

Septage-treatment facility for PHL's 'dirtiest' river system now operational

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MEYCAUAYAN CITY—The septage-treatment facility that was built to rehabilitate water quality of the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River System (MMORS) which was tagged a few years back by the Blacksmith Institute, an international pollution watchdog, as one of the 30 dirtiest river system in the world.

The facility's inauguration in Barangay Zamora in this city coincided with the celebration on Friday of the World Water Day and International Year of Water Cooperation.

Lormelyn Claudio, Central Luzon's chief of the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (EMB-DENR), told the BusinessMirror that studies conducted by the World Bank showed that 48 percent of river system's pollution comes from domestic sources.

A separate study made by the water quality management area (Waqma) governing board showed a 65-percent to 70-percent biochemical oxygen demand, a parameter for organic pollution, that comes from domestic or household sources.

Claudio exhorted resident to properly dispose of their septage and refrain from dumping the material to lessen or totally eliminate environmental pollution.

The septage-treatment facility is a pilot project for the MMORS and the second in Bulacan. The first one is located Baliuag town but the MMORS facility is much bigger in terms of size and scope, according to Claudio, adding that the project is in accordance with the Clean Water Act and the continuing mandamus of the Supreme Court.

Claudio said the area where the facility was constructed was provided for by the Ecoshield Development Corp. and funded under the DENR's Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program, while utilization and operation of the facility will be handled by the local government of Meycauayan and its local water district under the Public-Private Partnership Program of the government.

"We are anticipating that the facility will not only serve the city of Meycauayan but also adjacent municipalities," Claudio said, adding that the by-product of the treatment process called night soil can be used as fertilizer.

Waqma governing board will come out with a resolution requiring all septage service providers to make use of the facility so that it can be assured that the septage that they have siphoned off will be treated in an efficient and safe method that would not cause any further harm to the environment.

On the other hand, Mariano Sangalang, general manager of the Meycauayan Water District said under Presidential Decree 198, otherwise known as the Provincial Water Utilities Act of 1973, their water district is mandated "to create, operate, maintain, and expand the reliable and economically viable and sound water supply and wastewater disposal system for the population centers of the Philippines."

With the establishment of the septage-treatment facility, Sangalang said "we have our open hands to accept your decision as to how we can be of help in the implementation of our objective." He added that "along the initial run of the system we might have setbacks and false start...let us join in the work in making this historic project a good example."

Lawyer Tirso Peralta of Ecoshield Development Corp., said in behalf of ALC Group of Companies founder and Chairman Emeritus Ambassador Antonio Cabangon Chua and his son Edgard that their group is only too willing to support the environmental protection program of the DENR.

With the inauguration of the septage-treatment facility, Peralta said their company takes pride in being part of the endeavor that is in compliance with the objectives of the DENR, the leadership of Bulacan Gov. Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado and the rest of the local government officials of Meycauayan.

Peralta said we are all living witnesses to the destruction being committed against the environment, particularly those who reside along the river system. He added that polluted water in the river system brings with it different kinds of diseases and destroys aquatic lives.

In Photo: (From right) Mariano Sangalang, general manager of Meycauayan Water District; Lormelyn Claudion, EMB Central Luzon chief; Third District Rep. Linabelle Villarica; and lawyer Tirso Peralta of Ecoshield Development Corp. conduct a joint inspection on the septage-treatment facility of the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River System in Meycauayan, Bulacan. (Ramon Efren R. Lazaro)

