

DENR-DESIGNATED WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS NOW 21

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has designated an important river system in Isabela province as a water quality management area (WQMA), bringing the total number of WQMAs declared since the enactment of the country's clean water law to 21.

DENR Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje recently signed an administrative order designating the Calao-Delinquente-Diadi River System (CDDRS) in Santiago City as a WQMA in a bid to restore its long-term health and protect it from further damage caused by development activities.

"The river system will now be placed under close monitoring by authorities to ensure that its water quality complies with the standards set forth under Republic Act No. 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004," Paje said.

CDDRS is the 21st WQMA declared since the enactment of R.A. 9275 and the 18th under the Aquino administration. Among the 21 WQMAs, nine are located in Luzon, five in Visayas and seven in Mindanao.

Paje has ordered the preparation of a WQMA Action Plan to address water quality problems in CDDRS.

Under the Clean Water Act, the DENR, in coordination with the National Water Resources Board, is mandated to designate certain areas as WQMAs using appropriate physiographic units such as watershed, river basins, or water resources regions to effectively enforce its provisions and improve the water quality of water bodies.

The law seeks to provide a decentralized management system for water quality protection and improvement of river systems.

Likewise, the DENR is tasked to create a governing board for each WQMA, which is chaired by a regional director of the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau (EMB). Its members include the mayor and governor of the concerned local government unit and representatives of relevant national government agencies, duly registered non-government organizations, and business and water utility sectors.

The governing board serves as a planning, monitoring and coordinating body. It also reviews the WQMA action plan prepared by the EMB.

The DENR and the stakeholders address the water quality problems, sources of pollution, and the beneficial use of the receiving water body. They also determine what control measures to institute to effectively achieve water quality objectives or improvements. #