



# Kalikhansan

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

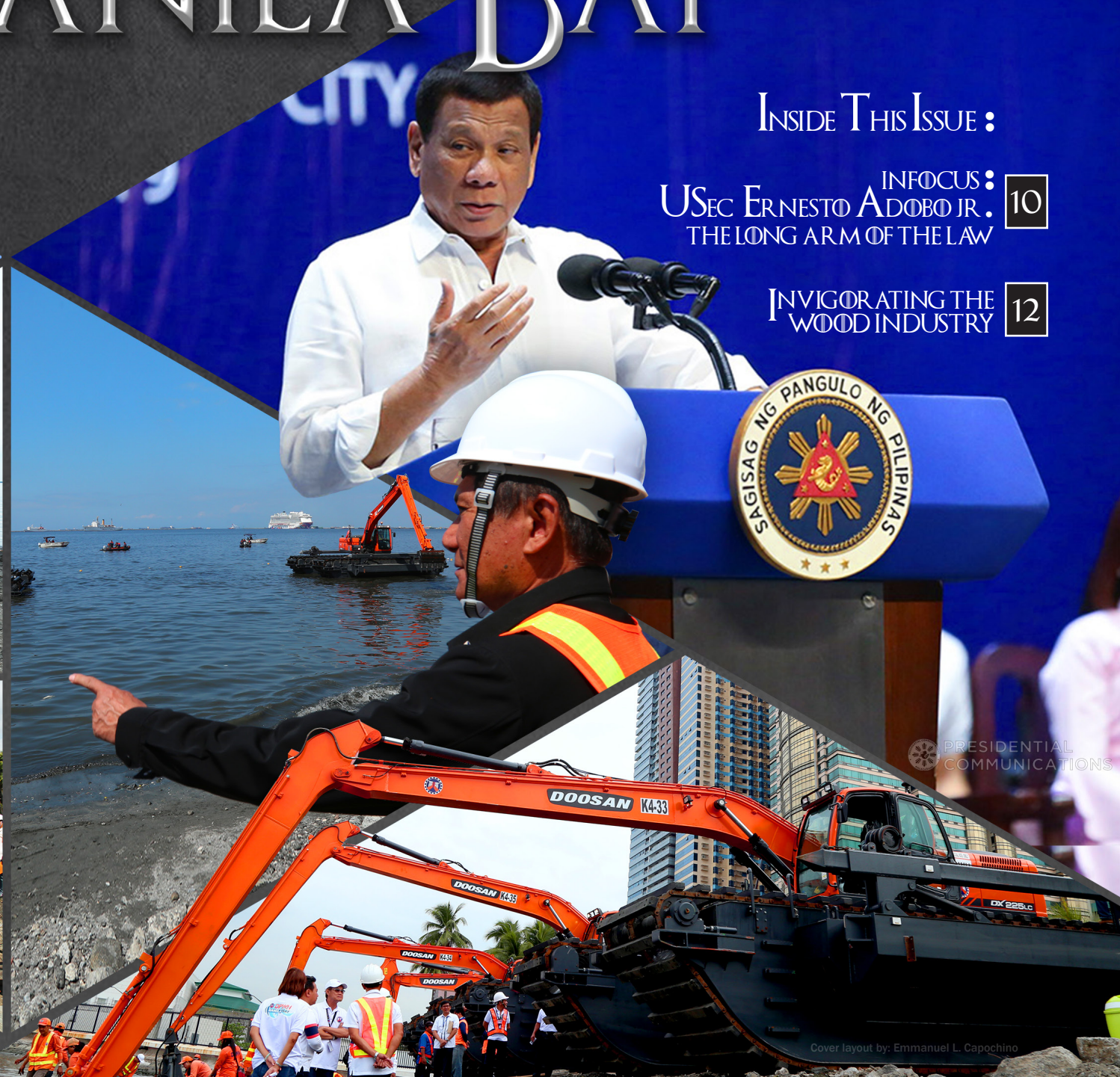
# BATTLE FOR MANILA BAY

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PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Cover layout by: Emmanuel L. Capochino

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*Solidarity Walk led by DENR with participating government agencies and employees*

## LAUNCHING OF "BATTLE FOR MANILA BAY"

On January 27, 2019, the Manila Bay rehabilitation, dubbed as the "Battle for Manila Bay," was officially launched by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Along with some Department Secretaries and around 5000 government workers and volunteers, carrying broomsticks and trash bags, DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu led the solidarity walk from Quirino Grandstand to the staging area at Baywalk in Manila.

