Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 831

Submitted by the Committee on Tourism and the Committee on Appropriations on MAR 9 2021
Re: House Bill No. 8956
Recommend its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 3667
Sponsors: Representatives Sol Aragones, Eric Go Yap and Adolf Edward G. Plaza

Mr. Speaker:

The Committee on Tourism, to which was referred House Bill No. 3667, introduced by Rep. Adolf Edward G. Plaza, entitled:

“AN ACT
DECLARING THE AGUSAN MARSH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF TALACOGON, SAN FRANCISCO, ROSARIO, BUNAWAN, LORETO, LA PAZ AND VERUELA IN THE PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR AS AN ECOTOURISM ZONE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

8956

has considered the same and recommends that the attached House Bill No. ________, entitled:

AN ACT
DECLARING THE AGUSAN MARSH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF TALACOGON, SAN FRANCISCO, ROSARIO, BUNAWAN, LORETO, LA PAZ AND VERUELA, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Respectfully submitted,

REP. ERIC GO YAP
Chairperson
Committee on Appropriations

THE HONORABLE SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUEZON CITY

REP. SOL ARAGONES
Chairperson
Committee on Tourism
Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
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HOUSE BILL NO. 8956
(In substitution of House Bill No. 3667)

Introduced by Representatives Adolf Edward G. Plaza, Sol Aragones,
Alfel M. Bascug, Juliette T. Uy, Micaela S. Violago, Ciriaco B. Gato, Jr., Fernando T.
Cabredo, Arnold "Noli" D. Celeste and Irene Gay F. Saulog

AN ACT
DECLARING THE AGUSAN MARSH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF
TALACOGON, SAN FRANCISCO, ROSARIO, BUNAWAN, LORETO, LA PAZ AND
VERUELA, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR, AN ECOTOURISM
ZONE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. - The State is mandated to promote a tourism
industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible, participative, culturally sensitive,
economically viable, and equitably beneficial to local communities.

2 Sec. 2. Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Zone. - The Agusan Marsh located in the
Municipalities of Talacogon, San Francisco, Rosario, Bunawan, Loreto, La Paz and Veruela,
in the Province of Agusan del Sur is hereby declared an ecotourism zone.

3 Sec. 3. Scope and Coverage. - This Act shall cover the Municipalities of Talacogon,
San Francisco, Rosario, Bunawan, Loreto, La Paz and Veruela.

4 The setting of the technical boundaries of the Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Zone shall
be undertaken by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and other
concerned agencies.

Sec. 4. Definition of Terms. - As used in this Act:

a. Biodiversity conservation refers to the practice of preserving the variety of species, habits and ecosystems, and genetic diversity of the place, including inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes which they are a part of;

b. Community-based tourism refers to a form of tourism where the local community and its residents have substantial control over and involvement in the development and management of the local tourism industry and a greater portion of the economic gains remain within the community;

c. Ecotourism refers to a form of sustainable tourism within a natural area where community participation, protection and management of natural resources, cultural and indigenous knowledge and practices, environmental education and ethics, as well as economic benefits are fostered and pursued for the enrichment of host communities and satisfaction of visitors;

d. Homestay refers to a mode of tourist accommodation where a tourist stays in a private home and experiences the day-to-day life of the local residents; and

e. Responsible ecotourism refers to a form of sustainable tourism in which both the tourism sector and the tourists take responsibility in the protection and conservation of the natural environment and the local culture and ways of life, and where community participation in ecotourism as well as the economic benefits that may be derived therefrom are fostered and pursued for the enjoyment and well-being of local residents and visitors alike.

Sec. 5. Development Strategies. – To accomplish the development of the Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Zone, the State shall:
a. Develop and promote responsible community-based ecological tourism as the core management strategy in the development of the Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Zone;

b. Ensure the conservation of the biodiversity and the preservation of said ecotourism zone;

c. Develop ecotourism products and programs that will generate employment and livelihood for the local residents concerned consistent with the preservation and conservation of natural resources;

d. Guarantee that the financial and economic benefits of the tourism industry are equitably shared by and distributed among the local residents concerned, by giving preference and support to community- and home-based micro and small tourism enterprises such as homestays, restaurants, food and fruit stands, and other similar tourism-oriented businesses and activities;

e. Ensure that the quality of local tourism programs and activities are educational and enriching for tourists and visitors through the provision of orientation, educational and tour programs by local tour operators, non-government organizations (NGOs), concerned local government units (LGUs), DENR and the Department of Tourism (DOT); and

f. Guarantee that in the development and promotion of the local tourism industry, the concerned LGUs shall ensure the adequate provision of water supply, food, energy and transportation for the needs of the local residents and communities.

Sec. 6. The Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Development and Management Plan. – Within one hundred and twenty (120) days after the approval of this Act, the DOT, in coordination with the DENR, shall formulate the Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Development and Management Plan that shall be complemented by a set of guidelines for a responsible, community-based tourism.
The Ecotourism Development and Management Plan shall ensure the preservation of the ecotourism zone. It shall include and pay due regard to the following considerations:

a. Carrying capacity of the Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Zone, including its endemic and migratory birds species;

b. Specific site assessment;

c. Identification of strategic priorities;

d. Product development plans for local income generation;

e. Capacity-building for the local community so residents therein can ably manage economically viable and responsible, community-based ecotourism business enterprises;

f. Strategies to promote the formulation of local production groups and networks, including the marketing and pricing of products; and

g. Marketing strategies that uphold the natural, social and environmental integrity of the Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Zone and its local residents.

The process of formulating the Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Development and Management Plan shall be participatory, with the framework to be provided by the DOT and the DENR, in consultation with the municipal governments of Talacogon, San Francisco, Rosario, Bunawan, Loreto, La Paz and Veruela.

Sec. 7. Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Board. — The Agusan Marsh Ecotourism Board, hereinafter referred to as the Board, is hereby created. It shall be composed of the following:

a. Governor of the Province of Agusan del Sur, as Chairperson;

b. Secretary of the DOT, or a duly authorized representative;

c. Secretary of the DENR, or a duly authorized representative;

d. Mayors of the Municipalities of Talacogon, San Francisco, Rosario, Bunawan, Loreto, La Paz and Veruela;
e. Representative from a non-government organization whose advocacy is environmental preservation;

f. Representative from the academe;

g. Representative from the business sector; and

h. Representative from the private sector.

The Board shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act by the concerned LGUs, and shall, as the need arises, amend, modify or revise such rules and regulations to meet the needs of changing times.

Sec. 8. Appropriations. - The Secretaries of the DOT and DENR shall include in their respective Department’s program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act, and shall augment such allocation with internally generated funds of the DOT.

Sec. 9. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 10. Repealing Clause. - All laws, rules, regulations, executive orders, presidential decrees and other issuances inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed or amended accordingly.

Sec. 11. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,