

POLICY DIALOGUE ON THE COLLECTION AND TRADE OF ALMACIGA RESIN IN PALAWAN

November 9, 2022
Puerto Princesa City, Palawan

I. Rationale

The collection and trade of almaciga remains one of the major livelihoods of the Tagbanua and Batak communities in Puerto Princesa and Northern Palawan, and for the Palaw'an of Southern Palawan. Tapping of the trees for resin is not only one of the traditional income generating activities for the indigenous communities, but also a deeply rooted cultural tradition. There is a clear link between the communities and their trees, where they practice forest management in terms of protecting and conserving their almaciga stands, propagating seedlings, and transplanting these to expand their holdings. Sustainable tapping practices are also passed on from generations of almaciga tappers within the communities.

The almaciga trade requires intense physical labor to travel to the tapping sites, gathering the resin, and transporting them down for consolidation and delivery to the buyers. Almaciga tapping is done primarily by the indigenous communities who are given priority rights in obtaining concessions for the almaciga trade. While the current guidelines have extended the validity of gathering permits, the regulatory processes to get a permit has been criticized as tedious and expensive for these indigenous communities, who often become saddled with debt as they too turn to financiers to pay for the inventory, site assessments, and application fees for the permits, as well as to pay any forest charges for the harvested resin.

Furthermore, the PCSD will not renew applications for SEP Clearances of indigenous communities for almaciga concessions if their almaciga stands are located in core zones outside of declared tribal ancestral zones, pursuant to Section 9(1) of RA 7611 states, "Maximum Protection Area or Core Zone for both Terrestrial and Marine Components shall be fully and strictly protected and maintained free of human disruption. Exceptions, however, may be granted to traditional uses of tribal communities of these areas for minimal and soft impact gathering of forest species for ceremonial and religious purposes." Gathering of almaciga resin in core zones are allowed only if they are found in Tribal Ancestral Lands pursuant to PCSD Resolution 04-233 which "allow almaciga tapping by indigenous peoples in the core zone in areas classified by the PCSD as Tribal Ancestral Lands..."

As almaciga trees usually grow in higher elevations and areas with thicker forest cover including old-growth forests which are classified as core zones, the application for SEP Clearances of several AD communities have been rejected by the PCSD and they have lost a major source of income for their families. This has impacted some indigenous communities whose gathering areas are within core zones but outside of declared Tribal Ancestral Zones (TAZ) as recognized under PCSD Resolution 99-147.

To ensure that harvesting of almaciga remains accessible, profitable, and sustainably managed by the indigenous communities, there is a need to assess the policies of the PCSD, as well as the costs imposed by the DENR to process their application for almaciga. New approaches or guidelines may be issued to support the communities dependent on the almaciga trade.

II. Objectives

While there is a need to ensure that the regulatory framework for almaciga concessions help conserve the trees for sustainable harvests, the framework should also be not unduly burdensome on indigenous communities who derive incomes from this resource. This policy dialogue will identify key issues related to costs of the almaciga applications in terms of policy-mandated fees versus field-based realities, the value chain of almaciga to understand how the indigenous communities derive their income, and to propose improved policy guidelines to make the regulatory framework more realistic and accessible to communities. The presentations will support the position that almaciga tapping can be done sustainably and in a low-impact manner and should be considered as an allowable activity in core zones. This activity will also request a new approach from the PCSD on how to treat the almaciga stands within the core zones.

The specific objectives of this activity are:

1. Understand the current policies and procedures related to the almaciga collection and trade and how they impact indigenous communities
2. Understand the value chain of almaciga

- Propose inputs to the current PCSD policy on almaciga stands within core zones as they relate to the TAL zoning under the SEP Law
- Understand the requirements of the DENR in terms of inventory assessments
- Identify ways to support the almaciga resin livelihood of the indigenous peoples

III. Methodology and Proposed Program

This one-day policy dialogue will be done with a series of presentations from the regulators and policy makers on the current framework for permitting and their proposed changes. This will be followed by presentations of real-world impacts of the application process and their costs from community members engaged in almaciga tapping and their supporting partners. Ideally, presentations will be in Tagalog to ensure that the proceedings are understandable for the indigenous communities.

