

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
First Regular Session

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Senate  
Office of the Secretary

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SENATE  
S.B. No. **520**

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Introduced by Senator LOREN LEGARDA

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The vital role of trees - in the midst of recurring landslides, loss of soil cover, water deficiency in watershed areas, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity and essential ecosystems as well as global warming, among others - is still not given the attention, much less the protection it rightly deserves from Government.

Data from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Forest Management Bureau (FMB) and the National Mapping and Resources Information Authority (NAMRIA) showed that of the country's total land area of about 30 million hectares, our forest cover is only 7.2 million hectares. The ideal should be at least 12 million hectares or 48% of the total land area.

This measure seeks to empower the youth, as effective catalysts for change as well as the academe, as the best medium to disseminate information, as they adopt or create forest sanctuaries or gardens both in urban areas as well as in the countryside. With more than twelve million students in the public school sector planting trees the whole year round, the country's forests can surely be revived in the shortest time possible.

In light of the foregoing considerations, the immediate passage of this measure is sought.

**LOREN LEGARDA**  
Senator



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**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR URBAN AND COUNTRYSIDE GREENING IN THE PHILIPPINES THROUGH MANDATORY TREE PLANTING AND ADOPTION OF A FOREST SANCTUARY BY PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

1           **SECTION 1. Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "Forest Sanctuaries Act of  
2 2013."

3           **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - Recognizing the vital role of trees and plants in  
4 ecological stability, it is hereby declared the national policy to ensure sufficient greenery  
5 in urban and countryside areas and to promote the right of the people to a balanced and  
6 healthy ecology.

7           **SEC. 3. Scope.** - This Act shall apply to all barangays, municipalities, cities and  
8 provinces, particularly in all public parks and public school grounds in urban and rural  
9 areas; idle public lands, unless otherwise identified to be used for other purposes; and  
10 privately-owned land whose proprietors voluntarily subject their properties to the  
11 provisions of this Act, upon the creation of appropriate agreements with the schools  
12 implementing this Act.

13           **SEC. 4. Objectives.** - Pursuant to the policy declared herein, it is the objective of  
14 this Act:

15           (a) To build, adopt, develop and maintain forest parks or sanctuaries by public  
16 elementary and secondary schools;

17           (b) To require the planting of trees and shrubbery as well as provision of  
18 financial, physical and technical support by national agencies and local government  
19 units;

20           (c) To promote environmental consciousness by encouraging active participation  
21 in tree-planting activities in the community, especially among students, youth, other  
22 civic action groups, and the academe; and

23           (d) To protect trees from harmful human activity and increase the country's  
24 forest cover.

1           **SEC. 5. National Forest Sanctuary Committee** - A National Forest Sanctuary  
2 Committee is hereby created with the Secretary of the Department of Education  
3 (DepEd) as Chairman and the respective secretaries of the Department of Environment  
4 and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Interior  
5 and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) as members.

6           The National Forest Sanctuary Committee shall promulgate the pertinent rules  
7 and regulations as may be necessary to fully implement the objectives and purposes of  
8 this Act not later than ninety (90) days after the approval of this Act.

9           The National Forest Sanctuary Committee shall convene every quarter to hear  
10 the reports or performance from the Regional Committees.

11           **SEC. 6. Specific Functions of the Executive Department.** The DENR shall provide the  
12 technical, scientific, and physical support in: 1) determining of the suitable species of  
13 trees and provision of seeds or saplings to be planted in existing forest/mangrove  
14 sanctuaries or areas where a forest/mangrove sanctuary or urban garden is to be  
15 established; 2) classifying and determining of existing forest/mangrove sanctuaries,  
16 proposed forest/mangrove sanctuaries and urban gardens; and 3) tree-planting  
17 activities.

18           The Local Government Units (LGUs) : The LGUs shall (1) In partnership with the  
19 DENR and DA, aid in the determination of suitable areas for the proposed  
20 forest/mangrove sanctuaries/urban gardens; (2) Mobilize all concerned local agencies  
21 and communities to ensure prompt and effective implementation of this Act in all  
22 public schools within their jurisdiction; (3) Mobilize non-government organizations,  
23 foundations and other private entities or corporations to provide financial, physical or  
24 other kinds of support for the implementation of this Act; and (4) Effect the  
25 apprehension for the consequent prosecution of all persons violating the penal  
26 provisions of this Act;

27           The DILG shall coordinate all local government units to ensure prompt and  
28 effective implementation of this Act;

29           The DOT shall assist in the conceptualization and site-evaluation and cooperate  
30 in the maintenance or creation of forest/mangrove sanctuaries and urban gardens and  
31 provide additional funding from its resources;

32           The DA shall aid in determination of suitable areas for the proposed  
33 forest/mangrove sanctuaries/urban gardens and provide the technical and scientific  
34 support i.e. the necessary tools, equipment, and manpower to effect the implementation  
35 of this Act; and

36           The DepEd, as lead agency of this Act, shall coordinate all tree-planting activities  
37 of all public elementary and high schools and integrate the tree-planting activities into  
38 the school curriculum to promote environmental consciousness. It shall also undertake  
39 relevant projects for the promotion of these activities.

40           **SEC. 7. Tree-planting Guidelines** - Tree planting in duly qualified areas shall  
41 comply with the following guidelines:

42           (1) Considering the classification and condition of the soil and the total land area  
43 of the site, suitable species of forest trees or fast-growing trees shall be planted in the  
44 identified areas;

1 (2) In cases where multiple trees can be planted, the trees should be planted in  
2 clusters not more than four (4) meters apart from one another;

3 (3) The DepEd and DENR shall facilitate and supervise all the tree-planting  
4 activities and the consequent maintenance of the same within its jurisdiction. The  
5 government agencies concerned shall perform their duties and responsibilities as  
6 indicated in Section 6 of this Act.

7 **SEC. 8. Prohibited Acts** - All forest/mangrove parks or sanctuaries or urban  
8 gardens established under this Act shall be protected and maintained by all concerned  
9 public schools, the DENR, DepEd and other government agencies, and local  
10 governments. These forest/mangrove sanctuaries shall not be cut or destroyed, except  
11 when the cutting and destroying of the same is necessary for public safety.

12 **SEC. 9. Penalties** - Any person found guilty of violating Section 8 of this Act shall  
13 be punished with imprisonment of not less than six (6) months to not more than one (1)  
14 year or a fine of not less than Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000.00) to not more than Ten  
15 Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00), or both imprisonment and fine, at the discretion of the  
16 court.

17 **SEC. 10. Submission of Reports.** The National Forest Sanctuary Committee shall,  
18 within ninety (90) days after the approval of this Act, submit periodic reports to both  
19 houses of Congress of the Philippines.

20 **SEC. 11. Funding** - The fund needed for the implementation of this Act shall be  
21 taken from any available appropriation in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of the  
22 year of its implementation; *Provided*, that funds for this purpose shall also be included  
23 in every annual GAA; *Provided further*, that there shall be equitable and proportionate  
24 appropriations of funds annually for this purpose for all barangays, municipalities,  
25 cities and provinces. In addition, adequate portions of financial grants and concessional  
26 loans extended by foreign governments and multilateral agencies every year, the  
27 amount to be determined by the President, shall be allocated to augment the annual  
28 appropriations until this Act is fully implemented.

29 **SEC. 12. Separability Clause.** All laws, decrees, rules and regulations, or parts  
30 thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

31 **SEC. 13. Effectivity Clause.** This Act shall take effect upon its publication in at  
32 least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,