

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. _____
(in substitution of House Bills Numbered 3460 and 8925)

Introduced by Representatives Rep. Mujiv S. Hataman, Rep. Amihilda J. Sangcopan, Rep. Luis Raymund "LRay" F. Villafuerte Jr., Elpidio F. Barzaga Jr. and Eric Go Yap

**“AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE NATIONAL WETLANDS
CONSERVATION POLICY”**

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 **SECTION 1. *Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “National Wetlands
2 Conservation Act”.

3 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – The State shall protect and advance the
4 right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm
5 and harmony of nature. Towards this end, the State shall establish measures for
6 the conservation and judicious use of wetlands and wetland resources consistent
7 with the principles of sustainable development, inclusive growth, poverty
8 reduction, food security, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and
9 mitigation, and disaster risk reduction and management.

10 **SEC. 3 *Definition of Terms.*** – As used in this Act:

- 11 a. *Biodiversity* refers to the variability among living organisms from all
12 sources, including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems in the
13 ecological complexes of which they are part of;
14 b. *Ecological character* refers to the combination of the ecosystem components,
15 processes, benefits and services that characterize the wetland at a given
16 point in time;
17 c. *Ecosystem approach or ecosystem-based approach* refers to a strategy for the

1 integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes
2 conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way;

3 d. *Ecosystem goods and services* refer to the multitude of material and
4 nonmaterial provisions and benefits from healthy ecosystems necessary for
5 human sustenance, well-being, and survival including support processes,
6 provisioning and environment regulating services, and cultural resource
7 preservation services;

8 e. *Riparian areas or zones* refer to interfaces between aquatic and terrestrial
9 ecosystems, the adjacent areas to bodies of water, and intermittent streams
10 that are distinguished by gradients in biophysical conditions, ecological
11 processes, and biota;

12 f. *Sustainable use* refers to the use of resources in a way and a rate that does
13 not lead to its long-term decline, thereby maintaining its potential to meet
14 the needs and aspirations of present and future generations;

15 g. *Wetlands* refer to a wide variety of inland habitats such as natural pools or
16 ponds, springs, freshwater swamps or marshes, peatlands, floodplains,
17 rivers, lakes, and coastal areas such as estuaries, saltmarshes, mangroves,
18 lagoons, intertidal flats and seagrass beds. These also include coral reefs
19 and other marine areas no deeper than six (6) meters at low tide, and
20 human-made wetlands such as dams, reservoirs, rice paddies, fish ponds,
21 saltpans, and wastewater treatment ponds.

22 **SEC. 4. Coverage.** – This Act shall apply to all types of wetlands, including
23 inland, coastal and marine and human-made wetlands in the Philippines. In the
24 case of human-made wetlands, application of this Act shall be limited to those with
25 high biodiversity value, and are critical as wildlife habitat or migratory routes of
26 birds and fishes.

27 **SEC. 5. Categories of Wetlands.** – Wetlands are composed of bodies of
28 water or aquatic ecosystems, as well as their riparian areas. The three (3) broad
29 categories of wetlands are the following;

30 a. Inland wetlands are aquatic-influenced environments, sometimes referred
31 to as freshwater or inland water/waterbodies, located within land
32 boundaries; examples are inland deltas, springs, creeks, rivers, streams,

1 waterfalls, freshwater swamps and/or marshes, peatlands, natural ponds or
2 pools, wet caves and lakes;

3 b. Coastal wetlands are wetlands located within the coastal watershed, such
4 as bays, marine shores, estuaries, coastal lagoons, saltmarshes, mangroves,
5 swamps, intertidal flats, seagrass beds, coral reefs and other marine areas
6 no deeper than 6 meters at low tide; and

7 c. Human-made wetlands are any type of wetland constructed or maintained
8 by humans, examples are dams, reservoirs, rice paddies, fish and shrimp
9 ponds, farm ponds, salt pans, dams, small water impounding areas, and
10 wastewater treatment ponds and lagoons.

11 **SEC. 6. *Establishment of Wetland Conservation Areas.*** – Where
12 appropriate, wetland conservation areas shall be prioritized for establishment
13 under Republic Act No. 7586, or the “National Integrated Protected Areas System
14 Act of 1992”, as amended by Republic Act No. 11038, or the “Expanded National
15 Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018”; Republic Act No. 8550 or the “The
16 Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998”; Republic Act No. 9147 or the “Wildlife
17 Resources Conservation and Protection Act”, or as local conservation areas
18 through the issuance of ordinances of LGUs, or for recognition as indigenous
19 community conserved areas (ICCAs) within the ancestral domains of indigenous
20 cultural communities and indigenous peoples (ICCs/IPs).

