

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF THE PHILIPPINES

First Regular Session



Senate  
Office of the Secretary

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SENATE  
P.S. Res 50

INTRODUCED BY:

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Introduced by Senator Poe

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**RESOLUTION**

**URGING THE DEPARTMENTS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND ENERGY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES MARINE SCIENCE INSTITUTE TO CONDUCT SHORT- AND LONG-TERM SCIENTIFIC/MARINE RESEARCH STUDIES AND EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES ON THE BENHAM RISE, A 13-MILLION-HECTARE UNDERWATER TERRITORY OFF EASTERN LUZON, AND SUBMIT TO THE SENATE RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS INDICATING FULL POSSESSION AND OWNERSHIP**

Whereas, the Benham Rise, a 13-million-hectare underwater region off the provinces of Aurora and Isabela in eastern Philippines and named after its American surveyor Andrew Benham, was mapped in 1933 but its connection to the Philippine shelf was validated only recently to justify the county's claim to an extended continental shelf<sup>1</sup>;

Whereas, on April 8, 2009, the Philippines, the only claimant of the undersea landmass in the Pacific Ocean, filed a claim to the United Nations, which was subsequently approved by the UN's Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on April 12, 2012<sup>2</sup>;

Whereas, Filipinos dove into the waters off Benham Rise, also called the Benham Plateau, for the first time on May 3 two years after the area was awarded to the Philippines by the UN, with a team of 28 researchers and divers conquering the Benham Bank, the plateau's shallowest portion which is 50 meters deep<sup>3</sup>;

Whereas, the undersea plateau—actually bigger than Luzon and an undisputed territory—is said to have huge deposits of solid nodules of methane that could potentially turn the Philippines into a natural gas exporter, said Environment Secretary Ramon Paje during a Senate hearing in 2011<sup>4</sup>;

Whereas, the seismically active region is also said to have active deposits of natural gas and manganese nodules “vital in the production of steel.”<sup>5</sup> The area has potentially rich marine resources;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://benhamrise.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.namria.gov.ph/benham.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rappler.com/nation/59316-philipinos-conquer-new-territory-benham-rise>

<sup>4</sup> <http://globaination.inquirer.net/9079/philippines-eyes-methane-gas-deposits-off-isabela-aurora>

<sup>5</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/183779/un-approves-ph-territorial-claim-to-benham-rise>

Whereas, in 2012, the Department of Energy (DoE) said it was pushing for “oil hunt” over portions of the Benham Rise through the Philippine Energy Contracting Round (PECR) 5 for petroleum exploration<sup>6</sup>;

Whereas, initial studies have not commenced, information about the Benham Rise are still lacking and the area is largely unexplored. On June 9, 2014, Zenaida Monsada of the DoE’s Oil Industry Management Bureau said it may include the area in the next contracting round of PECR 6<sup>7</sup>;

Whereas, it is time for the government to maximize and explore the Benham Rise to reduce the country’s dependence to imported oil and gas products and conduct studies that could potentially turn the Philippines into a natural gas exporter;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED,** by the Philippine Senate, to urge the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Energy and the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute to conduct short- and long-term scientific/marine research studies and exploration and development approaches on the Benham Rise, a 13-million-hectare underwater territory off eastern Luzon, and submit to the Senate relevant legislative recommendations indicating full possession and ownership.

Adopted,

  
GRACE POE

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<sup>6</sup> [http://president.gov.ph/gov\\_at\\_work/doe-pushes-oil-hunt-in-benham-rise/](http://president.gov.ph/gov_at_work/doe-pushes-oil-hunt-in-benham-rise/)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/06/09/1332626/doe-assess-resource-potential-benham-rise>