

Chapter 20

Maintaining Ecological Integrity, Clean and Healthy Environment

The attainment of sustainable development requires the region to maintain the integrity of its ecology as this provides the physical basis of the region's progress and survival. The region shall therefore ensure the protection of the environment and natural resources even as it continues to pursue economic progress for its constituents. In this way, a healthier and liveable environment and superior quality of life for the people are ensured.

Assessment and Challenges

The maintenance of ecological integrity requires the region to: conserve, protect, and rehabilitate its natural resources; improve the environmental quality; and build up the adaptive capacity and resilience of communities to disasters. During the period 2010-2016, Central Visayas implemented various programs and projects that contributed to the maintenance of the region's ecological integrity.

Through the National Greening Program (NGP), the region rehabilitated a total of 85,067.14 hectares (ha.) of open and denuded forest land areas, exceeding its target of 81,833 ha. by 3.95 percent. The program attained 92 percent survival rate for the planted trees, and generated more than 250,000 jobs for its intended beneficiaries. The region also sustained the management and protection of its 30,443 ha. of forest land.

In the management of terrestrial and marine protected areas, Central Visayas effectively and equitably managed a total of 55,842 hectares of terrestrial protected areas and 1,504.66 hectares

of marine protected areas. The region likewise undertook measures to rejuvenate 3,031 hectares of degraded coral reefs within the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS). Protection measures such as re-stocking, removal of underwater debris, and fixing of damaged settlement materials were conducted in some identified degraded and severely damaged coral reef areas.

In the case of public agricultural A&D (alienable and disposable) lands, a total of 10,871 beneficiaries were provided with secured land tenure, exceeding by 8.71 percent the 10,000 beneficiaries targetted for 2015. Another 2,611 beneficiaries were granted secured land tenure in residential lands that were zoned as residential areas in 2015.

Based on the standard Air Quality Indices set forth in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Clean Air Act (Republic Act No. 8749), the air quality in Region 7 is in "fair" condition. In addition, there had been no serious threat for people suffering from respiratory illnesses.

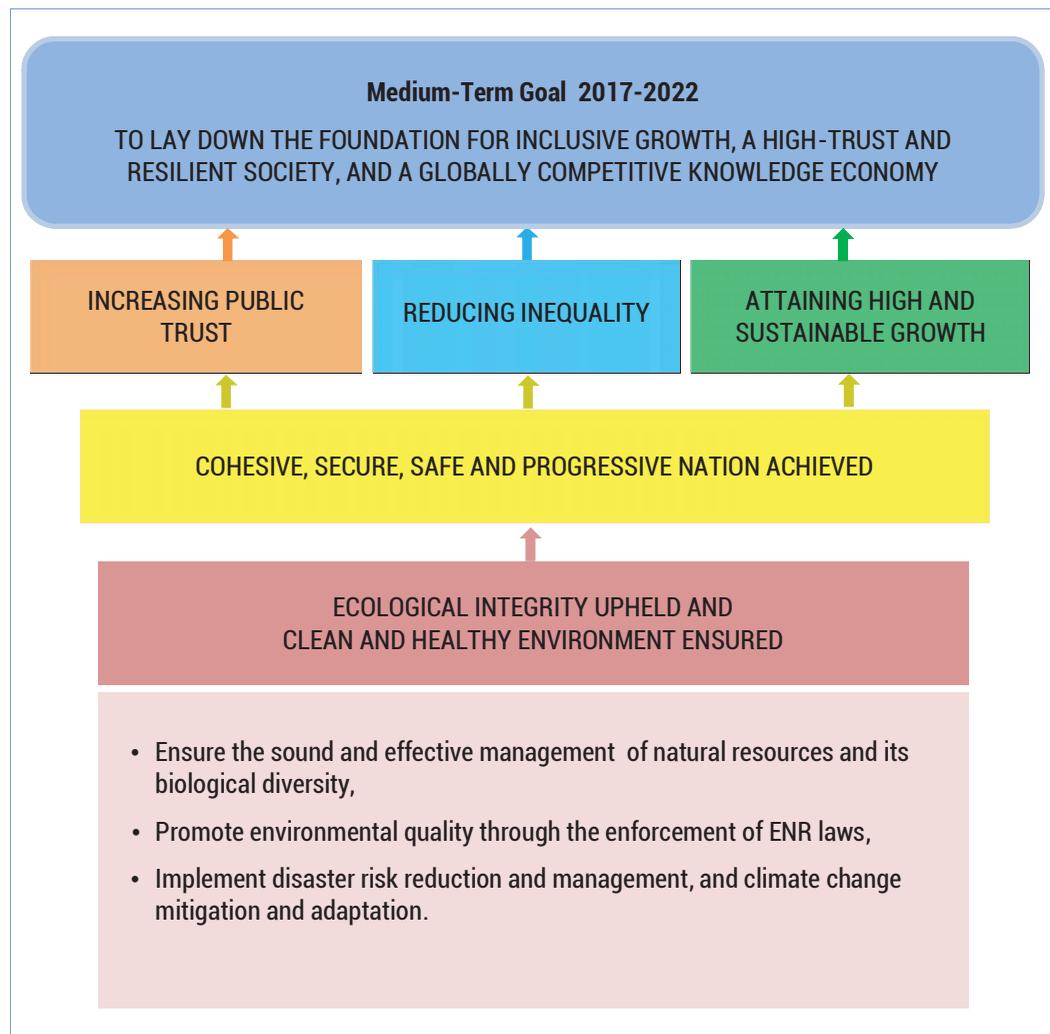
Notwithstanding the gains in maintaining ecological integrity, the region continues to face

