

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

September 23, 2004
Senator Lorenzo M. Tañada Room
9:30 a.m.

AGENDA

CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE DEPARTMENT'S INTENDED PROGRAMS, THRUSTS, TARGETS AND LEGISLATIVE CONCERNS

HIGHLIGHTS

With the Chair presiding, DENR Secretary Michael T. Defensor proceeded to present the Department's thrust and priority programs, to wit:

The Agency's medium term thrusts are to provide sustainable and more productive utilization of natural resources, revitalize the mining industry to provide jobs and income, focus and strengthen protection of most vulnerable and ecologically fragile areas, and create an environment that will promote healthier population and workforce.

1. In providing sustainable and more productive utilization of natural resources to promote investments and entrepreneurship, it plans to:
 - a. Open up more forest lands for development by delineating forestlands for production (initial estimate = 8,2 M hectares); delineate forestland boundaries; and conduct evaluation for suitable uses such as agro-forest plantation, community based programs and special land use such as ecotourism.
 - b. Accelerate the distribution of titling of the alienable and disposable (A & D) lands, to facilitate survey of the remaining 1.4 million has of 72 unsurveyed municipalities and 2.4 million has of 289 partially surveyed cities and municipalities and distribute 600,000 hectares of A & D lands through land patents;
 - c. Expand the coverage of A & D lands for increased land distribution by complete classification or remaining unclassified lands (800,000 hectares), and push for reclassification of built-up forest areas through legislation;

- d. Ensure the integrity of land titling system through the harmonization and integration of land titling system, procedures and institutions and push for legislation of the Land Administration and Reform Act or LARA;
 - e. Promote lease/rental of existing open A & D lands, forestlands, foreshore areas to entrepreneurs;
 - f. Create a climate conducive for investments and production by developing more stable, consistent and predictable policies like the legislation of sustainable forestry, etc., complete simplification and streamlining of permitting process and rationalize environmental standards and coverage of ECC; and
 - g. Provide business related and technical extension service to investors/clients by assisting in securing permits from other agencies, (e.g. NCIP and LGU clearances, etc.), linking community based programs, lessees of government lands and patent holders to sources of finance and markets; and provide technical assistance, best practices and improved planting materials.
2. Revitalize the mining industry to provide jobs and income:
- a. Work for substantial implementation of the Minerals Action Plan (MAP) by working for early resolution of the Supreme Court case on the participation of foreign investment in mining and significantly simplify and streamline mining remittance process and assist in securing permits from other agencies;
 - b. Ensure and facilitate delivery of benefits from mining to host LGU's and communities, reactivate/rehabilitate idle and abandoned mines, resolve land use conflicts through valuation and EIA system, and promote downstream industries for greater value-added.
 - c. Pursue the development of twenty-three (23) large scale mineral development projects in the next six (6) years, to bring in: U.S. \$4 to \$6 billion in investment; U.S. \$5 to \$7 billion in foreign exchange and Ph P5 to P7 billion in excise tax on minerals, and about 210,000 direct and indirect employment;
 - d. Resolve issues involving Marcopper, Mt. Diwalwal and other similar projects;
3. Focus and strengthen protection of vulnerable and ecologically fragile areas.
- a. Delineate protection areas nationwide (initial estimate = 6.336 million hectares);
 - b. Push for proclamation and legislation of additional protected areas, especially those that are critical watershed and habitats for highly endangered species;

