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The past has seen a rapid rise in an ever-burgeoning drive for economic progress in almost all sectors of Philippine society. This is key to the unrelenting and unsustainable utilization of our coastal resources, particularly mangroves. These, in concert with the intensified exploitation of the different marine habitats, plus the impacts of the little understood climate variability, have severely depleted our once abundant coastal store. Hence, the last two decades have brought a mix of scientific and social research studies and initiatives aimed at reversing the degradation trend. The *1st State of the Mangroves Summit: Northwestern Luzon* is a much-needed positive response to this urgent call.

The summit is an enthusiastic celebration of ideas from many mangrove practitioners, especially ideas engendered by the impacts of the country's current economic growth and climate change, made more dramatic with the loss of lives and damage to property wrought by the Super-Typhoon Yolanda in November 2013. It is also a unique tribute to the many participants who provided many current insights on mangrove status, mapping, climate change vulnerability assessment and blue carbon. The summit culminated with the formulation of an action plan that would direct immediate and long term actions towards effectiveness and prudence, learning from the country's vast experiences.

Although the summit represents only a small sample of the country's pool of mangrove-related experts and practitioners, it amply illustrates the importance of the ecosystem and the field of social-ecological science to humankind and the way in which the field is evolving.

I think that the organizers can be confident that there will be many readers of these summit proceedings who will have gained a broader perspective on the mangroves as we embark on the set of actions for their conservation and management.

Miguel D. Fortes, PhD
Professor of Marine Science (ret)
Marine Science Institute, College of Science
University of the Philippines, Diliman, QC 1101





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The Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) values the biological diversity in mangrove ecosystems and the role it plays in provisioning for food, fuel, medicine and other materials, in regulating climate and other ecological services such as providing nursery and feeding grounds to a wide variety of species, coastal protection and shoreline stabilization. Various mangrove species and its associates primarily support various juveniles of species that make up a large part of our coastal ecosystems. With thousands of kilometers of coastline, our country is indeed fortunate to possess large expanses of mangroves that showcase its rich biodiversity.

Unfortunately, the past decades show the rapid degradation of this natural resource brought about by natural and human perturbations. The pressures that mangroves received from the poor development of our coastlines and overexploitation (mangrove conversion to other uses) have exacted a heavy toll on these resources. Management efforts have been underway to address to these pressures. But there is a need for further consolidation and integration of data to enhance management efforts.

The BMB shares in the objectives and efforts of the *1st State of the Mangrove Summit: Northwestern Luzon* consistent with its mandate to conserve the biological diversity of the country. We find that the streamlining of data, networking and innovations through research provide us with better direction for the conservation and rehabilitation of our mangrove areas. The summit provides us with an opportunity to level off where we are in terms of our country's mangrove resources and share learning and ideas particularly on northwestern Luzon. It also encourages us to work together and use technological innovations for mangrove conservation and management.

Let us use the summit proceedings and the knowledge they generate to recall and develop our ideas for the enhancement of our mangrove resources. Let this be the start of a more diverse and participative consolidation effort that will eventually translate into feasible actions for mangrove management.

Theresa Mundita S. Lim
Director
Biodiversity Management Bureau
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Quezon Avenue, Diliman, QC 1101





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ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

We are happy to have played host to a gathering of concerned and proactive experts and to have provided a venue for participants to discuss the state of an important natural resource. Please be assured that you have the support of the Ateneo de Manila University's Loyola Schools in the creation and implementation of plans to enhance the management of our mangroves in northwest Luzon.

I would like to thank all the speakers who shared their data and insights during the summit. I would also like to thank the Environmental Science Department for bringing together a group to really focus on this topic, which, if managed correctly, addresses many problems we face in this country—storm surges and flooding, pollution, and erosion, among others.

I hope that the summit proved to be informative, enlightening, and productive. It is also my hope that through sharing knowledge and ideas, everyone has been inspired to continually collaborate with each other for the protection and flourishing of the Philippines' mangroves.

John Paul C. Vergara, PhD
Vice President for the Loyola Schools
Ateneo de Manila University





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For an archipelagic country like the Philippines, mangroves are one of the most important ecosystems but sadly the least valued. The loss of mangroves means loss of nurseries for fishes and other aquatic organisms, which negatively affects the food supply of populations largely dependent on seafood. The global climate change phenomenon and climate change-related disasters highlighted another significant function mangroves play – protection mechanism for thousands of Filipinos living in coastal communities.

Challenged by global environmental changes, the Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE) now gives priority to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and management (CCA-DRRM) issues by including it in FPE's 10-year strategic plan. This move is grounded on the insurmountable damage brought by super typhoon Yolanda never experienced before.

The Foundation has been supporting biodiversity conservation initiatives for local community development in the last 23 years, but now sees with greater reason the importance of conservation in building resilient communities. The 1st State of the Mangrove Summit: Northwestern Luzon timely supports FPE's vision of advancing a climate-proof biodiversity conservation and sustainable development agenda.

In addition, most research studies on mangroves in the Philippines are focused in the Visayas region, thus, this event which brought together local government units, regional representatives of the DENR, nongovernment organizations and experts from the academe, provided additional and up-to-date knowledge on the state of mangroves in northwestern Luzon, where primary and secondary data are limited or may be inaccessible.

FPE also recognizes the value of knowledge sharing and partnership building in resolving conservation and development challenges. FPE commends Ateneo de Manila University for organizing the Summit and facilitating the production of this publication that contains detailed profiles, status of mangroves in various provinces in northwestern Luzon, and related technical studies. This publication will provide FPE concrete basis in laying interventions in both of its competitive and proactive grant programs, including special projects.

It is our hope that a similar summit be conducted to focus on other equally-important areas and the result of such initiatives be shared to all possible stakeholders. This proceedings will definitely guide policymakers, and government and non-government organizations alike in advancing mangrove conservation in the country.

Godofredo T. Villapando Jr
Executive Director
Foundation for the Philippine Environment

