrying capacity study was initiated this diving season. KfW gave funds for the study in 2019. Since tourists are now back in Tubbataha, the study will finally be implemented with 2023 as the expected year of completion. TMO was instructed to submit an interim report to KfW.

3.6 Request for Installation of Moorings in El Nido/Contract. El Nido Foundation, Inc., requested for the installation of embedment moorings in its area. The Board determined that a Contract for Services is a better option, rather than the draft Lease

Contract, a copy of which was provided by TMO to members. Atty. Escala was assigned to review the contract.

3.7 MOU with De La Salle University on Research. The lead coral scientist of De La Salle University who has worked with TMO for more than a decade is retiring this year. He recommended that TMO enter into a MOA with the university to institutionalize and formalize its technical support to TMO. A copy of the MOA was provided to the members before the meeting through email. The PASu explained that the aim of the MOA is capacity building, information exchange, and collaboration in the implementation of the ecosystem research and monitoring program of TMO. No cost is involved in the Agreement.

The board unanimously approved the granting of authority to the PASu to sign for and in behalf of the TPAMB.

3.8 Cagayancillo Distribution of Notebooks. The PASu informed the Board that Tubbataha collaterals are available from DENR for distribution to school children in Cagayancillo. Mayor Tapalla said that he plans to conduct an information drive and can distribute the materials to the schools.

3.9 Fund Raising for Ranger Station. The PASu asked the TPAMB for help in completing the station, explaining that the current station is in a bad state of disrepair. She added that the lives of the marine park rangers who safeguard Tubbataha for the whole country is at risk. She reported that BIOFIN is willing to help raise funds for the completion of the central structure.

A photo of the underside of the ranger station was shown to the Board. Mayor Tapalla commented that just by looking at the photo he can say that the station is structurally unsafe, the foundation has lost its integrity, and the structure can collapse anytime. He called attention to the rusted reinforcing bars adding that repairs by cementing the underside, which anglers regularly do, will no longer help. He recommended that the station be condemned or retrofitted by adding more posts.

The PASu said that she requested Engr. Purisima for the costing of the central structure, the quarters of the rangers, to disaggregate its cost from the Program of Works for Phase 2. She added that the helipad and research station may be built later but the quarters of the rangers are needed now especially since the typhoon season is coming again.

Ms. Custodio, WWF stressed that the TPAMB has a duty to ensure the safety of the rangers. She said that some funds remain from the fundraising activity spearheaded by WWF in 2013 for the construction of the station. Some of the funds were used for the design and management of the project, and the balance deposited in an investment account to earn interest. She added that there is P2.927M remaining from the fundraiser. WWF will disburse the fund for the needs related to the station. It was agreed that the previously approved proposal for the use of the fund be realigned to respond to the current need.

The PASu inquired if the Board would be willing to embark on a fundraising campaign for the station. It was agreed that the P58M now with the government be pursued while other sources of funds, e.g., crowdfunding, private donors, etc., are being tapped. Ms. Dygico suggested that communications with TIEZA be revived as it may be able to provide additional funding.

The Board resolved to assess the integrity of the current ranger station. Next, the costing of the central structure will be prepared to serve as a basis for mobilizing funds. Mayor Tapalla agreed to help disaggregate the POWS for the central station, which can be conserved as

Phase II. The PASu reported that the remaining materials for the station are stored in the premises of RAMSAR.

The TPAMB should be informed on the costing and its approval sought before fundraising is undertaken. The TMO will report to the Board the mechanics of the effort, e.g., who will spearhead the fundraising, legal considerations, etc.

Due to the urgency of the matter, the above-mentioned activities will be conducted as soon as possible. Mayor Tapalla can use the funds with WWF to engage an engineer that he can supervise to prepare the 'costimates'. TMO and WWF will meet with Mayor Tapalla to thresh out the details in the coming week.

The PASU said that a wooden floor with a separate floor framing was built in 2018 on top of the concrete floor to lessen the load of the concrete. Mayor Tapalla commented that it will do for now, but it needs to be inspected and the integrity of the structure verified.

The Bureau of Treasury requires that the PCG provide a certification regarding the use of its share in the US payment, but despite numerous follow ups, it has failed to issue the document. Commodore Supangan PCG, assured the Board that he will follow up the document with their headquarters.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28 pm

Prepared by:


ANGELIQUE M. SONGCO
Secretary

Attested by:


ATTY. ADELINA BENAVENTE- VILLENA
Presiding Officer