



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Edgardo 'Egay' Villagracia Lim Salvame
Congressman
1st District, Palawan

March 8, 2023

The Honorable
MARIA ANTONIA YULO-LOYZAGA
Secretary
Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Subject: Initial Situational Report: The Impact of 'Mindoro Oil Spill' in Northern Palawan

Dear Secretary Yulo-Loyzaga:

This has reference to the **Oil Spill incident** caused by the tanker MT Princess Empress that sunk off Naujan, Mindoro last February 28 – which, unfortunately, is now spreading in some of our island municipalities here in northern Palawan.

Northern Palawan, as we both know, is “the *world's best island destination*”, home to the world's richest marine biodiversity and marine protected areas, and some 500,000 Filipinos whose majority largely depend on fishing and tourism. With the recent development of the oil spill reaching our seas and shores, we are afraid that this disaster will have grave, wide-ranging, long-term negative impact to our ailing economy and fragile ecosystem.

And since we still have one of the highest poverty incidences in the region, the adaptive capacity of our residents to cope from this new wave of disaster is, no doubt, low and weak.

Initial reports from our constituent-LGUs state that:

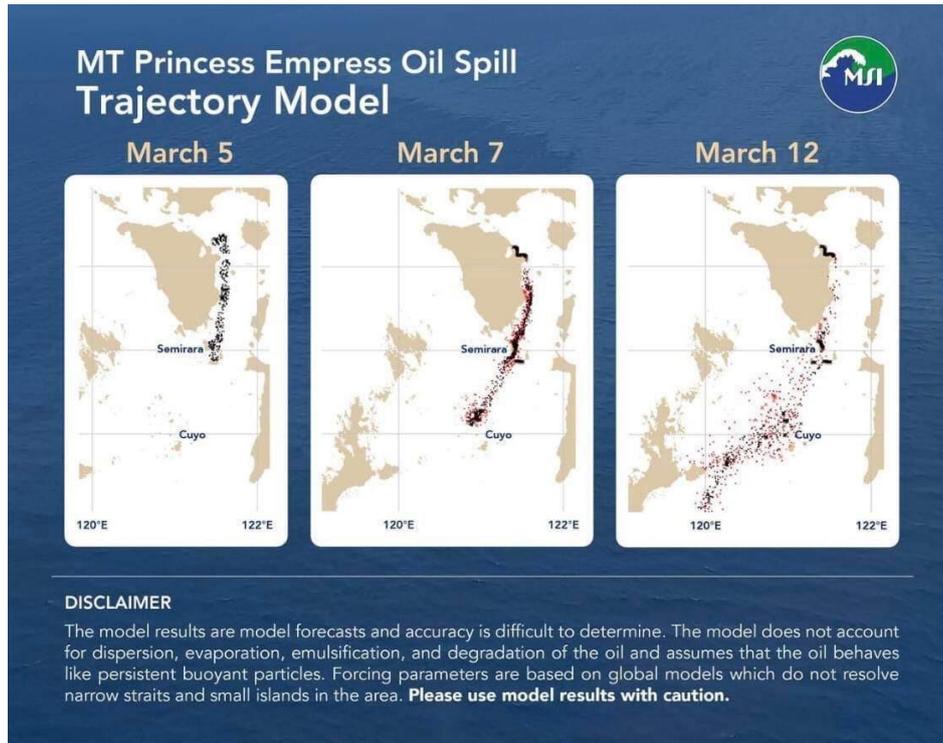
1. Indicators of the oil spill have been evident in the municipality of Agutaya, some 225 kms away from Naujan, and part of the Cuyo group of islands. *Enclosed are photos of seaweeds turning black, and plastic bottles containing dark, thick oil washed ashore presumably from the tanker;*
2. Two of its biggest barangays, Algeciras and Concepcion, have reported an estimated **2,067 households** directly affected by this incident:
 - Brgy. Algeciras, Agutaya: 1,153 households
 - Brgy. Concepcion, Agutaya: 914 households
3. Almost all, if not all, households of these island barangays engage in seaweeds farming¹. 80% of the HHs of the entire municipality depend on the industry. With the oil killing the seaweeds, our seaweeds farmers would earn no income, and lose their hard-earned capital spent so far;
4. The UP Marine Science Institute (MSI) estimates that 12,851.61 hectares of corals, 5,038.69 hectares of mangroves and 4,055.65 hectares of seagrasses in five of this District’s municipalities could be possibly affected by the oil slick, to wit:

