

**Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff
CY 2023 Annual Report**



Introductory Message of the Executive Director



Greetings from the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff!

The PCSD and its staff operate in the Province of Palawan and the highly urbanized City of Puerto Princesa. Post-pandemic, the staff has resumed regular operations, geared up and enthusiastic about accomplishing its goals.

The Council has recently made efforts to be more inclusive and to involve stakeholders in the policymaking processes related to the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) for the Palawan Act.

As part of this initiative, the Council has expanded its membership to include five (5) new members. Additionally, the PCSD functional committees have been reorganized to better support the resolution of issues and the recommendation of matters that need to be addressed by the Council.

We are focused on strengthening the SEP Framework, its ECAN strategy, and other mandated laws based on science to ensure environmental protection and sustainable development. We assure our stakeholders of our unwavering commitment to pursue our mandates and achieve outcomes that are beneficial to our people and communities.

We continuously explore partnership opportunities at the local, national, and international levels of engagements. Our goal is to advance the best interests of the Province of Palawan by implementing programs and projects and conducting research initiatives. We are committed to ensuring that all these projects and development initiatives align with the ideals and goals of Republic Act 7611 as our contribution to the national and global communities.

Padayon kitang tanan!



ATTY. TEODORO JOSE S. MATTA, MNSA
Executive Director III

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II. Executive Summary

The year 2023 provided so much challenges and opportunities for the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) and its Staff, with the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as by the new policy directions by the national government. In spite of all odds and changes, the PCSD and its professional support staff, the PCSD Staff, continued the implementation of Republic Act 7611 and other mandated laws in Palawan, the implementation of which are linked to the MIMAROPA Regional Development Plan (RDP) for 2023-2028, the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) for 2023-2028, and the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) that underpins the importance of recognizing the strong link between people, society and planet.

For this year, the staff were able to attain its annual targets, especially our commitments in the Republic Act No. 11936 or the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, attaining an average physical accomplishment rate of **107.34%** across all five (5) major performance indicators. In addition, the organization accomplished other physical targets and commitments in the agency work and financial plan (WFP) across the following **eight (8) sub-programs** of the Palawan ECAN Management Program:

- ❖ **ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATIONS, AND EDUCATION.** This includes continuing efforts towards a more caring citizenry for the environment while aspiring for an inclusive development, with the help of various forms of media and support from our local and international partners.
- ❖ **ECAN MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM.** PCSDS is aiming on the gathering, analysis and generation of useful information for decision-making processes by both policy-makers and stakeholders.
- ❖ **ECAN ZONING.** This includes ongoing updating of the ECAN Zoning Maps as well as policy studies and analyses in support of SEP and ECAN.
- ❖ **KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH MANAGEMENT.** The PCSDS and partners carry on their efforts to better understand our environment through scientific research and seek innovative solutions for better sustainable development decisions and actions.
- ❖ **RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.** This includes continuous efforts to source out fundings from local and international funding institutions, as well as working together as a community of practice to strengthen sustainable development governance in the province.
- ❖ **OPERATION OF STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (SEP) CLEARANCE SYSTEM.** This system, which includes the permitting system in terms of wildlife and chainsaw, allows for development control in Palawan without compromising the ecological integrity therein.
- ❖ **WILDLIFE AND CAVE MANAGEMENT.** This includes the management and protection of wildlife resources, as well as the implementation of environmental laws such as R.A. No. 9147 (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act), R.A. No. 9175 (Chain Saw Act), and R.A. No. 9072 (National Caves and Cave Resources Management and Protection Act).

Meanwhile, in terms of financial performance, the PCSDS was able to utilize a total of **PHP 125.96 million**, or **99.18%** of its annual allotment of **PHP 126.996 million** (which includes the Accounts Payables and Continuing Appropriations from FY 2022).

III. Highlights of Accomplishments

The agency together with partners and the Palawan community attained and, in some cases, exceeded its targets for the year under the eight (8) major sub-programs of the Palawan ECAN Management Program, as committed under the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2023, amidst the challenges and issues encountered.

