



The Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)—through its Environmental Management Bureau (EMB)—has given recognition to public and private organizations for their environmental initiatives at the 1st Game Changer Communities Award.

"Protecting the environment is always a shared responsibility. We are proud of the winners for their ingenuity in resolving challenging environmental and health concerns that impact their very own communities," DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

The award recognizes individuals or groups whose initiatives are "beyond the usual and not business-as-usual approach on addressing the pressing issues on environmental management."

"A game-changer must showcase innovativeness, sustainability, and leave positive impacts to the environment and the community where they belong," DENR-EMB Director

William Cuñado said in his welcome message during the virtual awarding ceremony on Sept. 1.

Three top winners and seven consolation winners were announced during the virtual event.

Coming in at first place was San Carlos City Environment Management Office with Ecological Solid Waste Management Lifestyle Change Project.

The initiative was used to promote behavioral change among the city's residents towards environmental responsibility through effective communication and education.

The office also established an eco-center that serves as a one-stop-shop disposal and recycling option for San Carlos City residents and businesses.

The eco-center contains a state-of-the-art sanitary landfill for municipal solid waste, centralized material recovery facility, composting facility, and wastewater treatment facility.

The Provincial Government of South Cotabato placed second with its South Cotabato Health Care Waste Treatment Facility, which is used to treat infectious and hazardous waste from healthcare providers. The province is first in the country to have such facility using Filipino technology.

Third place was the city government of Santiago, Isabelita with its Barangay Empowerment and Synergy for Poverty Reduction Network or BESPREN Project, which effectively implemented various national laws related to the environment.

Cuñado said the awardees are "game changers" as they exhibited out-of-the-box solutions to environmental challenges such as air and water pollution, solid waste management, climate change, and environmental education.

"We hope that the example you have set will also lead the way for other communities all over the Philippines to be game-changers in their own simple ways," he added.

Consolation prize winners were the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office of Lebak (Sultan Kudarat); local government of Donsol, Sorsogon; Grachelle Andrea Bello Guevara of I Can Make A Difference, Inc. (Zamboanga City); Camille M. Agotana of Lupon Ng Mga Inidibidwal Na Nangangalaga Ng Kalikasan Inc. (La Union); city government of General Trias, Cavite; Raoul T. Bacalla of DBSN Farms Agriventure Corporation (Leyte); and municipality of Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte.

Launched in April 2021, the DENR-EMB Game Changer Communities Award was opened to Filipino individuals, civil society, women's and youth groups, and local government units that led innovative projects on waste reduction; climate change mitigation; water quality conservation and protection; information, education, communication; and environmental education. ###