	PALAWAN	CORAL (ha.)	MANGROVE (ha.)	SEAGRASS (ha.)
1	Coron	1,102.97	2,264.01	1,849.41
2	Culion	630.08	2,505.21	1,461.34
3	Agutaya	2,557.81	-	73.52
4	Magsaysay	4,899.07	148.97	514.67
5	Cuyo	3,661.68	120.50	156.71
	TOTAL	12,851.61	5,038.69	4,055.65

Coron is one of the country’s most popular tourism destinations; Cuyo is host to the expensive Amanpulo Resort. These five municipalities have **138,030 residents** (PSA, 2020).

Adverse effects on our marine ecosystem are yet to be determined, but lessons from other oil spill incidents tell us that natural recovery from this disasters take decades!

5. UP MSI, furthermore, forecasts that “in about a week’s time,” the oil spill “will get closer to northern Palawan mainland.”



“Northern mainland Palawan” includes the municipalities of El Nido, Roxas, San Vicente, Taytay, Dumarán and Araceli – home to 274,944 Filipinos. May God forbid, this terrifying scenario would not happen.

It is in this context that I am respectfully requesting your Office’s assistance in mitigating the impact of this disaster (*please see page 6*). I trust that you will be with us all throughout this crisis. As early as now, I am extending my sincerest appreciation of your proactive actions and response to help alleviate our fears and worries. I shall update you from time to time.

Thank you very much. *Matamang salamat po! More power po sa inyo!*

Sincerely yours,

EDGARDO ‘EGAY’ VILLAGRACIA LIM SALVAME

cc: **USec. MARILOU G. ERNI**, DENR Task Force MT Princess Empress Commander
Dir. LORMELYN E. CLAUDIO, CESO IV, Regional Executive Director, DENR MIMAROPA

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Situational Report No. 2 as of March 8, 2023

References: Rep. Edgardo L. Salvame, 1st District of Palawan
Mr James Paul S. Inawasan, chief political affairs officer

SUMMARY

1. Evidence of oil spill are present in the municipality of Agutaya based on unofficial but reliable reports from the ground. Other municipalities report there is still no evidence of oil spill in their respective municipalities. *Please see enclosed photos marked as Annex "A".*
2. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) reported that it has conducted an aerial survey early morning of March 6 and said "there is no oil spill in Palawan" yet, but just in case, it has a ready "District Oil Spill Contingency Plan". *Please see enclosed screenshots of Palawan News and the Provincial Information Office of the Provincial Government of Palawan reporting the statement of the PCG, marked as Annex "B".*
3. LGU Agutaya, Palawan is on the process of verifying reports of oil spill in the island barangays of Concepcion and Algeciras. Municipal Administrator reported to this level they had difficulty sending validating team in the said islands due to strong waves and wind hindering their boat from traveling.
 - a. Barangays Concepcion and Algeciras of Agutaya have been devising "oil spiller lines" out of donated old clothes since this weekend.
 - b. These barangays, whose population heavily depend on seaweeds farming and fishing, are seen to suffer the most from this incident. Evidence of seaweeds coated with thick, dark oil were sent to this level by local residents. *Please see Annex "A".*
4. LGU Cuyo, Palawan has been preparing for the possible spread of bunker oil in its territories, and has started deploying "makeshift oil spiller lines" in its marine protected areas. *Please see Annex "C".*
5. The provincial government of Palawan has started preparing for the possible effects of the oil spill in the province, as reported by its PIO Facebook page.
6. The UP Marine Science Institute (MSI) estimates that 12,851.61 hectares of corals, 5,038.69 hectares of mangroves and 4,055.65 hectares of seagrasses in five of this District's municipalities could be possibly affected by the oil slick.