TIME	TOPIC	REMARKS	RESOURCE PERSON
November 8, 2022 (Day 0)			
AM/PM	Arrival of participants in Puerto Princesa City		
PM	Community dialogues		
November 9, 2022 (Day 1)			
8:00 – 8:30 AM	Registration		Secretariat
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Opening program		Dir. Levita Lagrada Director, PCSD Enrique A. Nunez, Jr. Executive Director CI Philippines (CIP) Jose Andres Canivel Executive Director Forest Foundation Philippines (FFP)
	Welcome Remarks		
	Message of support		
	Recognition of participants and program rationale		
9:00 – 9:15 AM	Overview of almaciga trade in Palawan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of concessions/ permits issued Number of communities engaged in almaciga tapping Ancestral domains affected by new policies 	Edward Lorenzo Policy and Governance, CIP
9:15 – 9:45 AM	Priority rights of indigenous peoples for resource use under IPRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource use rights under IPRA as applied to almaciga Definition and context of “ancestral domains” in terms of resource use Structuring agreements for minor forest product between AD communities and outside traders 	NCIP
9:45 – 10:15 AM	DENR policy framework for almaciga resin tapping and trading DENR DAO 2021-33 and others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENIPAS Law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DENR policies for application of almaciga and table of fees Required endorsements and transmittal of documents Application fees and other charges Additional process within protected areas 	DENR FMB
10:15 – 10:30 AM	BREAK		

TIME	TOPIC	REMARKS	RESOURCE PERSON
10:30 – 11:00 AM	PCSD policy framework for almaciga <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCSD Resolutions 99-147, 04-233 Wildlife Act, and PCSD AO 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECAN zoning and almaciga Process for recognition as Tribal Ancestral Land and processing costs Challenges on resource utilization in core zones for NTFPs 	PCSDS Legal Service
11:00 – 11:30 AM	Value chain of the almaciga trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs related to almaciga tapping and income analysis for indigenous communities in relation to market forces Presentation of yield studies of almaciga and value of forest charges Impact of sustainable harvesting on incomes of AD communities 	Dr. Ramon Razal (TBC) College of Forestry and Natural Resources, UPLB
11:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Real world costs for indigenous communities on the almaciga trade	Discussion of real-world costs and experiences of the communities in applying for almaciga permits covering applications, site assessments and inventories, transport costs, processing times, and impacts of loans.	Community member
12:00 to 1:00 PM	LUNCH		
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Possible legal approaches to address the zoning restrictions	Discussion of remedial measures and policy interpretations on almaciga gathering in core zones	PCSDS Legal Services
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Plenary question period		
2:30 – 3:00 PM	Identification of action points to address almaciga collection and trade issues		
3:00 – 3:15 PM	BREAK		
3:15 – 3:30 PM	Summary of issues presented		Edward Lorenzo Policy and Governance Adviser, CIP
3:30 – 4:00 PM	Ways forward		DENR PCSD
4:00 – 4:30 PM	Closing program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing remarks 		Edna Maguigad Project Lead CCNCS Project, CIP

IV. Participants

- 17 staff from **FMB, BMB, DENR 4B, PCSD, PENRO, MMPL-PAMO, CENROs Roxas, PPC, Brooke’s Point, and Quezon, NCIP-Palawan**
- 1 representative each from the **League of Municipalities and League of Barangays** in Palawan
- 8 representatives from **CSOs** (NTFP, IDEAS, Augustinian Missionaries, PCART, NATRIPAL, PNNI, WPU, etc)
- 20 representatives from the **IP communities engaged in the almaciga trade** covering the Palawan mainland