21 **SEC. 7. *Development of a National Wetland Conservation Program***
22 ***and Action Plan.*** – Within one year from the effectivity of this Act, the
23 Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall, in coordination
24 with other government agencies, and concerned sectors, develop a National
25 Wetland Conservation Program and Action Plan, to provide direction, support and
26 guidance to local government units (LGUs) and stakeholders in the development
27 and implementation of their local wetland conservation programs. The National
28 Wetland Conservation Program and Action Plan shall be consistent with existing
29 national policies, plans and programs on coastal wetlands and their resources. It
30 shall also define national targets for the conservation of wetlands and the
31 development of its national coordinating mechanism.

32 The National Wetland Conservation Program and Action Plan shall include

the following objectives:

- a. To conduct wetland assessment including bio-capacity and carrying capacity assessment and valuation of wetland ecosystems in order to measure the full extent of its value and guide agencies on the wise use of wetlands;
- b. To adopt an ecosystem-based approach in the rehabilitation of priority wetlands to ensure the ecological integrity and original functioning of specific ecosystem. Prioritization of wetlands for rehabilitation shall be based on a national inventory of wetlands with potential for rehabilitation such as wetlands susceptible to hazard, and wetlands critical to biodiversity. Partnerships may be established with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs), the academe and private sector in the rehabilitation of priority wetlands.
- c. To ensure the strict implementation by concerned government of land use setback provisions including the prohibition on the construction of any structure along the easement zones of banks or rivers and streams and the shores of the seas and lakes pursuant to existing laws. The easement zone has a width of three (3) meters in urban areas, twenty (20) meters in agricultural areas and forty (40) meters in forest areas.
- d. To limit reclamation activities and conversion of wetlands to those that are necessary for national interest and security, and in compliance with legal requirements provided under applicable rules and regulations on environmental impact statements and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) approval for reclamation projects.
- e. To establish the Philippine Wetlands Conservation Awards (PWCA) which shall recognize individuals, NGOs, POs and LGUs with significant contributions to the wise use of the country's wetlands. The PWCA shall be given by the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the DENR.
- f. To promote research and development, database and knowledge management, and develop communication, capacity-building and awareness programs;
- g. To assess the vulnerability of priority wetlands to climate change and

1 disaster risk;

2 h. To develop soil and water conservation technologies for the wetlands and
3 institute measures to address the introduction of invasive alien species to
4 wetland areas;

5 i. To encourage the participation of LGUs, communities, and private entities
6 in the governance of wetlands through various schemes, such as the “Adopt-
7 a-Wetland” scheme through Public-Private Partnership; and

8 j. To support international recognition of suitable wetlands, such as
9 declaration of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites),
10 Flyway Sites, ASEAN Heritage Park, World Heritage Site, and the like,
11 through the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Convention on Migratory
12 Species, East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership, ASEAN and other
13 such multi-lateral environmental agreements and bodies.

14 **SEC. 8. *Integration and Mainstreaming of Conservation and Wise***
15 ***Use of Wetlands.*** – All government agencies and offices and local government
16 units shall integrate and mainstream conservation and wise use of wetlands into
17 their policies, rules and regulations, programs, projects and development planning
18 processes. They shall also directly consult with the DENR and affected LGUs in
19 the development and implementation of their plans, programs and projects having
20 an impact on wetlands.

21 The municipal, city, or provincial government having territorial jurisdiction
22 over the wetlands shall integrate in their local development plans, the
23 conservation measures referred to in this Act.

24 **SEC. 9. *Lead Implementing and Monitoring Agency.*** – The Department
25 of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Biodiversity
26 Management Bureau, shall be the lead agency in the overall implementation and
27 monitoring of this Act.

28 The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall
29 monitor compliance by local government units and shall formulate and implement
30 incentive schemes to promote wetland conservation and wise use practices
31 through effective local governance.