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- c. Augment forest/protected area protection through partnership with other government agencies, LGUs and NGOs sector;
 - d. Develop protected areas into viable management areas: conduct zoning of 14 protected areas with highest potentials for development to delineate production areas (buffer and multiple use zones); develop and promote ecotourism with 25 protected areas that are included in the program for ecotourism master plan; and developed water user fee and flowback mechanism for forest protection and management of protected areas;
 - e. Undertake massive reforestation in critical watersheds;
 - f. Pursue urban greening in major urban centers especially along major thoroughfares in Metro Manila; and
 - g. Strengthen protection of coastal and marine ecosystem, create more coastal law enforcement alliance nationwide through partnership with other government agencies, LGUs and non-government sectors, and provide technical assistance to 200 LGUs in the protection and management of their coastal areas.
4. Create healthier environment for population and workforce.
- a. Improve air quality especially in major urban cities, create 14 airsheds nationwide for better management of air pollution sources, reduce air pollution (total suspended particulates or ISP) in Metro Manila by 45% to bring air quality within acceptable standards and re-energize anti smoke belching campaign along EDSA. Also, ensure strict and regular monitoring of industries with high air pollution potential, especially in Valenzuela, Caloocan, Malabon and Navotas, and complete the establishment of state-of-the-art air quality monitoring stations and air pollution advertisement boards;
 - b. Improve water quality, complete the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) and fully implement the Clean Water Act, pursue the reclassification of the remaining 202 unclassified principal water bodies nationwide for better water management, complete the water analysis and monitoring of bathing areas nationwide through “beach watch” program, reduce water pollution biochemical oxygen demand (BOD Level) in Pasig River by 70% that will allow aquatic life to survive;
 - c. Improve management of solid waste to avoid potential garbage crisis in Metro Manila, provide technical assistance to LGUs on conversion of 118 open dumpsites to controlled dump facilities, prioritization of 32 sanitary landfills/waste processing facilities, complete implementation of LGU-wide ecowaste management system in 48 model sites, undertake massive communication campaigns to encourage LGUs to establish integrated waste management system (segregation and collection at source, materials recovery facilities, recycling and composting), assist LGUs in providing storage facilities for compost and market for recycled materials;

- d. Initiate declogging and cleaning of esteros, especially in major esteros in the city of Manila, on a sustained basis;
- e. Establish management system and facilities for toxic and hazardous wastes; complete inventory of toxic and hazardous waste nationwide, register and monitor 500 companies handling cyanide, mercury and asbestos and 3,000 electrical utilities and establishments handling PCB's, initiate the establishment of the first facility for the treatment of toxic and hazardous wastes, especially in economic zones; establish mechanism for the retrieval and disposal of millions of cellphone batteries.
- f. Total phase-out of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) consumption nationwide; and
- g. Complete the Geo-Hazard Mapping of remaining 16 regions.

Following the presentation, the Chair sought clarifications on the following:

1. On the matter of allowing private sector groups the lease of forest areas for its protection and sustainable use, Secretary Defensor explained that Congress have approved the lease and rental of permanent forest lands but the same disallowed ownership of said lands.
2. On the matter of short-term and long-term solutions to watershed and habitats that are critical, in terms of over depletion of ground water supply and over extraction, the Secretary disclosed that short-term solution included coordination by the National Water Resource Board to disconnect groundwater connection of Manila Water and Maynilad into the groundwater system
3. On the matter of local government units involvement in the protected areas thru the Protected Areas Management Board (PAMB) so as to fast track the NIPAS Law mandate, the Secretary explained that PAMB's nationwide are being reorganized because of its nature, i.e. its composition is co-terminus with the elective position of LGUs.
4. On the matter of anti-dumping as provided by the Solid Waste Act in relation to Mt. Banahaw and other protected national parks which have become tourist destinations, the Secretary responded that the Department is trying to develop a mechanism for trekkers and mountaineers for user and flow back fees to augment the Integrated Protected Areas Fund which is not enough to maintain the place.
5. The Chair sought the submission of the forty-eight (48) model sites on ecowaste management, segregation, and recycling which the Chair would wish to visit.
6. On the matter of reforestation projects and industrial tree planting programs with the private sector, Secretary Defensor cited the Department's experience with that of the DENR Bukidnon

Reforestry Project, its community-based forest management program which are big reforestation agreements with the private sector.

7. The Chair noted that there remain to be a lack of awareness and appreciation on the need to segregate garbage as provided by the Solid Waste Management Act and a continuing resistance on the part of LGUs.
8. On the matter of legislation to ensure that mining companies will be engaged responsibly in mining operations, the Secretary replied that apart from the Mining Rehabilitation Decommissioning Plan of the Department, the bigger picture dictates that mining companies coming in to invest should be properly screened to allow only those capable and reputable firms.
9. On the matter of the Clean Water Act with respect to the sewerage system overhauled and re-engineered vis-à-vis the promotion of eco-tourism and protection of beaches and marine life, the Secretary disclosed that both Boracay and General Santos City have operationalized their sewerage treatment plants and requiring establishments to inter-connect with these plants for the protection of the beaches and environment in these areas.
10. The Chair and Senator Madrigal sought an update regarding the status of DENR Officials with pending criminal and administrative cases on various offenses to which Secretary Defensor committed to undertake a follow-up on the same.