A. Policy and Governance

The PCSD passed and adopted **96 resolutions and policies** during their **12 monthly meetings** in 2023. These resolutions range from approval of proposed projects and initiatives to amendments to the existing PCSD policies.



Figure 1. The 306th meeting of the PCSD on 28 September 2023 via hybrid of face-to-face and virtual arrangement.

Meanwhile, the PCSDS coordinated **twenty-nine (29) meetings** of the following PCSD Functional Committees: (a) PCSD Adjudication Board (PAB); (b) Legal and Inter-governmental Affairs Committee (LIAC); (c) Environmental and Natural Resources Committee (ENRC); (d) Committee on Security and Safety; (e) Tribal Affairs Committee (TAC); and (f) the Puerto Princesa Council for Sustainable Development, which was created in 2022.



Figure 2. (Left and Right) The Puerto Princesa Council for Sustainable Development during its regular meeting at the City Hall, Puerto Princesa City.



Figure 3. The meeting of the Sub-Committee on Pangolin Conservation and Management of the PCSD Environment and Natural Resources Committee (ENRC).

Under its prosecuting function, the PCSD Adjudication Board (PAB), with the assistance of the PCSD Staff, resolved **eight (8) administrative cases** involving violations of PCSD policies related to the implementation of Republic Act 7611 (RA 7611), The Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) for Palawan Act and environmental laws under its mandate, the Chainsaw Act (RA 9175), Wildlife Act (RA 9147), and Caves Act (RA 9072). Meanwhile, the PCSDS Legal Services Section prepared a total of **161** legal opinions, pleadings and other legal documents.

B. Updates on the DENR Inputs to the President’s Report to the People 2022-2023 in his 2nd State of the Nation Address (SONA)

1. Safeguarding the Integrity of the Environment

a. Protecting and Conserving the Country’s Rich Biodiversity

i. PCSDS Sub-Program: *Wildlife and Cave Management*

The staff assessed four (4) municipalities in terms of biodiversity, for production of habitat maps and possible declaration as Critical Habitat (under RA 9147). Out of these biodiversity assessments, **24 habitat distribution and suitability maps** were produced and/or updated. In addition, the PCSDS, in partnership with the USAID SIBOL Project, Municipal Government of Kalayaan, and other offices or institutions, developed the Lawak Island Critical Habitat Management Plan, following the island’s declaration by PCSD as a Critical Habitat in 2022.

Furthermore, the PCSD Staff conducted population studies for two (2) threatened and endemic species, specifically: *Bostrychus expatria* (locally known as *Bulukot*) and *Barbodes manguonensis* (locally known as *Paitan*). Following the researches on threatened, endemic and/or flagship species conducted by PCSDS and partners in the previous years, the staff developed one (1) action plan containing conservation strategies. Additionally, the staff conducted population studies for two (2) economically important species: *Siganidae* (Richardson, 1837) and *Caesionidae* (Bonaparte, 1831). Based on wildlife researches, the staff updated the list of threatened species and the list of economically important species.

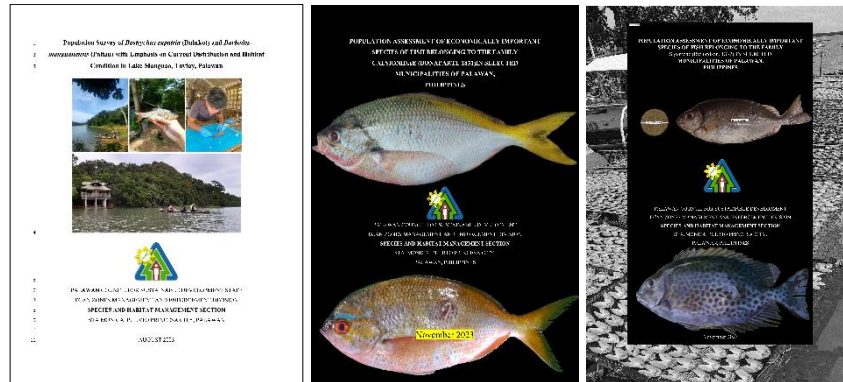


Figure 4. Cover pages of the population studies conducted for threatened and economically important wildlife species.

