

Sound Practice No.6

SAVE THE MARIKINA RIVER¹

Overview

Save the Marikina River Project was conceptualized and implemented to revive by rehabilitation the Marikina River and its environs and develop it as the city's biggest recreational and sports area.

Marikina River is the town's main waterway connected to Pasig River. Some four decades ago, the river was all filth and stench owing to uncontrolled encroachment and indiscriminate disposal of both domestic and industrial waste and garbage in the easement of the river causing the deterioration of its water quality. Since then, the river merely served as a dumping area and no one ever dared to go near it (when during its heyday, it was the picnic ground of the townfolks and *fiestas* were even held there).



It was during the incumbency of former Mayor Bayani Fernando (1992-2001) that saving the Marikina River came to be implemented as it was stipulated in his *Program of Government*. Work started in the early part of 1993 that by the end of the same year, the constituents began to witness some changes along the

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riverbanks, most significant of which was the presence of a renovated boat.

Significant Background Information

A proposal made sometime in 1987 by the then Ministry of Public Works and Highways revealed the need for banks improvement in order to facilitate better water discharge from the river in order to reduce flooding and to secure the inundation area.

In planning the river rehabilitation, then Mayor Fernando has considered largely the study made under this MPWH proposal. By and large, the idea of the Mayor was both to revive, as well as to protect and preserve, the river environs, especially from the harmful effects of flooding, and reconvert it into its former grandeur.

Thus, the plan consisted of : (1) build access roads to allow men and equipment to go near the river and undertake the necessary cleaning and clearing operations; (2) clearing the banks both of its informal settlers and other encroachments; (3) revive the quality of riverwater by demanding from the industries, especially those alongside the river, to set up and maintain water treatment facilities; (4) construction of sports facilities, historical and cultural structures; and (5) enhance the aesthetic appeal of the river environment by planting a variety of flora.

The development policies PD 1151 and PD 1152, which espouse the following, were adopted:

- ***Create, develop, maintain and improve conditions under which man and nature can thrive in productive and harmony with each other.***
- ***Fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations of Filipinos, and ensure the attainment of environmental quality conducive to life of dignity and well-being.***

The proponent himself, former Mayor Fernando, has even promoted a program's principle, as follows: *The people have to touch and smell the water. It is hoped that this experience and exposure will galvanize them to muster enough political pressure for the government and the rest to act and conserve the river.*

It was the intention of the former mayor to showcase the river rehabilitation not simply as one of those government programs on environmental preservation, but to communicate to his constituents that the local government is seriously working on such a project and it is its business to entice them to clean up, follow what the laws say about sanitation, encroachment, and others, be a good neighbor, and love nature.

In the past, attempts have failed in removing trash from the river and in flushing-out squatters along the banks. Many thought that it would take a miracle to restore the lost glory of the Marikina River. In fact, when then Mayor Fernando has broached the idea of developing the area into a riverpark (long before he became the local chief executive), no one believed. Thus, when he was elected mayor of the town, it did not take him a year to show to his constituent that it was possible to save the river.

SOME OTHER DETAILS



- The *Save the Marikina River* can be categorized as a **technical and land-use management** program.
- It was and it remains to be a local government program. At the inception of the project, some P8 million budget has been provided, spread over a three-year period. The development obtained in the river has generated enthusiasm from socio-civic groups

and other non-government organizations, without saying also that the cooperative spirit of the entire citizenry of Marikina has come to life once again. The local government has continuously received varied forms of assistance, including those coming from the national government like Philippine Tourism Authority, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and a few senators' Countryside Development Fund (CDF).

- It was considered in the planning of the rehabilitation project that it will be the entire city that should benefit from it.
- The river covers an area of around 220 has. and measures about 11 kms. in length. Its depth measures 3



meters and rises to 12 up to 15 meters during heavy downpour.



- The Marikina River takes pride in its major features, which have been parts of its development for the past 11 years, as follows: 11 km jogging/biking lane, skating rink (reportedly the biggest in the country), tree planting pockets, picnic and play grounds, sports amenities like baseball field and

basketball court, a Youth Camp, a Chinese Pagoda, a Roman Garden, gazebo, a riverboat, floating stages, amphitheater, a Senior Citizens' Lifestyle Center, our Parks Development Office (PDO), and other ongoing projects.

- After the initial phase of development, from 1997 till today, an estimate of P6 million is allotted as yearly budget for its operational and personnel expenses. The office in-charge has acquired equipment for use in maintenance and some 84 staff tasked for the job (though many of these people are used also in the other parks development projects).
- Though the project work began in 1993, it is not given a completion date. It remains to be a continuing development project. Only activities (projects) undertaken in the area are given a timeframe for completion.

DOCUMENTATION



Knowledge Base Coding Reference:

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