# 2019



*Opening of the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program at Quirino Grandstand, Manila*

After leading the recitation of the Pledge of Commitment with mandamus agencies, other government offices concerned, and stakeholders, Secretary Roy Cimatu declared the start of the Manila Bay rehabilitation.

"This is one battle that will be won not with force or arms, but with the firm resolve to bring back Manila Bay to life," said the environment chief.

Manila Bay and the environment in general is not a lost cause, impressed by the environment chief. Though many regard the Bay's rehabilitation as an impossible endeavour, the Secretary maintains his optimism that the battle for the Bay will be won. For him, the commitment and determination displayed by many Filipinos in doing their share in the rehabilitation effort during that day, is first of all, assuring.



# January



The Pledge of Commitment by Mandamus and participating government agencies in Roxas Boulevard

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## SIMULTANEOUS CLEAN-UP ACTIVITIES



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(CLOCKWISE FROM 1-4): Manila Bay Coastal clean-up and Eco Tour with North Fairview High school students at LPPCHEA; Estero Clean-up in Obando, Bulacan; Laying-out of silt curtain around a bridge along Manila Cavite Expressway or CAVITEX; and Estero Clean-up in Talaba Dos in Bacoor, Cavite

## DIALOGUE WITH BRGY. CHAIRPERSONS

After the ceremony, simultaneous clean-up activities were conducted along the baywalk shore area, at Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area or LPPCHEA, and the Marine Tree Park in Navotas in the National Capital Region. In Region 3, on that same day, the Bay's rehabilitation was launched in the towns of Obando, Bulacan; Mariveles, Bataan; and Guagua in Pampanga. Silt curtains were laid out around a bridge along Manila-Cavite Expressway or CAVITEX, and a cleanup activity was held at Talaba Dos in Bacoor, Cavite.



DENR officials during the Dialogue with Barangay Chairpersons on March 18, 2019 at Bayview Park Hotel Manila

2019

February -



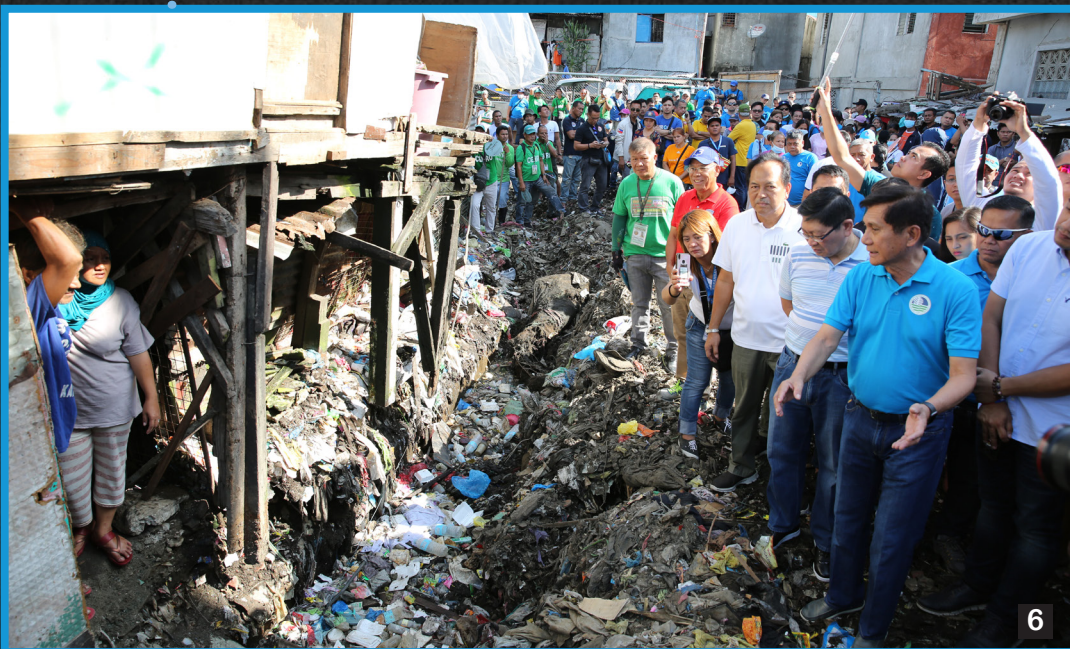
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On March 31, 2019, another Metro Manila-wide simultaneous river/estero clean-ups were held. There are 309 water tributaries (esteros and creeks) in Metro Manila that are directly draining into Manila Bay and these cover a total area of 10,850,531.81 square meters. The DENR and other government office contingents, conducted a synchronized clean-up in Malabon-Navotas, Tullahan-Tinajeros, Marikina River (Manggahan Floodway), Pasig River, San Juan, Paranaque, and Las Piñas-Zapote River Systems.