several environmental challenges. Among these are the continued illegal cutting of trees and timber harvesting which diminished the gains of NGP, the growing scarcity of water particularly in highly urbanized areas such as Metro Cebu due to unmanaged urbanization and the adverse impact of climate change, deteriorating water quality due to water pollution, the encroachment of settlements in the region's watersheds and protected areas, and low productivity in fisheries due to over fishing. Further efforts are needed to ensure the sustainable management of the region's environment and natural resources.

Strategic Framework

Ensuring ecological integrity, and a clean and healthy environment is an essential foundation supporting the three main pillars of the RDP: increasing public trust in government, reducing inequality, and attaining high and sustaining economic growth. Policies and designs that preserve environmental functions and protect the region's natural resources will thus be promoted. The region will also develop the capability of communities on disaster risk reduction and management.

Figure 20.1 Strategic Framework to Ensure Ecological Integrity, Clean and Healthy Environment, 2017-2022



Strategies

Central Visayas shall protect the integrity of the environment and natural resources, and develop the capability of communities on disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) through the following strategies:

Ensure the sound and effective management of natural resources, including land and forest resources, water and coastal resources, mineral resources and its biological diversity.

In terms of land resource management, the following shall be pursued during the plan period: formulation, approval and implementation of Protected Area Management Plans; implementation of watershed management, soil conservation and agro-forestry; promotion of sustainable agriculture (e.g. Sloping Agricultural Land Technology); and implementation of the Land Survey and Titling Program.

In the area of forest resource management, the region shall pursue the following: establishment of commercial tree plantations and agro-forestry community parks; institutionalization and incorporation of the Forest Land Use Plan in the Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUPs) of LGUs; enhancement of the Community-based Forest Management, Protected Area Community-Based Resource Management Agreement (PACBRMA), and Special Agreement on Protected Areas (SAPA); implementation of reforestation using indigenous species; and strengthening of the multi-sectoral “Bantay Kalasangan” task groups.

The management of the region’s water resources shall be enhanced through the institutionalization of the Integrated Water Resources Management Plans by the LGUs, and the strengthening of their institutional capacity for water resource management. The region shall also undertake the stabilization/rehabilitation of river banks and other inland waters through greenbelts or the planting of ornamental plants and deep-rooted trees.

The region shall advocate for the Ridge-to-Reef approach to the management of the region’s watersheds in order to focus the various interventions on reducing hillside deforestation, pollution and soil erosion through integrated approaches which address natural and man-made causes of land and water quality degradation.

The region shall effectively manage its rich coastal resources through the strict enforcement of coastal laws, rules and regulations under the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998. The region shall also facilitate the updating and integration of the Coastal Resource Management Plan and zoning ordinances in the CLUPs of LGUs. The region shall pursue the establishment of more marine and fish sanctuaries to supplement existing ones. It shall also ensure the protection of the Danajon Double Barrier Reef and the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape.