Meanwhile, the PCSDS team conducted rescue, release and dispositions of 70 wildlife individuals. The staff facilitated the reactivation of the Municipal Rescue Groups in Brooke's Point and Bataraza. Additionally, the agency maintained and operationalized the Palawan Biodiversity Resource Center (PBRC) located in Barangay Irawan, Puerto Princesa City, where 187 specimens of wildlife were processed and maintained for educational and research purposes.



Figure 5. Various wildlife species which were rescued, released and properly disposed of by PCSD Staff and partners.

b. Employing Innovative Science and Technology in Environmental and Natural Resources Management

As part of the initiative titled *Spatio Temporal Evaluation, Analysis and Monitoring of Landscapes and Natural Capital Accounting vis-à-vis Palawan's Strategic Environmental Plan* or STEAM-NCA, the team produced four (4)

technical reports, including the *2020 Palawan Carbon Account* NCA report and the *Land Asset Account of Brooke's Point, Palawan* report.

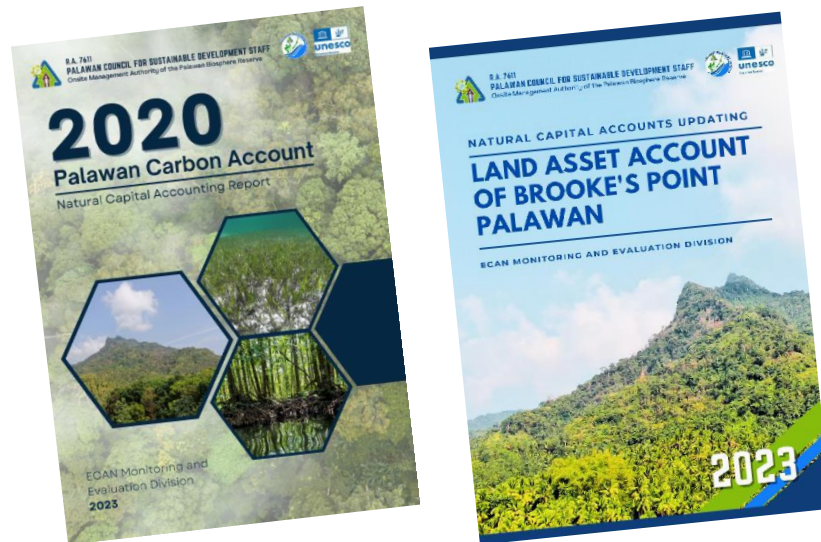


Figure 6. Cover pages of the 2020 Palawan Carbon Account (left) and Land Asset Account of Brooke's Point, Palawan (right) NCA reports.

The PCSDS continued in 2023 the sustainable development monitoring of major economic industries in Palawan, using internationally recognized tools such as the Sustainable Management Online Tool (SMOT) for mining companies, and the Sustainable Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems (SAFA) for agriculture companies. Furthermore, the PCSDS developed a similar tool specifically for Palawan, the **Sustainable Management Monitoring Tool (SMMOT)**, which was based on the SMOT from the Manicaugan Uapishka Biosphere Reserve, Canada. The SMMOT was approved by the PCSD through PCSD Resolution No. 23-937 (*Requiring All Mining Companies in Palawan to Undertake Annual Sustainable Development Monitoring Using the Sustainable Management Monitoring Tool (SMMOT), and Submit the Results Thereof to the PCSDS on or before December 30 of Every Year*).

c. Enhancing Waste Management and Promoting Circular Economy through Strong Private Sector Participation and Support to Informal Waste Sectors

The PCSD staff reviewed the Ecological Solid Waste Management Plans of Balabac and Coron, for approval by the Council. Relative to this, the staff participated in four (4) quarterly meetings of the Provincial Ecological Solid Waste Management Board (PESWMB) in 2023, providing updates to the body on the status of review and approval of ESWMPs in Palawan. As of December 2023, there are 19 ESWMPs approved by the PCSD.