32 **SEC. 10. *Appropriations.*** – The Secretary of the DENR shall immediately

1 include in the Department's program the implementation of this Act, the funding
2 of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

3 **SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90)
4 days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of the DENR shall, in
5 consultation with concerned national government agencies, issue the
6 corresponding rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

7 **SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.*** – If any section or provision of this Act is
8 held unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining sections or provisions with the
9 provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

10 **SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules
11 and regulations, issuance or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this
12 Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

13 **SEC. 14. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
14 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation

15 *Approved,*

SENATE

21 FEB -2 A8:44

S. No. 2036

RECEIVED

Introduced by **SENATOR CYNTHIA A. VILLAR**

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL WETLAND POLICY, PROVIDING
MECHANISMS FOR ITS INSTITUTIONALIZATION, AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREOF**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Wetlands refer to a wide variety of inland habitats such as natural pools/ponds, springs, freshwater swamps/marshes, peat lands, floodplains, rivers and lakes, and coastal areas such as estuaries, saltmarshes, mangroves, lagoons, intertidal flats and sea grass beds, and also coral reefs and other marine areas no deeper than six meters at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as dams, reservoirs, rice paddies, fish ponds, saltpans, and wastewater treatment ponds. Wetlands also refer to water bodies or aquatic ecosystems except oceans and the deep sea.

The most recent estimate of global inland and coastal wetland area is in excess of 12.1 million km², an area almost as large as Greenland (Global Wetland Outlook 2018). For the Philippines, the 2016 Atlas of Philippine Inland Wetlands and Classified Caves put their numbers at 314 inland wetlands and 2,487 river systems. Out of these 314 wetlands are 221 lakes, 12 marshes and swamps, 9 peat lands, 39 water storage, and 31 ponds. Due to its archipelagic nature, the Philippines has numerous coastal wetlands such as coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove swamps, estuaries, and intertidal flats.

Wetlands provide a wide range of ecosystem services that is vital for human survival. They provide critical food supplies including rice and fish, fresh water, fiber, and fuel. They also serve as the habitat of threatened species of Philippine flora and fauna and harbors biodiversity that is vital in sustaining life and promoting human well-being and sustainable development. Another notable service of wetlands are its capacity to supply and regulate water and act as natural safeguards against disasters thus protecting vulnerable communities to devastating effects of floods, droughts, and storm surges. Indeed, healthy and well-managed wetlands increase resilience to climate change and extreme weather events.

Despite the wide range of ecosystems services provided by wetlands, they are laced with countless issues and concerns that pose a great challenge in maintaining the integrity of these important ecosystems. One of which is the degradation of wetlands due to their conversion to other land and water uses. These are caused by human actions, such as drainage, dredging and stream channelization, damming, poor agricultural practices, introduction of alien invasive species, and other extractive activities. Natural actions such as drought, severe storms, and climate change also serve as direct and indirect drivers of change for wetlands. These human and natural actions often result to siltation and sedimentation, release of toxic chemicals, pollution, and runoff, changing nutrient levels, subsidence, sea level rise, and loss of biodiversity.

Scientific studies show that 64 percent of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900. Compared against figures in 1700s, an estimated 87 percent of wetlands have been lost. Inland wetlands are disappearing at a faster pace than coastal ones but the overall trend is clear. As a result, access to fresh water is declining, while flood control, carbon storage and traditional wetland livelihoods all suffer. (Ramsar, 2014)

The Living Planet Index, created by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre, provides a measure of the trends in more than 3,000 populations of 1,145 vertebrate species around the world and is an aggregate of three separate indices of change in freshwater, marine and terrestrial species. The index showed that freshwater populations have declined consistently

and at a faster rate than the other species groups assessed, with an average decline of 50 percent between 1970 and 2000. In the same period, both terrestrial and marine fauna decreased by 30 percent. In general, the trend is one of continuing decline in each ecosystem over the 30-year period. Therefore, it is clear that global wetland loss and degradation continues faster than any other ecosystems (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005).

