Workshop:
Philippine Mangrove Roadmap to 2030
Date: 16-17 June 2022
Venue: Quezon City (TBA)

The presence and health of Philippine mangroves are threatened by natural disasters, primarily typhoons and sea level rise. Around 20 typhoons per year (four to five of which are catastrophic) batter the country. In addition, the estimated rate of accelerated sea level rise in the Philippines is perceived to be at least three to four times higher than the international rate. Typhoons, sea level rise, or a combination of these will constrain mangrove growth and survival. If conserved and managed properly, mangroves have natural coping mechanisms that can be used to adapt to and mitigate these impacts. These coping mechanisms include coppicing, the growth of sturdy and inter-connected roots, viviparity, and wide seed dispersal range, among others. Healthy mangroves will contribute to the stability of the coastal zone, as well as sustain associated ecological and socio-economic services.

Mangroves have been recently recognized for their contribution in sequestering atmospheric CO2. They have four to five times higher carbon stocks than any other forest type. Their capacity to store carbon may be harnessed in climate change mitigation, a potential that was recognized at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP22) in 2016.

The International Blue Carbon Initiative (IBCI) is a global program that is focused on mitigating the impacts of climate change through the conservation and rehabilitation of coastal ecosystems. Filipino mangrove researchers are members of this international network. At the local level, there have been some initiatives that aim to estimate blue carbon. On 15 April 2021, the Philippines submitted its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Philippines committed to a projected GHG emissions reduction and avoidance of 75%, of which 2.71% is unconditional 9 and 72.29% is conditional, 10 representing the country's ambition for GHG mitigation for the period 2020 to 2030 for the sectors of agriculture, wastes, industry, transport, and energy. The country has also committed to undertake adaptation measures across but not limited to, the sectors of agriculture, forestry, coastal and marine ecosystems and biodiversity, health, and human security, to preempt, reduce and address residual loss and damage.

Aside from blue carbon, mangroves are also recognized for the various ecosystem services they provide (e.g., biodiversity, fisheries, shoreline protection, etc.). However, the delivery of these services is dependent on habitat extent and quality (i.e., ecosystem health). However, comprehensive, and updated information on Philippine mangroves is lacking and mostly inconsistent. Policies at the local to national levels are outdated and conflicting. Good baseline and monitoring information, as well as effective governance are therefore necessary to develop national mangrove conservation and restoration programs.

In October 2019, the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), organized the National Mangrove Summit, in partnership with Conservation International Philippines and Forest Foundation. The workshop outputs during the Summit were synthesized to a draft roadmap with thematic areas and vision statements. A follow-up roadmapping exercise among key institutions was recommended by key government partners to review and prioritize the research and management gaps and programs identified during the Summit discussions and workshops.

The National Mangrove Roadmap is seen as the harmonizing framework for mangrove conservation and management towards the 2030 targets. The Plan must be owned and championed by the DENR, DA-BFAR and DILG, ideally as part of the larger Philippine Development Plan. It should comprehensively and coherently address the issues identified in the last Mangrove Summit and other previous dialogues including AUUs, titling of mangrove areas, and coastal greenbelts, among others. Finally, the Plan must be developed with a climate change/resilience lens.

The Roadmapping workshop, aims to review and finalize the mangrove road map with well-defined objectives, activities, strategies, and institutions- and organizations-in-charge. A national mangrove roadmapping report will be produced to document the process.