

Abstract

SESSION 2:

Accelerating Actions for Sustainable Development and Climate Change

WORKSHOP 2.1:

Scaling up ICM: Innovations and Impacts at Local, National and Regional Levels

Scaling and Amplifying MPAs for the Effective Conservation of the “Center of Center of Marine Biodiversity”, The Verde Island Passage

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The Philippines is located in the Coral Triangle wherein the Verde Island Passage (VIP) has been identified as the center of center of marine shorefish biodiversity. Fish species per unit area here is unparalleled anywhere else on Earth. In 2006, Executive Order 578 was issued, “establishing the national policy on biological diversity, prescribing its implementation throughout the country, particularly in the Sulu Sulawesi Marine Ecosystem and the Verde Island Passage Marine Corridor.” Recent expeditions to the VIP discovered several new species and records new to science.

The primary government response to protect this important biodiversity from, among others, overfishing and illegal fishing, pollution, habitat conversion, and climate change has been the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs). However, the spatial coverage of more than 70 locally managed MPAs is still ineffective in improving habitats to enhance biodiversity and fisheries. Effective MPA management is also hindered by inadequate bio-geographic representation and connectivity; insufficient and unpredictable funding levels for the long-term sustainability of MPAs and MPA Networks; and weak institutional framework for the identification, establishment, and management of a national MPA system.

These barriers are currently being addressed through an integrated approach aimed at strengthening the conservation, protection, and management of MPAs to conserve marine key biodiversity areas (MKBAs) in the Philippines. This will be achieved through partnerships with national government agencies, national and local conservation organizations, private sector, academe, local government units, and the communities. The punctuated financial and technical resources from the Seascapes Program of Conservation International for VIP provided the impetus for the sustained efforts in marine conservation in the area. This was key to the development of the MKBA Project in the VIP that is now building the MPA network at the corridor level, apart from formulating sustainability mechanisms and amplifying the results towards a national MPA system.



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About Augustus Rex F. Montebon:

Augustus Rex Montebon is currently the Program Manager of the Coastal, Marine, and Fisheries Program of Conservation International Philippines Foundation, Incorporated (CIPFI). Under which, he is presently handling the project 'Strengthening the MPAs to Conserve Marine Key Biodiversity Areas' in the Verde Island Passage. He previously managed CIPFI's biodiversity conservation of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seascape and proceeded to coordinate and manage the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program of this large marine ecoregion through a GEF-UNDP project. He earned his doctorate degree at the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute where he did his dissertation on coral reef symbiosis.