

MAP urges Holistic Laguna Lake Rehabilitation for Water Security and Eco-Tourism

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Water security and the environment are major concerns of the MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (MAP).

It is for these reasons that MAP urges an immediate effort by the national government together with local government units and the private sector to clean, conserve, rejuvenate and preserve Laguna Lake and its watershed.

Laguna Lake is the largest freshwater lake in our country and among the largest in Southeast Asia. It is an ideal and logical source of potable water and has a vast potential for eco-tourism.

Unfortunately, the water quality of Laguna Lake has, despite sporadic efforts, continuously degenerated from neglect and wanton disregard for the lake's wellbeing much like other natural resources of our country.

We strongly applaud PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE (PRRD) for seeing the despoilage of Boracay and exercising strong political will by taking draconian measures, including its temporary closure, to rehabilitate and save it from human overexploitation. Now we see the very rewarding positive results even after just a brief period.

We urge PRRD to take similar action and order a Save Laguna Lake action by issuing an Executive Order to direct all national and local government units and instrumentalities to immediately implement all existing laws, rules, regulations and directives to protect and rehabilitate Laguna Lake and the forest cover of its watershed in the surrounding hills and mountains.

The public must be warned that the government will strictly enforce existing laws that prohibit, under pain of penalty, the dumping of waste into the lake. Polluting industries, such as factories, fish culture, poultry and livestock farms, must be strictly regulated and restricted to a sustainable level.

Other sources of pollution must be prohibited, and these include the use of vessels powered by fossil fuels. Only vessels using clean energy, such as electric or natural gas, shall be allowed as is required in environmentally protective countries.

All development and structures must be banned within a no-build zone starting from its high water mark to within preferably no less than fifty meters, especially in populated areas, to allow space for public recreation and enjoyment of a national resource.

We urge PRRD to direct the national and local water boards to render and tap Laguna Lake as a dependable, inexhaustible and proximately-located source of raw water for Metro Manila and the lake's surrounding communities, with other sources such as dams serving a complementary role to ensure water security under all circumstances, including potentially catastrophic earthquakes. Further, that all resources, including funding from whatever source, be devoted for the said purpose.

Necessarily, massive reforestation must be undertaken in the surrounding hills and mountains to enhance the productivity of the watershed. Ideally, indigenous wood species, fruit-bearing trees and bamboo should be utilized.

We also urge PRRD to direct the Department of Transportation to plan and implement a lake ferry transportation system to provide convenient, affordable and reliable connectivity between the towns and cities around the lake.

Further, for the Department of Tourism to plan, develop and implement eco-tourism projects to fully exploit the lake's potential, and for the Biodiversity Management Bureau (formerly Parks and Wildlife Bureau) to recommend public recreational parks for implementation and maintenance of the relevant agencies.

This Save Laguna Lake Movement must be participated, supported and sustained by all. Ideally, this Movement should be adopted by private corporations as among their primary social responsibility projects. Civil society, including all environment protection organizations, are stakeholders and must participate.

Lastly, let the Save Laguna Lake Movement be the model for the protection and rehabilitation of all our freshwater lakes, and replicated all over the country.