



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

H. No. 8608

BY REPRESENTATIVES MARIÑO, UMALI, LUISTRO, PANALIGAN, TEVES (J.), RECTO AND REYES

**AN ACT
DECLARING THE VERDE ISLAND PASSAGE, LOCATED IN THE PROVINCES OF
BATANGAS, MARINDUQUE, OCCIDENTAL MINDORO, ORIENTAL MINDORO
AND ROMBLON, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE**

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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “Verde Island Passage
2 Ecotourism Act.”

3 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
4 promote a sustainable tourism industry and to implement responsible tourism strategies and
5 programs which shall protect and conserve its natural resources.

6 Towards this end, considering that the Verde Island Passage is recognized as the
7 world’s center of marine biodiversity, the State shall ensure the optimal resource utilization,
8 conservation, protection and promotion of the sustainable coastal and marine development of
9 the areas covered by the Verde Island Passage.

10 **SEC. 3. *Verde Island Passage as Ecotourism Zone.*** – The Verde Island Passage,
11 located in the Provinces of Batangas, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro and

1 Romblon is hereby declared an ecotourism zone. Pursuant thereto, its development and
2 promotion shall be prioritized and supported by the Department of Tourism (DOT), subject to
3 the rules and regulations governing ecotourism zones.

4 **SEC. 4. *Verde Island Passage Ecotourism Council.*** – There is hereby created the
5 Verde Island Passage Ecotourism Council, hereinafter referred to as the Council, which shall
6 be the primary policy-making, planning and coordinating body in the development and
7 administration of the ecotourism zone.

8 The Council shall be composed of the following members:

9 (a) Secretary of the DOT, or a duly authorized representative, as Chairperson;

10 (b) Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), or a
11 duly authorized representative, as Co-Chairperson;

12 (c) Governors of the Provinces of Batangas, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro,
13 Oriental Mindoro and Romblon, who shall elect from among themselves the Vice-Chairperson;

14 (d) Mayors of the municipalities and cities comprising the ecotourism zone;

15 (e) Regional Directors for Region IV-A and Region IV-B of the DOT, DENR,
16 Department of Science and Technology, Department of Health, Department of the Interior and
17 Local Government, Department of Justice, Department of Energy, Department of Public
18 Works and Highways, Department of Finance, Department of Labor and Employment,
19 Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Transportation, Department
20 of Trade and Industry, Department of National Defense, and the Philippine National Police;

21 (f) Chief Operating Officer of the Tourism Promotions Board;

22 (g) Chief Operating Officer of the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone
23 Authority;

24 (h) Regional Directors of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources for
25 Region IV-A and Region IV-B;

1 (i) Regional Directors of the National Economic and Development Authority for
2 Region IV-A and Region IV-B;

3 (j) Executive Director of the Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving;

4 (k) Director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the DENR;

5 (l) A representative from the private sector who is distinguished in a profession or
6 field of interest relevant to marine protection and management; and

7 (m) A representative from an academic institution, with proven track record or related
8 to marine protection and management.

9 The sectoral members of the Council shall be selected by the Council in a fair and
10 transparent manner. They shall each serve a term of three (3) years and may be reappointed for
11 another term.

12 The Council may call on the other government agencies and offices to provide advice
13 and assistance on matters relating to the performance of its functions and the development of
14 ecotourism in said provinces.

15 The provincial governments of Batangas, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental
16 Mindoro and Romblon shall provide a secretariat for the Council, including the funding
17 necessary to cover expenses for the performance of its official functions and activities.

18 **SEC. 5. *Ecotourism Development Plan.*** – Within one (1) year after the approval of
19 this Act, the Council, in consultation with concerned agencies of the government and
20 stakeholders, prepare a tourism development plan that shall include the construction,
21 installation and maintenance of such appropriate infrastructure and facilities to enhance tourism
22 in the area: *Provided*, That said development plan shall ensure the preservation and
23 conservation of the natural beauty and resources of the area: *Provided, further*, That pertinent
24 and existing policies, management plans and efforts to protect and conserve marine biodiversity
25 thereat shall be taken into account in the preparation of the tourism development plan.

1 **SEC. 6. *Role of the DOT.*** – The DOT shall assist the provincial governments of
2 Batangas, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro and Romblon in the
3 implementation of the tourism development plan by providing technical assistance in tourism
4 capacity building. It shall also include the Verde Island Passage in its national and regional
5 promotion programs.

6 **SEC. 7. *Appropriations.*** – The funding for the implementation of this Act shall be
7 included in the respective annual budgets of the provincial governments of Batangas,
8 Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro and Romblon. The DOT may augment
9 such allocation with internally-generated funds.

10 **SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days from the
11 effectivity of this Act, the Council shall, in consultation with the concerned agencies of the
12 government, promulgate the rules and regulations to implement this Act.

13 **SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision of this Act shall be declared
14 unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force
15 and effect.

16 **SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, rules, regulations, presidential decrees, and
17 other issuances inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed
18 or amended accordingly.

19 **SEC. 11. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication
20 in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,