The Convention on Wetlands, also known as the Ramsar Convention, in which the Philippine is a Contracting Party, is the only international treaty focused on the wise use and conservation of wetlands. As a Contracting Party, the Philippines is committed to adopt and implement laws, policies and plans to promote the wise use of wetlands or the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approached, within the context of sustainable development. In the Philippines, there are seven (7) wetlands that have been so far declared as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. These are the following: (1) Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary, which constitute 5,800 hectares and found in Cebu [*declared as Ramsar Site (RS) No. 656 on 01 July 1994*]; (2) Naujan Lake National Park, which constitute 14,568 ha. and found in Oriental Mindoro [*declared as RS No. 1008 on 12 November 1999*]; (3) Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, which constitute 14,836 ha and found in Agusan del Sur [*declared as RS No. 1009 on 12 November 1999*]; (4) Tubbataha Reefs Natural, which constitute 96,828 hectares and found in Sulu Sea [*declared as RS No. 1010 on 12 November 1999*]; (5) Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, which constitute 22,202 ha. and found in Palawan [*declared as RS No. 2084 on 30 June 2012*]; (6) Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (also known as the Las Piñas – Parañaque Wetland Park), which constitute 181.63 ha. and found in Las Piñas City and Parañaque City in Metro Manila [*declared as RS No. 2124 on 15 March 2013*]; and (7) Negros Occidental Coastal Wetlands Conservation Area, which constitute 89, 607.8 ha. and found in Negros Occidental [*declared as RS No. 2,271 on 20 October 2016*]. The inclusion of these wetlands in the Ramsar List indicate that these wetlands are of significant value not only for the country where they are located, but for humanity as a whole; it also embodies the government's commitment to take the steps necessary to ensure that the respective ecological

characters of these wetlands are maintained. There are currently over 2,400 Ramsar Sites around the world. They cover over 2.5 million square kilometers, an area larger than Mexico.

While wetland conservation and wise use is already promoted, directly and indirectly, under existing laws on water resources, water quality management, fisheries and aquatic resources, wildlife resources and their habitats, protected areas, land use development, public infrastructure, and environmental impact assessment, among others, there is no single Philippine legislation that deals specifically on wetlands. The policy review found that not all wetlands are equally protected and that the degree of protection depends on the classification or kind of wetland. Further, most of the wetlands have limited legal protection from uses incompatible with the maintenance of its ecological character. Given that the legal bases for wetland conservation and wise use are dispersed in various laws, there is still a need for a concise policy statement on wetlands to be adopted at the national level.

This legislative measure seeks to guide all concerned national government agencies and local government units in adjusting their sectorial or local policies, plans and programs to be consistent with wetland conservation and wise use. This will also greatly enhance current efforts to raise awareness on the importance of wetlands as the "cradle of biodiversity". This proposed measure will also provide the opportunity to comply with the directives on the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and management, climate change and biodiversity conservation in policy formulation.

The approval of this bill will ensure the protection, conservation and wise use of all wetlands, eventually contributing to the human well-being of the present and future generations.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.

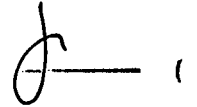

CYNTHIA A. VILLAR

SENATE

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Introduced by **SENATOR CYNTHIA A. VILLAR**

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL WETLAND POLICY, PROVIDING
MECHANISMS FOR ITS INSTITUTIONALIZATION, AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREOF

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "National Wetlands
2 Conservation Act".

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
4 conserve and wisely use wetlands and wetland resources consistent with the
5 principles of sustainable development, inclusive growth, poverty reduction, food
6 security, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and
7 disaster risk reduction and management, while advancing the right to a balanced
8 and healthful ecology in accordance with the harmony and rhythm of nature.

9 Sec. 3. *Coverage.* - This Act shall apply to all types of wetlands, both inland,
10 coastal and marine and human-made wetlands, in the Philippines. For human-made
11 wetlands, it shall be limited to those with known high biodiversity value such as, but
12 not limited to, wetlands critical as wildlife habitat and as migratory routes of birds
13 and migratory fishes.

1 Sec. 4. *Categories of Wetlands.* - Except for deep marine waters, wetlands are
2 composed of water bodies or aquatic ecosystems, as well as their riparian areas. The
3 three (3) broad categories of wetlands are the following:

4 a. Inland wetlands - are aquatic-influenced environments, sometimes
5 referred to as freshwater or inland water/waterbodies, located within land
6 boundaries; examples are inland deltas springs, creeks, rivers, streams, waterfalls,
7 freshwater swamps and/or marshes, peatland, ponds, floodplain, wet caves and
8 lakes;

9 b. Coastal wetlands - are wetlands located within the coastal watershed,
10 such as bays, marine shores, estuaries, coastal lagoons, saltmarshes, mangroves
11 swamps, intertidal flats, seagrass beds, coral reefs and other marine areas no
12 deeper than 6 meters at low tide; and

13 c. Human-made wetlands - are any type of wetland constructed or
14 maintained by humans; examples are dams, reservoirs, rice paddies, fish and shrimp
15 ponds, farm ponds, salt pans, small water impounding areas, and wastewater
16 treatment ponds and lagoons.