Aside from the 13 “mandamus agencies” ordered by the Supreme Court to clean and rehabilitate Manila Bay, other agencies and offices that took part in the clean-up events were the Department of Tourism, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of National Defense, Department of Science and Technology, Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, National Housing Authority, Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor, Manila Water Company Inc., and Maynilad Water Services Inc.. Various local government units, non-government organizations, and stakeholders also participated.

## RIVERS AND ESTEROS CLEAN-UP

March 31, 2019 | Battle for Rivers and Estero Clean-Up (FROM 1-6): Estero de Magdalena; Marikina River; Tullahan River; Navotas River; San Juan River; and Tripa de Gallina

# March

continue on next page ▶

# QUICK FACTS ABOUT MANILA BAY:

## SC Continuing Mandamus on Manila Bay

On February 15, 2011, the Supreme Court (SC) En Banc issued a resolution affirming the December 18, 2008 SC Decision in G.R. Nos. 171947-48, ordering 13 government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve Manila Bay in their different capacities.

Through a continuing writ of mandamus, the 13 government agencies were ordered to restore Manila Bay's water quality to Class SB level to make them fit for swimming, skin-diving, and other forms of contact recreation.

These 13 government agencies, tagged as the "mandamus agencies," are the DENR, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Philippine National Police-Maritime Group (PNP-MG), Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), and Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA).

The DENR, as the primary government agency responsible for the enforcement and implementation of environmental laws and programs, was directed to fully implement the Operational Plan for the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy (OPMBCS), pursuant to Section 19 of RA 9275. The environment agency was ordered to call regular coordination meetings with concerned government departments and agencies to ensure the successful implementation of the Plan.

With the political will showed by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and the full determination of Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, the DENR is strictly enforcing environmental laws and programs to fulfil the 2008 Supreme Court continuing mandamus to cleanup Manila Bay and its tributaries.



1



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(FROM 1-4): Coastal clean-up with DPWH employees;  
Manila Bay ocular inspection by DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda and the Philippine Navy;  
Fencing operations by MMDA at the Manila Bay;  
Coastal clean-up of Philippine Coast Guard employees at Baseco Compound, Manila



Shanties built along or near esteros

### Current Condition of Manila Bay

The pollution problem of Manila Bay is at its worst. A 2017 report of DENR's Environmental Management Bureau shows that the fecal coliform level in Manila Bay reached as high as 330 million most probable number (MPN) per 100 milliliters (ml), considering the safe level is only 100 MPN/100ml.

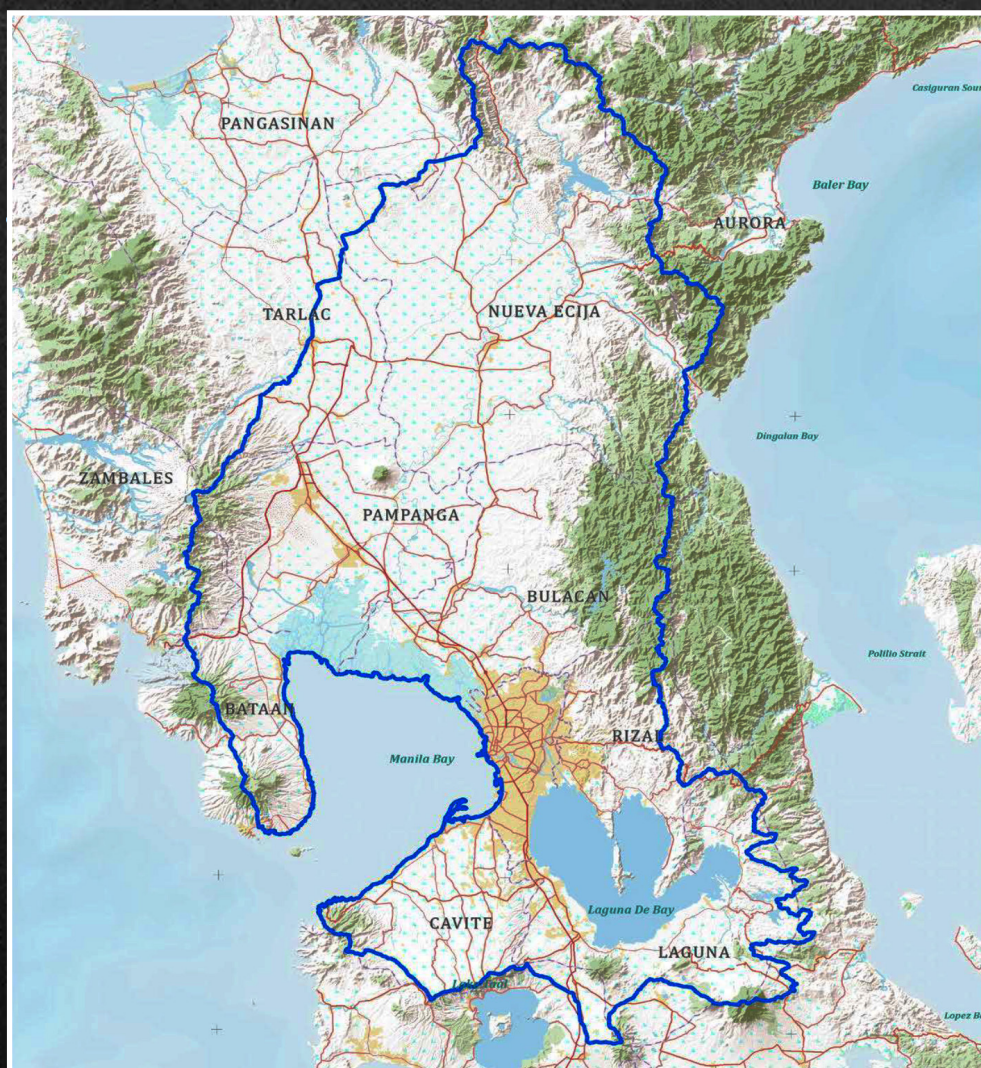
Only 15% of the water-served population in the National Capital Region (NCR) are connected to sewerage system and only 3.84% of the water served population outside NCR are provided with sanitation services; the rest of these population discharge their wastewater and effluent either to open sewer or drainage or directly into the waterways that lead to the Bay.

