

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Seventeenth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 3520



Introduced by Honorable Arlene B. Arcillas

EXPLANATORY NOTE

At the beginning of the Spanish colonial period (1565-1898), the Philippines' original forest cover, according to the data from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), was placed at 27 million hectares or 90 percent of the country's total land area.

Sometime in 2002, the Global Agricultural Information Network of the U.S. Department of Agriculture posted the Philippines' forest at 5.2 million hectares or only around 18 percent of the country's original forest land area. It means that the country lost 82 percent of its forest.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), in its 2003 report, *"The State of the World's Forests,"* placed the Philippines' rate of deforestation at 1.4 percent or 89,000 hectares from 1990 to 2000.

Data and projections may have differed but there is but one common denominator – the Philippine forest cover has significantly dwindled through the years, and this can be attributed to increasing urbanization, commercial and illegal logging, large-scale mining, agricultural expansion, and forest fires to name a few.

Deforestation does not only cause the loss of natural habitats and eventual extinction of the country's various endangered species of plants and animals. Deforestation is also identified as the major culprit in massive floodings like the catastrophic *Ondoy*, river siltation, soil erosion, and drought, all of which adversely and tragically affect the country.

If we are to save and eventually resuscitate the last forest lands that we still have, comprehensive and rigorous measures should be taken to keep pace with and hopefully overtake the accelerated rate of our forest denudation. Thus, this bill proposes to mandate every city or municipality to set aside one (1%) percent of its

lands of the public domain for the establishment and maintenance of a city or municipal forest park.

Thus, in line with the Constitutional mandate to protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology, and in accord with the country's thrust towards sustainable forest management and development, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

Arlene B. Arcillas
ARLENE B. ARCILLAS
1ST DISTRICT, LAGUNA

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AN ACT

MANDATING EACH CITY OR MUNICIPALITY TO SET ASIDE A PORTION OF ITS TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION FOR FOREST PARKS AND PROVIDING FOR THE MAINTENANCE THEREOF

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

SECTION 1. ***Forest Park.*** – Each city or municipality with available lands of the public domain within its territorial jurisdiction is hereby mandated to set aside one (1%) percent of the lands for the establishment and maintenance of forest park.

SEC. 2. ***Local Seed Bank.*** – For the effective implementation of this Act, each city or municipality shall maintain a seed bank from which the local residents can draw seeds or saplings and learn proper planting technology. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), shall regularly contribute to the local seed banks, identify the species of trees to be distributed and determine the proper planting technology to be employed, in consideration of the different topographies, climates, soil types and other conditions in each city or municipality.

SEC. 3. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days after

the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources shall formulate the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act.

SEC. 4. ***Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issuances, or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 5. ***Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,