I IMPACT

	EVIDENCE OF OIL SPILL	A. EVIDENCE OF OIL SPILL	B. TO HEALTH	C. TO LIVELIHOODS			D. TO THE ENVIRONMENT	
				Fishing	Seaweeds Farming	Tourism		Others
1	Municipality of Agutaya	Photos from the ground showing the spread of the oil spill in below barangays*	No reports so far	No official reports so far	Photos of seaweeds coated with thick, dark oil sent to this Office*	No official reports so far	None so far	Yes; forecast from UP MSI
2	Municipality of Cuyo	No reported evidence of oil spill so far**	No reports so far	No official reports so far	No official reports so far	No official reports so far	None so far	Yes; forecast from UP MSI
3	Municipality of Magsaysay	No reported evidence of oil spill so far**	No reports so far	No official reports so far	No official reports so far	No official reports so far	None so far	Yes; forecast from UP MSI
4	Municipality of Coron	No reported evidence of oil spill so far**	No reports so far	No official reports so far	No official reports so far	No official reports so far	None so far	Yes; forecast from UP MSI
5	Municipality of Culion	No reported evidence of oil spill so far**	No reports so far	No official reports so far	No official reports so far	No official reports so far	None so far	Yes; forecast from UP MSI

*Please see Annex "A".

** According to LGUs and local coordinators of this Office.

C.1. Details of Impact to Livelihoods

Municipality of Agutaya	Estimated No. of HHs Affected
Brgy. Algeciras	1153
Brgy. Concepcion	914

As presented in SitRep No. 1, “100% of households in these barangays” engage in seaweeds farming.

D.1. Details of the Impact to the Environment

	PALAWAN	CORAL (ha.)	MANGROVE (ha.)	SEAGRASS (ha)
1	Coron	1,102.97	2,264.01	1,849.41
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Source: UP Marine Science Institute, Bulletin No. 03.

II	RECOMMENDATIONS / PROPOSED ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE UNITS/AGENCIES
1	Activation of incident command systems in the LGUs.	MLGUs, BLGUs
2	Validation of reported oil spill in the areas.	LGUs, PCG, local CENROs
3	Containment of the spread using all means available.	PCG, DENR , LGUs
4	Constant monitoring of the coastal areas.	PCG, MLGUs, Barangays
5	Expert advice from the DENR and DOH on how to handle the impact to the environment and health of the affected population.	DENR , DOH
6	Provision of family food packs and other forms of assistance to affected families.	DSWD, DENR , DOLE, LGUs, Office of the Congressman, PCG (for hauling)
7	Regular coastal clean-up through volunteers, and cash-for-work for affected seaweeds farmers and fishermen.	DSWD, DENR , DOLE, LGUs, Office of the Congressman
8	Provision of PPEs to volunteers involved in the clean-up.	DOH, DENR , LGUs
9	Timely and accurate public information to affected communities.	LGUs, DENR
10	Plan and implement alternative livelihoods to affected households while the oil spill remains a threat to sources of food and livelihoods.	LGUs, DOLE, DTI, DSWD, Office of the Congressman,
11	Study legal action against the management of MT Princess Empress.	DENR , Task Force
12	Study and prepare rehabilitation plan on the affected marine ecosystem	DENR , PCSD, LGUs

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Annex "A". Photos of oil spill in the municipality of Agutaya, Palawan.





Contributed photos from a local resident Dyle Zoon showing seaweeds coated by the oil spill. In his post, he said: “Nakarating na po sa Concepcion, Agutaya, Palawan ang oil spill at amoy na amoy na ang langis sa [C]ambian lalo’t higit malapit sa baybayin. Always wear your face mask mga kabarangay na andyan sa baybayin ng Cambian [sic].”

Annex “B”. News from the Palawan News and the Provincial Information Office.

 Palawan News
1d · 🌐

Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) District commander Capt. Dennis Rem Labay said there is “no oil spill” in Palawan.

“We are expecting, based sa dito sa model ng UPMSI, by March 7, tomorrow—darating sa vicinity ng Agutaya and Cuyo. Pero as of now, walang spill,” Labay said.

He also said aerial survey conducted early this morning, March 6, of the Marine Environment Protection Unit (MEPU) and other line agencies did not spot any traces of oil in any area of Palawan. | via Celeste Anna Formoso

>> Full story to follow.



 PIO Palawan
18h · 🌐

TINGNAN: PAMAHALAANG PANLALAWIGAN, NAGHAHANDA NA SA POSIBLENG EPEKTO NG OIL SPILL SAKALING MAKARATING SA KARAGATANG SAKOP NG PALAWAN

Nakaalerto na ang Pamahalaang Panlalawigan ng Palawan sa pamamagitan ng Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) kaugnay sa kasalukuyang oil spill sa may bahagi ng Naujan, Oriental Mindoro na pinangangambahang posibleng makarating sa karagatang sakop ng Palawan.