Almost 233,000 informal settler families (ISFs) are residing along the waterways in the Manila Bay area. Their makeshift houses have no proper toilets or sanitary facilities; they discharge their wastes directly into the waterways.

Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 was enacted in 2001, but was fully implemented only after ten years. Today, in order to curb the solid waste pollution in Manila Bay, proper solid waste management must be implemented by the 75% local government units (LGUs) that have approved 10-Year Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP).

### The Manila Bay Area

The Manila Bay area covers 10 provinces and 187 local government units (LGUs) in 3 regions of the country, namely: National Capital Region (NCR), Region III, and Region IV-A. Six provinces are coastal (Bataan, Bulacan, Cavite, Pampanga, Quezon, and Batangas), while the other four provinces are non-coastal (Laguna, Nueva Ecija, Rizal and Tarlac). Its drainage area covers 199,400 hectares. Its coastline measures some 190 kilometers. There are 17 principal river systems draining into Manila Bay, namely: (Region III) Angat River, Bocaue River, Sta. Maria River, Marilao River, Meycauayan River, Obando River, Talisay River, Guagua River, Pampanga River, (NCR) Meycauayan-Valenzuela River, Pasig River, Parañaque River, Malabon-Navotas-Tullahan-Tinajeros Rivers, (Region IV-A) Imus River, Ylang-ylang River, Rio Grande River, and Cañas River.



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## Manila Bay Rehabilitation Plan

The Manila Bay Rehabilitation Plan (MBRP) was unveiled on January 27, 2019 during the launch of the Manila Bay rehabilitation.

**Phase I** of the Manila Bay rehabilitation focuses on cleanup and water quality improvement:

1. Cleanup of designated esteros and waterways;
2. Reduction of fecal coliform level and toxic discharges from houses and establishments by connecting their sewer lines to existing Sewerage Treatment Plants (STPs) and requiring STPs for government, commercial, industrial, and educational establishments;
3. Inspecting and repairing leaks in old sewer lines;
4. Providing temporary sanitation facilities to informal settlers residing along esteros and shorelines pending relocation;
5. Implementing proper solid waste management; and
6. Planning for the relocation of informal settlers

**Phase II** focuses on rehabilitation and resettlement:

1. Rehabilitation of old sewer lines in NCR
2. Relocation of informal settlers
3. Ensuring completion of 340 millions of liters per day (MLD) of Maynilad and Manila Water by 2022

**Phase III** focuses on education and sustainment:

1. Continuing environmental education of citizens to protect the gains
2. Sustained law enforcement and monitoring
3. Fast tracking/ earlier completion of the sewerage system in Metro Manila from 2017 to 2026



