

Project Update: February 2007

ESTABLISHMENT OF A MARINE RESERVE IN ST. PAUL BAY PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, PALAWAN, PHILIPPINES

City Ordinance No. 325 establishing the St. Paul Bay Marine Reserve in Barangays Cabayugan, Marufinas and New Panggangan was issued on November 29, 2006. Saguda Palawan was unable to complete the project within the three-month extension requested, which would have been September 2006, due to delays in the conduct of a public hearing in the locality. The Chairman of the Committee on Environment of the City Council finally decided to hold one public hearing, instead of two, in a location accessible to all concerned. The public hearing was finally conducted in September 15, 2006.

Section 12 of City Ordinance No. 325 provides that prior to its effectivity; a) guidelines and regulations for the Marine Reserve be formulated and approved by the City Council, b) boundary markings and buoys be set up in the no-take zones. Saguda Palawan attempted to complete the above requirements through collaboration with project partners. The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park & World Heritage Site has agreed to include the formulation of marine reserve guidelines in their future planning workshops. The Rotary Club of Puerto Princesa has expressed willingness to donate marker buoys. However, there are no definite schedules for these activities to date and Saguda Palawan does not have the wherewithal to initiate these activities.

Saguda Palawan has submitted a proposal to the UNDP Small Grants Program for the completion of the above activities, among others, as funds from Rufford Small Grants Project has already been expended for the activities approved by it. It is expected that activities relating to the marine reserve will be resumed after the conduct of the national elections, which is scheduled on May 11, 2007. In order to avoid having these conservation activities tainted by partisan politics, Saguda Palawan will continue its marine reserve activities in June 2007.

The activities that were conducted to achieve the objectives of the project have served as an opportunity for local residents to express their aspirations for their localities. The training on scientific assessment was an empowering activity, helping residents to realize that it can be within their powers to determine the condition and the future of their resources. Most importantly, the establishment of the marine reserve engaged various agencies, organizations and communities in common planning efforts towards a mutual goal. This project has not only enabled Saguda Palawan towards the establishment of a marine reserve through inter-institutional collaboration, it has also been a unifying force in the Barangays of Cabayugan, Marufinas and New Panggangan.

The attached City Ordinance establishing the St. Paul Bay Marine Reserve, which is the objective of this project, is submitted in compliance with the deliverable of Saguda Palawan to the Rufford Small Grants Project. The St. Paul Bay has been established as a marine reserve through a participatory process, giving local communities the legal mandate to manage their own resources.