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## Blue Alliance Updates From The Field

1 message

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**Blue Alliance for the Oriental Mindoro Marine Protected Area Network**

Wed, Jul 5, 2023 at 12:44  
PM

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Reply-To: Blue Alliance for the Oriental Mindoro Marine Protected Area Network <conserve@bluealliance-mpa.org>

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# UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

## Blue Alliance Philippines

# Q2 2023 NEWSLETTER

***"Malusog na karagatan para sa masaganang pangisdaan at kabuhayan"***  
"Healthy ocean for abundant fisheries and livelihoods"

With Blue finance (Bf) and our partners in conservation, we were able to continue our progress in 2023. Read our newsletter to learn more about our work at Blue Alliance (BA) in the sustainable management and financing of marine protected areas (MPAs) in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines.

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Young generation engaged in marine conservation



We presented North Oriental Mindoro's marine biodiversity and the conservation work we do to high school students in Puerto Galera during the Biodiversity Day Youth Camp hosted by the Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc. (MBCFI). We also facilitated a workshop on coral reef assessments using the manta tow method, a simple technique for estimating live hard coral and soft coral cover in Puerto Galera.

## Women at the forefront of marine conservation



The Blue Alliance and Blue finance team met with women community leaders, Bantay Dagat, and members of People's Organizations in Baco and San Teodoro. We listened to their concerns and needs to empower more women to be involved in our conservation efforts. We also conducted a basic training for snorkeling so they can witness the beauty under the waters of their own towns.

## BA strengthens partnership with Baco and ST LGUs



Blue Alliance, together with Blue finance, strengthened further its partnership with the San Teodoro and Baco Local Government Units (LGUs) through the signing the MPA co-management agreements with additional activities. The co-management agreements included more specific points for collaboration



including the development of diving ecotourism and sustainable aquaculture ventures such as mangrove crab and sea cucumber.

## **Oceanus and BA collaborates for oil spill response**

Through Oceanus Conservation, we implemented a cash-for-work program for coastal communities affected by the oil spill in Pola, Oriental Mindoro. Residents of Brgy. Puting Cacao and Brgy. Tagumpay were incentivized to clean up the oil slick along the coast of Pola. Our partner coastal communities in North Oriental Mindoro were also provided with rice incentives for conducting beach cleanups.



## **UNDP visits BA sites, explores potential partnership**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted site visits in Oriental Mindoro and explored potential collaboration with Blue Alliance. They will be implementing a project on Green Climate Finance in the Philippines through nature-based solutions, which aligns with the work of Blue Alliance in North Oriental Mindoro.



## **Congratulations to our newly certified divers!**

The Philippines is surrounded by water and rich marine ecosystems, yet only a small fraction of Filipinos can scuba dive and have witnessed the beauty below the sea. We aim to bridge this gap and empower more people in our partner communities to be involved in our conservation efforts through scuba diving. Leonard and Dhing, Blue Alliance Key Ocean Defenders (BAKOD) from Baco and San Teodoro, together with our Ecotourism Manager, Belinda Enriquez were recently certified as PADI open water divers through our in-house instructor, Christian Manalo.



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## SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION

### **BA tests AI technology for fish surveys**



FISH-I cameras were deployed in our monitoring stations in Puerto Galera. FISH-I is a game-changing tool for conducting fish community surveys using cutting-edge camera and fish video processing software that uses artificial intelligence technology developed by experts from the University of the Philippines.

FISH-I is revolutionizing the way we study marine biodiversity, providing fish identification, biomass, count, and population density without the technical expertise needed in the traditional fish visual census method.

## eDNA samples collected

We collected environmental DNA (eDNA) samples from Puerto Galera. In partnership with NatureMetrics, we are testing a new method for figuring out what species live in our MPAs. Fish and other marine species shed scales, skin cells, feces, and other tissues containing DNA or genetic material, which can help us determine what species were in the area recently.



## BA explores and maps Tatlong Pulo reefs



We are conducting a mapping of the benthic (coral) and fish communities of the Tatlong Pulo (3 Islands): Baco Grande, Baco Medio, and Baco Chico. This scientific assessment of the Tatlong Pulo marine ecosystem is part of our project with Cassandre Vandamme, Blue finance intern from France. The results of this assessment will help us design our diving ecotourism program and provide recommendations for possible MPA expansion.

## BA kickstarts water quality monitoring program with MinSU





In partnership with the Mindoro State University (MinSU) - Main Campus, we kickstarted our water quality monitoring program in Puerto Galera and Calapan City. MinSU students, guided by their advisers and our science team, collected physicochemical parameter data and plankton samples for their thesis and practicum.

Good water quality is crucial to coral reef health. Through water quality monitoring programs, we can identify alarming levels of certain parameters affecting coral reef health so we know where to direct our management efforts.

## **MBCFI and DOST explores possible partnership with BA**



We presented our programs and initiatives and discussed possible collaborations with the Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc. (MBCFI), the Department of Science and Technology - S&T Foundation Unit (DOST-STFU), DOST-MIMAROPA, and DOST-PSTC-Oriental Mindoro at the Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Center in Puerto Galera. DOST also visited one of our MPA sites, the Silonay Mangrove Conservation Ecopark and interacted with the People's Organization, Sama-samang Nagkakaisang Pamayanan ng Silonay (SNPS).