(FROM 1-5): Clean-up spearheaded by the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) at Estero de Magdalena; DENR Inspection at the Manila Zoo; and sewerage treatment facility near One Esplanade in Pasay City; LLDA taking water samples; and serving of Cease and Desist Order (CDO) to HengFeng Kitchenette, Pasay City



# P42.95 BILLION BUDGET



*Clean-Up at Manila Bay Yacht Club during the Launch*



*Secretary Roy A. Cimatu oversees the dredging operations in Manila Bay*

## Budget

The budget given by Malacañang for the rehabilitation of Manila Bay, dubbed as the “Battle for Manila Bay,” whose projects are to be carried out for three years, amounts to P42.95 billion. This amount covers the cleanup of priority waterways, relocation of informal settler families (ISF), and provision of temporary sanitation facilities to IS communities prior to their relocation.

Secretary Roy Cimatu revealed that around P6 billion or roughly 14 % of the allocation will be used for cleanup activities, including information, education, and communication (IEC) campaign on the importance of keeping Manila Bay clean. The remaining P36 billion will be spent for the relocation of ISF and provision of support systems like access to jobs and livelihoods and construction of town centers with recreational areas, markets, church, schools and hospitals.

## Immediate Goals

The clean-up started at the “ground zero” or the bay area from Manila Yacht Club to the United States Embassy, where all solid and water pollutants converge and the fecal coliform count is highest. Clean-up activities would eventually spread out to Region 3 and Region IV-A.

According to Secretary Roy Cimatu, the immediate goal for Phase I is to reduce the coliform levels of the bay and its connecting estuaries and creeks. To achieve this, intensive campaigns and partnerships, massive mobilization, and continuous clean-up activities in the 47 esteros leading Manila Bay, and strategic rivers and waterways in Region III and Region IV-A have to be carried out. (Alvin D. Gatbonton)



# Usec Ernesto Adobo Jr.

## The Long Arm of the Law

by: Adona P. San Diego

**T**his quote from Jack Welch probably describes the work-life choice of Atty. Ernesto D. Adobo, Jr., who currently works as one of the Undersecretaries (USecs) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Because of his wide experience and excellent skills in various fields of law enforcement and management, he is now entrusted by the Department to manage seven DENR Services. Though not a choice he really wanted for himself, but a choice borne out of fulfilling his duty as a public servant.

“Usec Adobo,” as he is commonly known in DENR, has 20 years of pretty challenging career in DENR. Starting out as Director of Land Management Bureau, he inched his way on becoming the Regional Executive Director of Region 4A, Region 4B, Region 9, and Region 10. He was promoted after as Assistant Secretary (ASec) for Visayas, then Assistant Secretary for Mindanao, and later as Assistant Secretary for Field Operations, Luzon. In 2011, during the administration of DENR Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje, Usec Adobo was promoted as Undersecretary for Field Operations.

Today, Usec Adobo is Undersecretary of seven DENR Services, which are considered core pillars of the Department’s day to day operations: Administrative, Finance, Human Resources, Information Systems, Anti-Corruption, Legislative, and Legal Services. Aside from being the busiest Undersecretary of the agency, he also heads the Secretariat of two big Task Forces: the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force and Manila Bay Inter-Agency Task Force, which equally demands undivided time, attention, and dedication, given its numerous

responsibilities and complex tasks.

If you think that Usec Adobo hoarded all the big offices for his advantage and benefit, you are absolutely wrong. He is compelled to assume all these responsibilities out of fulfilling his duty as a public servant. A must good soldier, need to obey or accept every assignment given to him without reservation. “Obey first before you complain,” is the military orientation of his superior, Secretary Roy A. Cimatu. Nevertheless, he is very thankful to the Secretary for giving him full trust and confidence.

**“There's no such thing as work-life balance. There are work-life choices, and you make them, and they have consequences.”**

—Jack Welch

Managing all seven DENR Services is a very big challenge and responsibility, aside from contending with all seven offices’ variety of tasks and interactions, he needs to have the flexibility and versatility to balance all Services’ functions and responsibilities to achieve efficient and effective overall operation. Every decision and action made must be carefully thought of and thoroughly assessed based on legality and sound management.

As the Head of the two major Task Forces of DENR, his decisions and actions are always critical on how they would impact the goals of the program, particularly, how they would affect the people who are affected and,

at the same time, how would they bring full economic benefits to the people and to the country.

### Work Habits

Given the importance of his office, Usec Adobo works extra days and hours, sacrificing his time for his family and other activities during the weekends. He wants to make sure that all documents in the office are acted upon. He works with clients and visitors on weekdays and acts on non-critical documents on weekends.

Working on weekends has helped him a lot, particularly in reading appealed cases and rendering decisions.

