



Press Release of Global Nature Fund for World Wetlands Day on 2nd February 2014

Intensive fish farming threatens Philippine crater lake - Lake Sampaloc is “Threatened Lake of the Year 2014”

The environmental foundation Global Nature Fund (GNF) proclaims the Philippine’s Lake Sampaloc and the six other crater lakes in San Pablo City, Province Laguna, as the “Threatened Lake of the Year 2014”. In commemoration of World Wetlands Day, the GNF draws attention to the advancing destruction of the crater lakes. Together, GNF and the local Living Lakes partner organisation, Friends of the Seven Lakes Foundation (FSLF), demand for sustainable measures to protect Lake Sampaloc and to improve its water quality.

Radolfzell/San Pablo City, 30th January 2014: As recently as thirty years ago, the Seven Crater Lakes of San Pablo City were used for recreational activities by the local people. But years of neglect led to the deterioration of these beautiful lakes. In the 1990s, illegal constructions sprouted along the lakeshore and fish cages mushroomed on the lake covering as much as 70 % of the surface area during some periods. The lake is extremely threatened by human influences such as the proliferation of floating fish cages and pollution from illegal lake dwellers occupying the shorelines.

In spite of the fact that some illegal constructions along the lake have been removed by the authorities, satellite images of 2012 show that fish cages still occupy more than 40 % compared to the allowable 10 % of the surface area. A supposed moratorium set forth by the agency in-charge for the renovation and establishment of existing fish cages has not been enforced due to lack of manpower and funds. So the number of illegal fish cages is increasing again. “The new cages often have huts the size of a small house floating above them, serving as storage for fish feeds and living quarters for the caretakers”, Bobby Azores, Chairman of the Friends of the Seven Lakes Foundation explains. “The excessively growing number of fish cages, overfeeding and crowding fish cages result in eutrophication exacerbating the degradation of the lakes to the point of killing aquatic life. This is evidenced by occasional fish kills and the massive growth of green algae as a result of the high pollution levels of the lake. Fresh water bodies like ponds and lakes, specially a small lake like Lake Sampaloc are considered to be “stagnant water” and have very little ability to cleanse itself, unlike oceans or seas.”

Support and Solutions

Since its foundation in the year 2000, the Friends of the Seven Lakes Foundation, along with other environmental organisations, is striving to make Lake Sampaloc a pilot showcase of lake rehabilitation. Thankfully, the local City Government under the new City Mayor, Honorable Loreto Amben Amante, has taken initiatives in supporting the conservation, protection and



rehabilitation efforts of the seven crater lakes. Most recently, the City Mayor formed a committee for the creation of a sustainable Tourism Master Plan aiming at transforming San Pablo City into a premier eco-tourist destination. The proposed Tourism Master Plan aims to 'make tourism a vital instrument of sustainable development, particularly in the aspects of environment and natural resources conservation and protection, socio-economic development, and preservation of important historical landmark and cultural heritage in San Pablo City'. Among others, it will include the relocation of informal lake dwellers, the rearrangement of floating fish cages following an approved zoning plan, and the provision of alternative tourism-based livelihood opportunities.

FSLF President, Fernando Fabros, says, "Our local government is taking the lead in addressing the problems of the seven crater lakes. We cannot expect much support from the national government at this time since it has had to direct its efforts and financial resources to the rehabilitation of badly-hit areas affected by the recent Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) that ravaged many cities and towns in the provinces south of Manila".

Background information

The Friends of the Seven Lakes Foundation is an environmentalist advocacy NGO that promotes conservation, protection and rehabilitation of the seven crater lakes of San Pablo City. San Pablo is a city in the province of Laguna, only 70 kilometres from Metro Manila. It is most famous for its seven lakes (Lake Sampaloc, Lake Bunot, Lake Mojicap, Lake Pandin, Lake Palakpakin, Lake Yambo and Lake Kalibato).

In order to contribute to solving the urgent problems facing the world's wetlands and lakes, Global Nature Fund annually announces a "Threatened Lake of the Year" on 2nd February, the World Wetlands Day. The Seven Crater Lakes of San Pablo City, including Lake Sampaloc, have been a member of the International Living Lakes Network, which is coordinated by the Global Nature Fund, since 2007.

For more information and an interview with Mr Bobby Azores (Chairman of Friends of the Seven Lakes Foundation) can be found at: www.globalnature.org/ThreatenedLake2014

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