



September 2006 Ozone Month Celebration

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

In the 1980's scientists discovered that certain man-made chemicals cause the destruction of the ozone layer in the atmosphere that protects us from the harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Governments were alarmed when the ozone hole in the Antarctic region as big as the North American continent became public knowledge. This is because ozone depletion allows the entry of harmful UV-B that cause the following:

- On humans and animals, UV –B causes skin cancer, eye cataracts that can lead to blindness, and weakens the immune system.
- On land, UV-B inhibits the growth of crops and trees. It also causes the degradation of building materials like rubber, plastic, etc.
- On water, UV-B damages phytoplanktons, the producers of the marine ecosystem, thereby disrupting the food chain. Fish eggs and crustaceans are also highly sensitive to UV-B.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER

September 16 is the **International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer**, commemorating the date in 1987 when the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was signed.

The DENR-EMB Philippine Ozone Desk (POD) leads the annual celebration of Ozone Day. This year, POD is planning to focus on the following issues:

- Promotion of the protection of the ozone layer for the sake of water organisms which also involve humans in the end of the food chain; and
- Intensive information, education and communication (IEC) campaign in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

I. **ADVOCATING THE PRESERVATION OF THE MARINE ECOSYSTEM THROUGH THE PROTECTION OF THE OZONE LAYER**

Recent studies reveal that the Philippines is the center of marine biodiversity and that the most diverse marine ecosystem can be found in central Philippines. However, 70% of the country's coral reefs have already been destroyed due to direct and indirect contribution of humans in the degradation of the Earth's coral reefs.

The direct way of destroying coral reefs is physically killing them by blowing them up with explosives or using cyanide to catch fish. The indirect way is destroying their environment by higher ocean temperature caused by global warming and increased exposure to ultraviolet radiation brought about by the depletion of the ozone layer.

The most obvious evidence that a coral is unwell is coral bleaching or the whitening of corals brought about by the death or disappearance of algae inside the coral. This is caused by various anthropogenic and natural changes in the reef environment including sea temperature and solar irradiance which could cause the destruction of major reef tracts and the extinction of many coral species.

A big percentage of the Philippines' 86 million population depend on the fishing industry for consumption and business. There have been numerous attempts by government and non-government organizations to promote the preservation of our marine ecosystem by advising fishermen to discontinue destructive fishing practices. However, few attempts have been made to advocate the protection of water organisms by focusing on the indirect causes of their destruction, such as ozone layer depletion.

One subject related to coral bleaching that is of heavy research today is the fact that reefs which are victims of bleaching are affected in patches, suggesting the contribution of UV-B radiation in the death or disappearance of algae in corals. Another evidence proving that global warming is not the sole cause of coral bleaching was the incidence in 1998 when the global temperature of sea surface was among the highest. Mass coral bleaching did not occur in Tahiti that year despite the heat because it was also the cloudiest on record, suggesting the effects of sunlight in corals.

METHODOLOGY

A. FORUM ON THE PRESERVATION OF THE PHILIPPINE CORAL REEFS.

On the first week of September 2006, POD will conduct a forum on the preservation of the marine ecosystem through the protection of the ozone layer. This activity aims to inform the public on the negative effects of ultraviolet radiation on water organisms and their environment.

POD is planning to co-organize this event with one or more non-government organization/s. Said agency will be in-charge of the invitation of the audience.

POD will invite representatives from the academe and NGOs to provide a lecture-discussion in this forum on the present condition of the Philippines' coral reefs and marine flora and fauna and how ultraviolet radiation affects them. The target participants of the activity are the media and government and non-government stakeholders of environment protection.

B. COASTAL PARADE AND DIVING EVENT

To cap the celebration, a parade along the coast of Anilao, Batangas, a premiere dive site in the Philippines, will be held in coordination with the LGU. The parade will be ended by a dive by the different divers frequenting the area manifesting their support and call for the preservation of the coral reefs through the protection of the ozone layer. NAECTAF divers will also lead this activity.

II. INTENSIVE IEC FOR ARMM

On a recent meeting with the DENR officials of the ARMM (August 1, 2006) revealed that the government officials and the general public of the said region are in need of intensive IEC campaign to ensure the phase-out of ODS consumption in their areas of jurisdiction.

Because of the difficulty in reaching the ARMM audience, the population in the region are behind in the information of ODS phase-out laws and programs of the Philippine government. This year's Ozone Month celebration will thus also give priority to the ARMM.

METHODOLOGY

The following activities will be co-organized by the DENR ARMM office in Cotabato City.

A. ORIENTATION ON OZONE LAYER DEPLETION, THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL AND THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT LAWS AND PROGRAMS TO PHASE-OUT OZONE-DEPLETING SUBSTANCES

On September 15, POD and DENR ARMM will conduct an one-day orientation on the above-mentioned topics targeting the officials of ARMM, specifically the government stakeholders involved in the implementation of the National ODS Phase-out Program:

1. Regional Governor's Office
2. Cabinet Secretaries and officials of ARMM
3. Local Media

B. EXHIBIT AND LECTURE DISCUSSION ON OZONE LAYER PROTECTION IN AN ARMM STATE UNIVERSITY

The DENR ARMM will coordinate with a state university in ARMM where a half-day lecture and an exhibit on ozone layer protection will be conducted. The proposed date of the lecture for college students is September 18 and the proposed date of exhibit is from September 18 to 22, 2006.

Approved/Disapproved:

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