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A "polluter pays" policy is being strengthened in the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando (MMO) river system in a tripartite agreement between the local government, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Globe Telecom.

The MMO has already been tagged by New York-based Blacksmith Institute, a global environmental think tank, as one of the world's 30 Most Polluted Places.

With the launching Tuesday of the "Green Line," a mobile phone line dedicated for reporting environmental violations in the MMO, the collaborators aim to reduce dumping of solid waste in the river system and achieve in 10 years its goal of reviving the system.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) Director Lormelyn Claudio said the government has programmed a 24-7 response to violations reported through the Green Line, a mobile phone line provided for by Globe Telecom.

Dumping of untreated water waste and solid waste to the river system will constitute suspension of environmental compliance certificate (ECC) for companies found violating existing laws.

Claudio said the Green Line is supported by seven Quick Response Teams (QRT) trained on various complaints on air and water pollution hazardous wastes, quarrying, and illegal logging.

The local government network in the MMO forms part of a very important economic system composed of tanneries, jewelry-making industry, gold and precious metal refining industry, lead smelting industry, pyrotechnics manufacturing, and piggeries.

But because of these industries which have not been closely monitored for a long time, the MMO river system has become a dumping ground for toxic chemicals, hazardous waste, and metallic substances found to be highly-polluting. Chromium, for one, a treatment medium for leather materials and was found to be present in the river system, is a known carcinogen.

While considered to be one of the world's dirtiest river, the MMO river system is a source of food for fishers and communities in the area specially the Obando part. The MMO river system The Blacksmith Institute has earlier conducted pilot testing of technologies in the MMO river system as part of an aim to restore the water to a healthy state.

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