17 Sec. 5. *Definition of Terms.* -

18 a. *Biological Diversity or Biodiversity* shall refer to the variability among all
19 living organism from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other
20 aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes or which they are part: this
21 includes diversity within species, among species and of ecosystems.

22 b. *Ecological character* shall refer to the combination of the ecosystem
23 components, processes and benefits/services that characterize the wetland at a
24 given point in time.

25 c. *Ecosystem approach or ecosystem-based approach* shall refer to a
26 strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that
27 promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.

28 d. *Ecosystem Services or Ecological Services* shall refer to the benefits people
29 obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food and water;

1 regulating services such as flood and disease control; cultural services such as
2 spiritual, recreational, and cultural benefits; and supporting services, such as
3 nutrient cycling, that maintain the conditions for life on Earth.

4 e. *Legal Easement* shall refer to an easement by necessity constituted by
5 Law which has for its object either for public use or the interest of private persons
6 (Section 64 of Civil Code).

7 f. *Riparian areas/zone* shall refer to the area which is the transition between
8 aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem, and the adjacent areas to water bodies, and
9 intermittent streams that are distinguished by gradients in biophysical conditions,
10 ecological processes, and biota;

11 g. *Sustainable development* shall refer to development that meets the needs
12 of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their
13 own needs.

14 h. *Wetlands* shall refer to a wide variety of areas such as natural
15 pools/ponds, springs, freshwater swamps/marshes, peatlands, floodplains, rivers and
16 lakes, and coastal areas such as estuaries, saltmarshes, mangroves, lagoons,
17 intertidal flats and seagrass beds, and also coral reefs and other marine areas no
18 deeper than six meters at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as dams,
19 reservoirs, rice paddies, fish ponds, saltpans, and wastewater treatment ponds.

20 i. *Wise use of wetlands* shall refer to the maintenance of their ecological
21 character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within
22 the context of sustainable development.

23 Sec. 6. *Integration and Mainstreaming of Wetland Conservation and Wise*
24 *Use.* - All government agencies and offices, and local government units (LGUs) shall
25 integrate and mainstream wetland conservation and wise use into their plans,
26 policies, ordinances and rules and regulations, programs, projects, and development
27 planning process. They shall also directly consult with the DENR and affected
28 communities in the development and implementation of their plans, programs and
29 projects within, or having impact, on wetlands.

1 *Sec. 7. Establishment of wetland conservation areas.* - Wetlands need to be
2 protected and conserved because they are threatened by drainage and conversion to
3 other uses, aquatic pollution, introduction and spread of invasive alien species (IAS),
4 unsustainable aquacultural practices, destructive fishing practices, mining
5 exploration, overexploitation, coral collection, coral reef destruction, sedimentation,
6 unregulated coastal development and urban expansion, and dredging.

7 Where appropriate, wetlands important for biodiversity conservation shall be
8 prioritized for protection under the National Integrated Protected Areas System
9 (NIPAS) Act, as amended by RA No. 11038, the Wildlife Resources Conservation and
10 Protection Act, or the Revised Fisheries Code, as amended, or through recognition as
11 Indigenous Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) within the ancestral domains of
12 indigenous people or as Local Conservation Areas through the ordinances of LGUs.

13 International recognition of suitable wetlands, such as declaration of Wetlands
14 of International Importance (Ramsar Sites), Flyway Sites, ASEAN Heritage Park,
15 World Heritage Site and the like, through the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands,
16 Convention on Migratory Species, East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership, ASEAN
17 and other such multi-lateral environmental agreements and bodies, shall also be
18 encouraged and supported.

19 *Sec. 8. Development of a National Wetland Conservation Program.* - A
20 National Wetland Conservation Program shall be developed by the DENR, in
21 coordination with other concerned agencies, sectors, and stakeholders, within one
22 year from the effectivity of this Act to provide direction, support and guidance to the
23 local government units (LGU) and stakeholders in the development and
24 implementation of their local wetland conservation programs. The National Wetland
25 Conservation Program shall be consistent with existing national policies, plans and
26 programs on coastal wetlands and their resources. It shall also define national
27 targets for the conservation of wetlands and the development of its national
28 coordinating mechanism.