Asked how he prioritizes things for both office and family - Usec Adobo has only high praises to the people who help him carry out his duties. He recognizes the contributions of good people around him, especially those who help him in the daily

discharge of his duties. He works closely with them to ensure that everything is in order.

Usec Adobo personally acknowledges the likes of “Ms. Mimi” as someone who is adept on personal matters and ASec Joan Lagunda for helping him a lot by being *matapang* and strong.

However, the Undersecretary admits that he is not perfect; he commits mistakes also. “Micromanaging everything sometimes has a tendency to overlook other concerns, *talagang may makakaligtan ka*, but with good and reliable people at my side, such problem can be resolved,” said Usec Adobo.

## Human Resources

On human resource development, particularly on promotion, USec Adobo has his biases on seniority. To him, it is “no brainer” when it comes to choosing between the senior contenders and the younger one, as long as the former meet the required minimum qualification standard, he should be assured of the position. Asked why these biases, he explained that he had seen it and experienced them in the field where promoting a junior staff resulted in the demoralization among the ranks. He reminds everyone that the Department’s organizational structure is based on hierarchy so seniority counts.

USec Adobo wants to improve career development for the employees and is preparing a program for the career path of everyone. He commends the efforts of the current administration in its fight against corruption; however, he still wants more reforms and planning to introduce policies that will compel employees to do their job. “It’s a matter of character and attitude, *may matitigas ang ulo*.” It’s a good thing that he has a hardworking and brave Assistant Secretary that help him out on HR concerns.

When it comes to work assignment, USec Adobo has this piece of advice: “to the rank and file - always look at your position descriptions because at the end of the day, you will be rated based on what your position descriptions are, which will also be the basis of your promotion.” He understands that many employees are performing multi-tasking, but he emphasized that they should not forget the position and specific tasks by which they were hired for.

## Legal Service

Overseeing the Legal Affairs Service is an advantage for USec Adobo, considering that he is a lawyer and a former National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Agent, a former Director of LMB, and former RED of DENR Regional Offices. With the Legal Affairs Service, he can apply his knowledge on law and various environmental concerns. Although he admits that there are tasks that are not easy, for instance, rendering decisions for appealed cases. Majority of the cases handled by the Legal Office are land cases, which comprise 80-85% of all cases heard.

“I have to read all the cases to be able to render a good decision. I have to protect the Secretary, so I need to read carefully all the appeals before endorsing them to him for his signature,” USec Adobo said.

The Undersecretary does his case reviews on weekends because he needs to focus on every case - read them carefully, study, and review them to arrive at informed decisions. “I always make sure that anything I forward to the Secretary is something that I can stand and defend in court; this is my prime duty as Undersecretary for Legal - to protect and defend the Secretary against possible lawsuit.”

This job at Legal, USec Adobo said, earned him several lawsuits in the Ombudsman. Being charged in court is part of the risks of his job in the Legal Service. He has, in fact, five cases now with the Ombudsman, which is more compared to when he was the RED in four regional offices. “Instead of appealing their cases, the losing party filed cases against me. This is the thing I do not like with Legal, they filed cases against you. It’s the prize you get in performing your duties. I don’t choose cases, I act as they come, I cannot wait for other parties to come by in making decisions,” he said.

As Head of Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force, USec Adobo and his men risk their lives every time there is an anti-illegal logging operation.

“We walk on dangerous grounds to do our job of protecting the remaining forests. We do not know our enemies; but most of the time, they are armed and dangerous. We grope in the dark, literally and figuratively.” Nevertheless, despite the dangers, USec Adobo has no

regrets; “that is our job and in it, we have to put our lives on the line to protect the remaining forests.”

He attributes his courage in fighting illegal loggers to his past experiences as former NBI enforcer. According to USec Adobo, his biggest haul was in Surigao and Agusan River in Talacogong in Agusan Del Sur in 2011.

## Crime Buster

USec Adobo was a Senior Agent at the National Bureau of Investigation when he was first assigned with the Anti-Illegal Logging mission. “The Task Force during that time was so effective but it was disbanded for lack of budget,” he said in jest. Apparently, the budget of the Task Force came from the sale of illegal logs. Later on, the DENR created a Task Force to apprehend syndicates faking land titles. USec Adobo busted a syndicate in the Bureau.

“They were so organized that the fraudulent titles proliferated,” he said. According to him, the biggest case was a 4.7 hectares friar land under sales patent, which was bloated to 47 hectares where his team padlocked the CENRO in Trece Martires. The raid earned him the trust of then Secretary Antonio Cerilles and he was offered to head the Land Management Bureau or LMB.

