

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 2371

INTRODUCED BY HONORABLE CHERYL P. DELOSO-MONTALLA

**AN ACT
DECLARING MT. TAPULAO IN ZAMBALES AS AN ECOTOURISM ZONE AND
FOREST RESERVE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Mount Tapulao which is located in the Municipality of Palauig in the Province of Zambales is the tallest mountain in the Zambales mountain range. Also known as the "High Peak" and "Poor Man's Mt. Pulag," Mount Tapulao is host to a variety of ecosystems ranging from grassland to primary and secondary dipterocarp forests to mossy montane forest and pine forest. In addition to this are the scenic beauties of several waterfalls and a whole lot of endemic plant and animal species that abound this mountain.

With an elevation of 6,683 feet and a rolling and rocky terrain leading to its apex, Mount Tapulao is one of the most attractive places for local and foreign trekkers and mountaineers. At the summit, one can enjoy the view of the Zambales mountain range on the east, the Lingayen Gulf on the north, the Zambales lowlands on the west and the pristine South China Sea on the south.

This rare elegance of Mount Tapulao, however, has been slowly ruined by small scale mining, illegal logging and the careless attitude of local inhabitants and tourists of improperly disposing their garbage anywhere. Several initiatives have been made by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to protect and preserve the remaining forest cover and the various flora and fauna of Mount Tapulao. But these initiatives are temporary solutions to a gamut of problems that pose a threat to the mountain along with its rare plant and animal species.

This bill which was approved on 3rd Reading by the 16th and 17th Congresses is being refilled in order to provide long term protection to the natural beauty of Mount Tapulao while allowing both local and foreign tourists not only to appreciate what Mount Tapulao can offer but also to make them aware of the interrelationships of plant and animal species in the area that collectively makes Mount Tapulao a beauty to behold among the mountain peaks of the world.

Immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


CHERYL P. DELOSO MONTALLA
Representative
2nd District, Zambales

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

SECTION 1. Declaration of Policy. - It is hereby declared the policy of the state to promote a sustainable ecotourism industry to attract local and foreign tourists while making them aware of the urgent need to preserve the blessings of nature.

SECTION 2. Mt. Tapulao Ecotourism Zone and Forest Reserve. - Mount Tapulao is hereby declared an ecotourism zone and the area of 5,000 hectares of the said mountain is hereby declared as a forest reserve. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall, within 90 days after the approval of this Act, make an inventory of the existing flora and fauna in Mt. Tapulao that shall serve as the basis for a master plan that will be developed for the purpose of this Act.

SECTION 3. Mt. Tapulao Ecotourism Governing Board. - For the purpose of Section 2 of this Act, an ecotourism governing board, to be known as the Mt. Tapulao Ecotourism Governing Board, is hereby created. The board shall be composed of the Governor of Zambales who shall act as Chairman, the Representative of the Second District of Zambales who shall act as co-chair, the Secretaries of the Department of Tourism and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources or their duly authorized representatives, a member of a non-government organization whose advocacy is environmental preservation, a member of the academe, a representative of the business sector, a representative of the private sector and the local chief executives of municipality where Mt. Tapulao is situated. The governing board shall prepare the rules and regulations necessary for the full implementation by the concerned local government units of the provisions of this Act and shall, as the need arises, amend, modify or revise such rules and regulations to meet the needs of changing times.

SECTION 4. Mt. Tapulao Ecotourism Master Plan. - The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Tourism (DOT) shall, within one hundred twenty (120) days from approval of this Act, develop a master plan to be approved by the President of the Republic of the Philippines upon the recommendation of the governing board.

SECTION 5. Appropriation. - The Secretary of the DOT shall include in the Department's program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act and/or the internally-generated fund of the Department.

SECTION 6. Repealing Clause. - All laws, rules, regulations, executive orders, presidential decrees or any other issuance contrary to or inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 7. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part of this Act may be declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions which are not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 8. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette*.

Approved,