

Community Protected Area at Cape San Agustin in Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Cape San Agustin Peninsula between Davao Gulf, Celebes and Philippine Seas remains a complete ecosystem refuge for endangered dugong, flying fox and Philippine eagle. *Mandaya* and *Manobo* tribes inhabit the coastal areas depending on artisanal fishing, *kaingin* (swidden farm), coconut farming and small-scale trading. Traditional taboos have protected dugong from local spear fishermen and artisanal fishing. Local elders, tribal leaders and barangay officials have continued to respect this belief and encourage their practice. Traditional fishermen have been given preference on local fishing grounds and are constantly checking for encroaching commercial fishing and poachers.

KEYWORDS: compressor, pukot, marka-bahala, kaingin, barangay, dayo

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In spite of patrolling by fishermen compressor (compressed air-aided dive fishing), *pukot* or fine mesh nets and *marka-bahala* or large mesh nets were reported to have caught and be responsible for some dugong casualties. Among the 7 stranded and dead dugong recorded in the past 2 years across the peninsula, Pujada Bay and Davao Gulf, 1 was caught by net and slaughtered. Another dugong stranding was documented in the last week of January 2008 weighing about 200 kilogram in Pujada Bay. Necropsy undertaken revealed no wounds or punctured body parts except numerous nematode worms on its stomach. Tissue samples were taken and buried appropriately for easy recovery of skeletal remains. It was reported in March, 2008 that a 100-kilogram sea turtle was stranded in barangay Lanca and 3 people died by food poisoning after eating its meat while 13 others got ill.

This indiscriminate fishing was undertaken by seasonally migrant fishermen or “dayo” coming from neighboring towns and provinces. Among those identified, tuna fishermen were reported to catch sharks and dolphins whose meat is sold as ingredients for fish balls and tempura. “Marka bahala” extra-large mesh nets have been set indiscriminately on their fishing grounds and have caught all kinds of large fish, sharks, dolphins and also probably dugong.

Local communities in barangay Kabuaya established a dugong habitat sanctuary (DHS) to protect resident dugong and observed improvement of fish stocks and fish catch after 1 year of establishment. Neighboring 7 barangay or villages around the northern and western part of the peninsula contemplated the same and initiated

coastal assessment, ecological awareness campaign and seeking technological support.

Local Non-Government Organization (NGO) partner Interfaith Movement for Peace and Development (IMPEDE) based in Mati, Davao Oriental is engaged to undertake the above work. Davao Oriental State College of Science and Technology (DOSCSST) is also engaged to undertake Participatory Coastal Resource Assessment (PCRA) in another Cape San Agustin Peninsula barangay. Barangay Luban intends to establish their own DHS or marine protected area (MPA) in April, 2008 and towards calm season. PCRA was recently undertaken in barangay Lanca and then in barangay Lavigan. The project goals are to influence local governments of Governor Generoso and Mati to invest in coastal resource management, protection of ecosystem and institute sustainable development. Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided a loan and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) provided a grant to fund Pujada Bay Integrated Coastal Resource Management (ICRM) Project. GREEN Mindanao, IMPEDE and DOSCSST strategize to influence Pujada Bay ICRM to extend its focus and direction towards Cape San Agustin Peninsula.

However, aggressive commercial fishing and mining have threatened local fishers, farmers, tribes and ecosystem. They sought assistance from NGO’s, media, church and local government officials to stop these destructive ventures. Local fishers and tribes initiated a drive to secure their fishing grounds and forest domain. Recently, the provincial government stopped the completion of road construction that will pass through ancient coastal forest and Philippine eagle sanctuary. This move spares the 30-kilometer stretch of remnant

forest and coastal areas reported to be frequented by herd of dugong.

RESULTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

NGO allies of GREEN Mindanao that include IMPEDE, Legal Right Center-Kasama Ka sa Kalikasan, local Friends of the Earth with CAFOD of United Kingdom band together to oppose large-scale mining of BHP Billiton. Activists and film-maker from UK recently visited the mining area and interviewed local communities documenting their opposition to BHP Billiton mining venture. Late in 2007, Australian Ambassador to the Philippines with the provincial governor of Davao Oriental mediated between conflicting small-scale miners group and BHP Billiton. BHP Billiton intensified public relations efforts through building community facilities, water system, employment and community development within municipality of Mati. In Governor Generoso, Chinese mining company Sino-Phil negotiated with friendly local officials in developing road project benefiting local transport and mining operation. However, majority of local fishers, farmers and local officials are opposed to their mining operation.