As Director of LMB, USec Adobo’s first reform was to stop the “no records modus” in the Bureau. Clients who wanted to reconstitute their land titles were told by corrupt personnel that the bureau has no records. Clients were forced to look for fixers who knows former employees who connive with people inside the Bureau. One big case that the former Director busted was a 10-hectare land between the PEA AMARI Marvel Subdivision and the World Health Organisation, which was owned by the Consunji. However, upon investigation, it was found out that the land in question was part of the Civil Aviation Administration of the Philippines. The syndicate was able to sell the property because CAAP placed a fence around the property without a proper survey.

Before, corruption was deeply rooted in LMB. Syndicates can manufacture land titles and make them look old and authentic by placing them in a sandwich to be microwaved after. He even found the so-called golden hand of those deals. However, today, USec Adobo is positive that having computerized most of the records, all the fraudulent and spurious titles will be minimized if not at all avoided. Clients now can easily access information to know the status of the parcel or tracks of land they own.

## Administrative

USec Adobo believes that there are a lot of things to be done to improve DENR’s Administrative Service. He wants to reform the Admin to ensure that everything is in sync with the Department’s mission and vision. Failure of the admin people to their job would have a huge negative implication on the operations of the Department. The Administrative Service must provide efficient and speedy delivery of service in order not to compromise the agency’s overall operations.

USec Adobo, despite being the Undersecretary for Administrative Service have had frustrating experiences with the admin. He was once disappointed on how his airline booking was handled, which he had to personally attend to, in order to fix it. When it comes to employees welfare, USec disclosed that a certain bad tradition exists in DENR, particularly for retiring employees in the field offices. Retiring employees usually get their retirement package after several months. The poor retirees have to spend grease money to those whose duty is to facilitate their retirement pay, in the first place. USec Adobo is planning to expedite the process of releasing retirement package.

As part of his responsibility as Undersecretary for Administration and Anti-Corruption, he wants to discipline LMB corrupt personnel who are still involved

in spurious and fake land titling. “Cases should be filed in court against our people who are involved in this,” he warned. Curbing this crime, according to him, can be done on two fronts: advancement in technology and disciplining the ranks. Today’s anti-corruption drive is really a big lead for the agency,” he stressed.

## Policy Making

On policies, Usec Adobo believes that policymakers must be grounded, making sure that the policies they develop will work for the benefit of the poor marginalized people. There are many poor people in the upland and for them taking down one Lauan tree is a big thing. When they go hungry, they won’t hesitate to cut Lauan in order to survive.

The Undersecretary thinks that the National Greening Program or NGP is one of the best programs of DENR. Through the NGP, poor local communities in the upland are provided with jobs and alternative livelihood to augment their daily needs. Nonetheless, according to the Undersecretary, the NGP has to be implemented correctly, monitored and evaluated. Unlike the Department of Agriculture, which has several programs for lowland farmers, DENR’s NGP is the best policy and intervention for the upland people.

## Management Style

“The key is knowing your people - their capabilities and, of course, if they can deliver,” emphasized by USec Adobo. However, he clarified that he does not choose any person he works with, nor select anyone for his team. “I can work with anyone, even the most hard-headed employees. I can work with them because I always believe that there is always good in a person. You just guide them,” he stressed.

According to the Undersecretary, Jack Welch’s ideas of running the offices, somehow influence him. “You don’t manage people, you guide them, he stressed. It is also important for any manager to immerse himself into the operation. You cannot expect to get 100% accurate information and situation from the people running the offices or organization alone. “*Maraming sanitization na ginagawa*,” get feedback from the people below; know the actual situation so you can give the right instructions,” USec Adobo stressed.

In the same way, you cannot take seriously the information you get from the grapevine, but it can be used to guide you in digging deeper investigation on issues that matters.

USec Adobo believes that there is no person who is not biased. “Everyone is biased, but it is how you temper biases that you arrive at good decisions.” USec Adobo also agrees with Welch’s idea of “rank and yank.”

Working with DENR gave him the opportunity to help more people. This is fulfillment and happiness, which you cannot buy, said the Undersecretary. “I was happy and contented with my job and never realized that this does not redound to family”. My job at DENR is tailored fit for me. “I was once an NBI agent and my job impacts many people. When I became the Regional Executive Director of DENR, I was able to help a lot more people through federalizing Community Based Forest Management.”

Two decades in DENR gave USec Adobo all kinds of adversaries, but the NBI enforcer in him makes him go on, never once faltering and cowering, even during those assignments that almost put his life on the line. His piece of advice: in the morning before getting up, pray for the coming events of the day and night. Ask God for guidance, and be thankful for all the graces of the Lord.