Ayon sa direktiba ni Gov. V. Dennis M. Socrates, agad na nagsagawa ng emergency meeting kahapon, Marso 06, 2023 na ginanap sa VJR Hall ng kapitolyo ang ilang tanggapan ng Pamahalaang Panlalawigan kasama ang mga katuwang na ahensya upang mapag-usapan ang mga gagawing paghahanda upang mabawasan ang maaaring maging epekto nito.

Ilan sa mga nauna nang hakbang na isinagawa ay ang aerial survey ng Tactical Operations Wing West (TOWWEST) at Philippine Coast Guard partikular sa karagatang sakop ng munisipyo ng Cuyo, Agutaya at Magsaysay.

Ilan sa mga nauna nang hakbang na isinagawa ay ang aerial survey ng Tactical Operations Wing West (TOWWEST) at Philippine Coast Guard partikular sa karagatang sakop ng munisipyo ng Cuyo, Agutaya at Magsaysay.

Ayon kay Coast Guard District Palawan Commander Dennis Rem C. Labay, sa ngayon ay wala pang nakikitang maaaring maging problema ng oil spill dito sa Palawan subalit sakaling makarating ito sa karagatang sakop ng lalawigan ay handa na at nakalatag na rin ang kanilang District Oil Spill Contingency Plan (DOSCOP) sa posibleng magiging epekto nito.

 PDRRMO



Clarification of the PCG Commander Dennis Rem C. Labay based on their aerial survey last March 6, morning. Also shown in the screenshot is the provincial government’s preparations for the possible effects in the province.

Annex “C.” The community of Cuyo prepares for the imminent spread of bunker oil in its territories. The municipality hosts the luxury Amanpulo Resort.

Palawan News's Post



TINGNAN | MANAMOC MARINE PROTECTED AREA SA BAYAN NG CUYO, PINALIBUTAN NA NG 'OIL SPILLER LINE'

Pinalibutan ng makeshift 'oil spiller line' gawa sa mga recycled na damit ang plastic bottles and paligid ng Manamoc Marine Protected Area sa bayan ng Cuyo.

Sa isang Facebook post ng netizen na si Jack, makikita ang paglalagat ng mga tauhan ng Philippine Coast Guard na naka-istasyon sa lugar ng 'oil spiller line'.

Sa pagtataya ng University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), inaasahan ang pag-abot ng oil spill mula sa lumubog na tanker na MT Princess Empress sa Naujan, Oriental Mindoro noong February 28, sa bayan ng Cuyo at iba pang bayan sa north mainland Palawan.

Sa kasalukuyan ay kinukumpirma pa ng mga awtoridad kung nakaabot na sa bayan ng Agutaya ang

Message Palawan News

12:59
Messenger

Estra Viva CUYO is thinking about Stop Oil Spills in Cuyo. 4h ·

Isara sa ateng preparasyon incase maapektuan ang Cuyo y ang oil spillage na agalin sa agtagbeng na MT Princess Empress sa Oriental Mindoro, agatarabang buat y Oil Spiller Boom ateng mga kasimanua sa iba-ibang mga barangay katabid ateng Cuyo-LGU Employees & Volunteers.



12:59
Messenger

Estra Viva CUYO's Post



Brgy. San Carlos

Like Comment Share



Brgy. San Carlos

Like Comment Share

1:00
Messenger

Estra Viva CUYO's Post

Like Comment Share



Brgy. San Carlos

Like Comment Share

2 comments



Brgy. San Carlos

Like Comment Share

2

Message Estra Viva CUYO



Additional Photos. Preparations in Agutaya as also reported in Palawan News, <https://palawan-news.com/agutaya-braces-as-mindoro-oil-spill-reaches-shores-expected-to-get-close-to-cuyo/>



Residents of Agutaya devise “oil spiller lines” out of donated old clothes, to at least mitigate the impact of the incident in their beloved island.

ⁱ <https://palawan-news.com/seaweeds-nursery-eyed-in-agutaya/>, last accessed March 6, 2023.