## **UP-MSI explores scientific collaboration with BA**

The University of the Philippines - Marine Science Institute met with the Blue Alliance and Blue finance team to discuss possible collaborations on our science projects. The UP CRADLE, UP-MSI's new marine lab in Puerto Galera is currently in its early operational stage.



## COTS monitoring continues

We continuously monitor the crown-of-thorns sea star (COTS) populations in Puerto Galera to detect and mitigate the impact of any further outbreak. COTS numbers have been reduced throughout our program with the consistent efforts of COTS Warriors comprised of Bantay Dagat and fisherfolk.



## First underwater commercial fish survey for 2023 completed



Our science team completed our first underwater commercial fish survey for this year. In this bi-annual survey, we identify the commercial fish species (targeted by fishers), including their count and sizes using the variable distance method. This allows us to measure the success of MPAs in enhancing fishery yields in adjacent fishing grounds and understand how they benefit local fishing communities.

## BA and Bf tests SONAR for mapping seafloor



We are testing a new equipment for mapping the seafloor in our sites. The SONAR or sound navigation ranging uses sound waves to measure the

depth and topography of the seafloor. This device will allow us to create 3D maps of our sites for monitoring and identification of diving ecotourism sites.



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## SUSTAINABLE REVENUES

### Full-blown feasibility study for sea cucumber in progress



We are conducting a full-blown feasibility study of establishing a sea cucumber hatchery and grow-out culture at our sites in North Oriental Mindoro. Together with Dr. Beni Giraspy of Seacucumber Consultancy, we collected water and sediment samples that were sent to the lab for analysis.

### BA collaborates with BFAR-NFDC for feasibility study



The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources - National Fisheries Development Center (BFAR-NFDC) conducted the laboratory analysis of our water and sediment samples from potential sites of sea cucumber hatchery and grow-out culture in North Oriental Mindoro. We were also given a tour of their facility in Dagupan City. Thank you to Dr. Westly Rosario, former head of NFDC and Dr. Dennis D. Tanay, NFDC Chief, for assisting us on this project.

## Sea cucumber project presented to fisheries students



We presented our sea cucumber project to the Mindoro State University - Bongabong Campus - Institute of Fisheries to explore potential partnership and engage the next generation in sustainable initiatives like this. BA team also formally discussed the project with MinSU President, Dr. Levy Arago Jr.

## Blue carbon credits to finance our MPAs





We're preparing to make waves with Uba Sustainability Institute for our blue carbon project. We conducted quick assessments of potential sites for mangrove conservation, enrichment, and restoration within and beyond our co-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). We are also exploring the feasibility of innovating our aquaculture sites with Blueyou into aquasilviculture—integrating mangroves into fish ponds with mangrove crabs and other species.

## Sea sensorium digital underwater world to rise soon



Capturing the beauty of the underwater world, BlueWild, our ecotourism team, shot 360 videos that will be used for the Sea Sensorium to be built in Puerto Galera. This digital museum will create a new way of experiencing and immersing into the depths of the ocean to witness the amazing marine biodiversity we have in North Oriental Mindoro.



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## LAW COMPLIANCE

### Marker buoys around MPAs completed



We completed the installation of additional marker buoys around the boundaries of our co-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Calapan City, Baco, and San Teodoro. Thanks to the efforts of our Blue Alliance Key Ocean Defenders (BAKOD) and Bantay Dagat (Community Fish Warden). These marker buoys serve as navigational guides to prevent illegal fishing inside no-take MPAs.

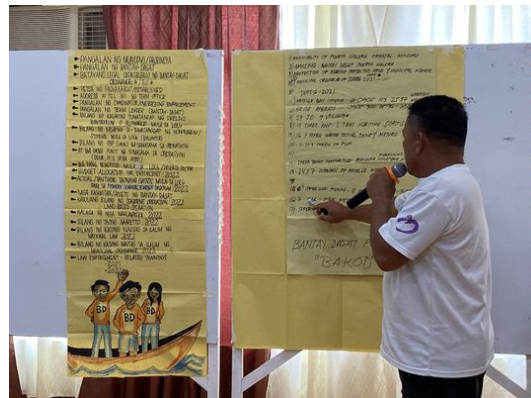
### New bangka patrol boat turned over to Bantay Dagat



We turned over a new motorized bangka to the LGU and Bantay Dagat of Baco, Oriental Mindoro for their daily seaborne patrolling. This logistical support, which also includes regular fuel subsidy, is part of our compliance and monitoring program to ensure the effective management of Marine Protected Areas

(MPAs). We also provide monthly cash incentives to the Bantay Dagat of our partner LGUs as compensation for their regular enforcement activities.

## BAKOD and Bantay Dagat continue to improve enforcement



The Blue Alliance Key Ocean Defenders (BAKOD) and Bantay Dagat of each LGU convened during the mid-year assessment and planning to further improve our enforcement plan and protocols. BAKOD and BDs were refreshed on protocols for MPA and fishery ordinance enforcement. Best practices were also shared during the meeting.

## Blue Alliance

Blue Alliance is the official co-management entity of the North Oriental Mindoro Marine Protected Area (MPA) network (currently 9 MPAs covering 5,166 ha of marine area).



## BlueWild

We connect people and oceans through responsible travel experiences in Marine Protected Areas that are co-managed by Blue finance as part of its innovative model for marine conservation.



## Blue finance

Co-management partner of Blue Alliance — A non-profit social enterprise built on sound entrepreneurial and sustainability principles to co-manage Marine Protected Areas, conserve marine biodiversity, and better the lives of local communities.



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