29 The following strategies shall be implemented within the Program:

1 a. Inventory, assessment and valuation of wetlands. Wetland assessment
2 including bio-capacity and carrying capacity assessment and valuation of wetland
3 ecosystems shall be conducted to measure the full extent of its value and guide
4 agencies on the wise use of wetlands.

5 b. Wetland Management Plan development and implementation.

6 c. Rehabilitation of priority wetlands. Prioritization of wetlands for
7 rehabilitation shall be based on a national inventory of wetlands with potential for
8 rehabilitation such as, wetlands susceptible to hazard, and wetlands critical to
9 biodiversity. Rehabilitation of priority wetlands shall adopt ecosystem-based
10 approach to ensure the ecological integrity and original functioning of specific
11 ecosystem. Partnerships may be established with nongovernment organizations,
12 academe and private sector in the rehabilitation of priority wetlands

13 d. Enforcement of legal easement zones, danger zones and other land use
14 setbacks. All concerned government agencies and LGUs shall strictly implement land
15 use setback provisions imposed by law, such as, but not limited to:

16 1. Prohibition of the building of any structure along the easement zones
17 of banks or rivers and streams and the shores of the seas and lakes. This
18 easement zone has a width of three (3) meters in urban areas, twenty (20)
19 meters in agricultural areas and forty (40) meters in forest areas.

20 2. Construction of houses and other residential structures and buildings at
21 a safe distance from streams or bodies of water.

22 While primarily intended for human welfare and safety, these land use
23 setback provisions also benefit wetlands by limiting development at certain distances
24 from wetlands. These measures address both disaster risk reduction and wetland
25 conservation concerns.

26 e. Regulation against wetland drainage, reclamation and filling-in. - In
27 accordance with the law, no further drainage, reclamation or conversion of wetlands
28 shall be permitted, except when necessary for national interest and security subject
29 to existing environmental laws, rules and regulations. In such exceptions, all legal

requirements shall be strictly complied with including, but not limited to, applicable rules and regulations on environmental impact statements and National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) approval for reclamation projects. Wetland conversion that causes adverse effects to the environment shall be prosecuted as a form aquatic pollution.

f. Recognizing best practices through the Philippine Wetland Conservation Awards. The Biodiversity Management Bureau of the DENR shall recognizes individuals, NonGovernment Organizations (NGOs), People's Organizations (POs) and Local Government Units (LGUs) with significant contributions to the wise use of the country's wetlands through the Philippine Wetlands Conservation Awards (PWCA).

g. Research and Development. (including Green House Gas Inventory)

h. Assessment of vulnerability of priority wetlands to climate change and disaster risk.

i. Database and knowledge management.

j. Implementation of soil and water conservation technologies.

k. Measures to address invasive alien species

l. Adopt-a-Wetland scheme through Public-Private Partnership

m. Communication, education, participation, capacity-building and awareness program.

Sec. 9. Lead Implementing and Monitoring Agency. - The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through its Biodiversity Management Bureau shall be the lead agency in monitoring overall implementation and compliance with this Act, particularly by all government agencies.

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) shall monitor compliance by local government units and shall formulate and implement incentive schemes to promote wetland conservation and wise use practices through effective local governance.

1 Sec. 10. *Role of Local Government Agencies.* – The municipal, city, or
2 provincial Local Government having territorial jurisdiction over the wetlands shall
3 integrate with their urban development plan, conservation measures being
4 implemented in this Act. In this regard, it shall be categorized as a criminal act, to
5 issue permits, documents, as well as eviction and resettlement of occupants of
6 danger zones such as riverbanks and shorelines, including lakeshores and seashores,
7 and effects in violation of this Act.

8 Sec. 11. *Appropriations.* - The amounts necessary to implement this Act
9 during the first year of implementation shall be sourced from the DENR.
10 Thereafter, such amounts necessary to effectively carry out the provisions of this Act
11 shall be included in the General Appropriations Act.

12 Sec. 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within six (6) months from
13 the date of this Act, the DENR, in close coordination with concerned agencies, shall
14 prepare the IRR of this Act.

15 Sec. 13. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared
16 unconstitutional or invalid, any part or provisions hereof not affected thereby shall
17 continue to be in full force and effect.

18 Sec. 14. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and
19 regulations or parts thereof which are contrary or inconsistent with this Act are
20 hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

21 Sec. 15. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its
22 publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general
23 circulation.

Approved,