Born in Tacloban and grew up in Zamboanga, USec Adobo is the youngest of three children born from a Visayan Father and Bicolano Mother.

# INVIGORATING THE WOOD INDUSTRY

by: Fatima R. Leya



Source: Google

In the Philippines, more than half of the total land area of 300,000 square kilometers is classified as forest land. Some are managed for food and wood production, while others are protected and preserved for ecological balance and sustainable development.

Forestry statistics of the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) indicate that the country has 8 million hectares of production forests, which cater to timber or wood production, agroforestry, and livestock industry. The country's annual wood consumption comes at a whopping average of 6 million cubic meters (m<sup>3</sup>), and is projected to increase in the coming years. However, only 25 % of these are sourced from the country; the rest or 75% are imported from other countries.

This figure clearly shows the great need of the forest industry to find effective strategies to increase the production of this basic economic commodity in the country. Nonetheless, it implies optimizing the utilization of production forests to address the deficit and expand its opportunity to contribute to the Philippine economy.

## ISSUES AND BOTTLENECKS

"The current deficit in wood supply requires that timber production in production forests be augmented. One way to do this is to encourage more investments in tree planting or plantation," said FMB Director Nonito M. Tamaoyo in an interview.

Since the logging ban in 2011, logging in natural forests was strictly prohibited, permitting cutting of trees only in production forests. This compelled investors to focus only on planting trees in production forests. However, because of the strict policies and rigid regulations enforced even on production forests, investors find it hard to secure the needed permits, much more to comply with the requirements to operate.

"Plantation owners find it hard to start business because

of the many permits required of them, much more of the arduous process they need to undergo to operate," Director Tamayo stressed.

The country also has to establish a sustainable forest certification scheme that would accredit and make competitive the Philippine wood raw materials and products in the global market. Raw wood material products that come from certified sustainably managed timber plantations have more edge and are considered to have premium quality when exported.

"Some investors of wood products in the country have to get their raw materials from countries with forest certification, like Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia, and then they manufacture their products here for export," Director Tamayo said.

Moreover, the National Economic Development Authority believes that potential investors such as the medium and micro scale enterprises (MMSEs) are limited in making investments because of financial constraints. Lack of modern facilities and technologies also hinders the potential for processing of quality wood materials and products in the country.

## CLOSING THE GAP

"There is a need to create an investment-friendly environment to encourage more investors in the industry, and this can be done if the government processes are made simple and policies are streamlined," said Director Tamayo.

The Wood Summit, held earlier this year, aimed for this objective, gathering various forest industry players to discuss interests and issues, and situate policies and market demands for wood-based industries.

The summit, according to Director Tamayo, is a way to take stock and assess existing policies, and develop

ways forward to encourage people to invest in timber production. One goal is to work out for an executive order that would encourage vertical integration among wood processors and producers, and propagate the establishment of timber plantations in the country.

"We want wood processors to invest also in plantations, not necessarily that they will do the planting," said the Director. "They can tie up with people's organizations or tree farmers, finance them, and harvest wood materials through them later on," he said.

Some areas of the Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) and the Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) can be utilized for timber production, continues the Director. "Forest management contracts can be issued to cooperatives, corporate entities, and communities through IFMA and CBFMA. This a way or an opportunity for local communities to have sustainable livelihood," he said.

On the other hand, tree growers can put up their own wood processing plants to have control over the value of wood they harvest. A cubic meter of log when processed costs two or three times more profit, a big difference from what they can earn by just supplying raw wood materials to processors.

The small and medium enterprises, through the assistance of the government, can work with banks, such as Development Bank of the Philippines and Land Bank of the Philippines, for sustainable financing. The recommendation to establish a forest certification scheme can also help increase the value of their local wood products for export.

Finally, the Director recommends that non-timber products like rattan and bamboo should, likewise, be promoted. Aside from their equally high potential for local and global markets, their use and supply can ease the demand pressure on trees.



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Usec Benny D. Antiporda  
Adviser

Maria Matilda A. Gaddi  
Editor-in-Chief/  
Managing Editor

Alvin D. Gatbonton  
Associate Editor

Adona P. San Diego  
Martina R. Constantino  
Fatima R. Leya  
Writers

Andrea Ana Sarian  
Lay-out and Graphic Editor

Eduard Dominic D. Oeado  
Marjun N. Jumao-as  
Jasper L. Lumagbas  
Michael M. David /  
Rhoderic M. Los Bañez  
Photographers/Infographics

Melvin B. Soriano  
Distribution and Circulation

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