In maintaining its biological diversity, the region shall work for the development of the biodiversity database and monitoring system. The database shall provide the bases for the enhanced implementation of biodiversity conservation. The region shall also institutionalize the involvement of LGUs and the local communities in biodiversity management. An integral part of the promotion of biological diversity is the protection of the region’s wildlife through the strict enforcement of the existing laws on wildlife.

Promote environmental quality through the enforcement of ENR Laws. The region, through the environmental government agencies and in partnership with various stakeholders, will pursue the implementation of policies prescribed by the Solid Waste Management Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and other legislations enacted to protect the region’s environment and natural resources (ENR).

Given the prevalence of problems related to solid waste particularly in the urban centers, the region will ensure the full implementation of the Solid

Waste Management Act (Republic Act No. 9003). Technical assistance will be provided to LGUs in the establishment of clustered sanitary landfill and materials recovery facilities.

Technical assistance will also be provided to facilitate compliance by LGUs of the preparation of the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). In line with this, the region will lobby for the decentralization of the approval process of the SWMPs to facilitate compliance by the LGUs.

With the volume of wastes generated in the urban centers, the region will explore the environmental viability of putting up waste-to-energy facilities as well as the adoption of modern incineration technologies.

Improving the quality of life also requires the improvement of the region's air and water quality. Strict monitoring of air and water quality will be facilitated with the institutionalization of air and water quality monitoring in all provinces and cities. Greenhouse gas emissions of power plants, vehicles and factories particularly in the urban areas will also be monitored as a means of mitigating climate change.

Implement disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The region will vigorously pursue the policies enunciated in the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (Republic Act No. 10121) and the Climate Change Act of 2009 (Republic Act No. 9729). In line with this, the region will ensure that disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) are mainstreamed in the physical, land use, and sectoral development plans of the LGUs.

Technical assistance will be provided to LGUs in the utilization of hazard maps and the conduct of risks and vulnerability assessments to improve DRR/CCA planning at the local level. Related to this, technical assistance will also be provided to LGUs in accessing and utilizing climate finance and DRR-related funds.

The regional and local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils (DRRMCs) will be strengthened by taking into consideration the paradigm shift in DRRM towards disaster prevention. The DRRMCs will therefore be capacitated in terms of undertaking long-term planning and investments to reduce the underlying risk factors in order to reduce the impact of natural and human-induced hazards. Capacity-building will give emphasis on reducing disaster risks through investments in poverty-reduction, risk-sensitive land use planning, and sustainable development.

In pursuing DRR/CCA, the region will also pursue the Ecosystem-based DRR (Eco-DRR) and Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EBA) in combination with or addition to the classical DRR/CCA interventions. The Eco-DRR/EBA are interventions that combine the natural resources management approaches, or the sustainable management of the ecosystems, with DRR and CCA.

Legislative Agenda

The region will support the legislative agenda outlined in Table 20.1, most of which are identified in the PDP 2017-2022, which are needed to strengthen the effectiveness of the regional strategies.

Table 20.1 Legislative Agenda to Ensure Ecological Integrity, Clean and Healthy Environment, 2017-2022

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA	RATIONALE
Protection of the integrity of the environment	
Amendment of Water Code	The proposed amendment shall include providing a legal framework for the institutionalization and operationalization of Integrated Water Resources Management to respond to current trends and challenges such as climate variability affecting water supply and availability, as well as address institutional gaps and weaknesses.
National Land Use Act	The proposed Act shall address the urgency to provide rationalized land use planning in the country, consolidate national laws on land uses, and address long-standing land use conflicts.
Establishment of Biodiversity Database and Monitoring System	The database shall provide the bases for the enhanced implementation of biodiversity conservation. The involvement of the LGUs and the local communities shall be institutionalized in biodiversity management and monitoring.
Review of Solid Waste Management Law	The review shall include the decentralization of the approval process of solid waste management plans (SWMPs) to the DENR regional offices.
Disaster risk reduction and management and climate change mitigation and adaptation	
Review of the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (Republic Act No. 10121)	The review of the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act shall consider the creation of an Independent DRRM Agency or Authority to serve as the primary government institution responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and implementing a comprehensive DRRM program. Alternative and modern methods or technologies to manage/dispose of wastes shall also be explored.