2. Accelerating Climate Action and Strengthening Disaster Resiliency

a. Mobilizing Climate Finance and Investments on Nature

i. PCSDS Sub-Program: Resource Mobilization and Partnership Development

With the extensive mandates and functions of the agency, and the limited fiscal space of the national government, the PCSDS continue to outsource funds from local and international funding institutions. These efforts include the co-preparation of two (2) project proposals, together with the local governments of Quezon and Roxas. The proposals are (1) “Increasing Resiliency of the Coastal Communities in Quezon, Palawan” and (2) “Climate-resilient Relocation for Coastal Communities of Roxas, Palawan”, and shall be submitted to the Climate Change Commission (CCC) for possible funding from the People’s Survival Fund (PSF).

Furthermore, the agency continued to implement special projects funded by local and international funding institutions, which include:

- **Marine Resource Initiative (MRI)**, funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). It has two (2) components: (a) **Marine Spatial Mapping**, co-implemented by GeoScience Australia (GA) and University of Sydney (USyd); and (b) **Monitoring and Management of Marine Resources**, co-implemented by Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).
- **Knowledge Transfer on Environmental Sustainability and Climate Adaptation from the Filipino Diaspora**, funded by the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) and co-implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). This includes three (3) components: (a) Education for Sustainable Development, co-implemented by Palawan State University (PaSU); (b) Fundraising for climate adaptation (in partnership with Palawan LGUs); and (c) Project Management (also with Palawan LGUs).

Aside from this, the PCSDS participated in the series of technical meetings and field surveys by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) for the PCSDS proposal entitled “Environment and Natural Resources Information System (ENRIS) for Palawan towards Food Security and Water Quality Improvement”. The proposed project is expected to be implemented from 2025 to 2027. Furthermore, the staff coordinated with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) for the initial activities of the Coral Reef Rescue Initiative (CRRi), funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF). For the CRRi, the DENR and PCSDS secured the Special Presidential Authority (SPA) issued by the Office of the President in 2023.



Figure 7. The Initial Meeting between PCSDS, KOICA Team, Provincial Government, and other partners on 10 January 2023: (Left) Mr. Kim Eunsub, Country Director of KOICA Philippines; (Center) all the participants and agency representatives; and (Right) Hon. Victorino Dennis Socrates, Governor of Palawan.

b. Engaging Local Governments in Multi-stakeholder ENR Governance

By virtue of PCSD Administrative Order No. 10, series of 2005, the PCSD and its technical staff have organized ECAN Boards across the 23 municipalities of Palawan. The ECAN Board is a multi-sectoral coordinative and advisory body to the local government, and is composed of representatives from the municipal government, the barangay, Indigenous Peoples (IPs), DENR, non-government organizations (NGOs), PCSDS, and other agencies/sectors as may be identified as necessary. The ECAN Boards are essential in the implementation of the SEP framework and the ECAN strategy, as these allow extensive management of the environment and natural resources on the municipal level, without undermining the authority and powers of the PCSD. For this year, the PCSD Staff facilitated the conduct of **95 ECAN Board meetings**, where **108 ECAN Board resolutions** were issued.



Figure 8. ECAN Board meetings of Coron in February 14, 2023 (left) and Dumarán in March 3, 2023 (right).

The PCSD Staff is a key member of the Provincial Land Use Committee (PLUC), especially in the review of Municipal Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUPs).

3. Other Major Accomplishments based on PCSDS Sub-Programs

a. ECAN Zoning

The ECAN Zones Map serves as both management and regulatory tool for Palawan as the province pursues sustainable development. It provides areas for development and areas for strict protection to ensure that ecosystem goods and services vital to sustainable development are continuously being provided. For the year 2023, the PCSD Staff, in partnership with the local government and other stakeholders, worked on and was able to produce **four (4)** validated ECAN Maps for the municipalities of Brooke's Point, Kalayaan, Narra, and Taytay. Out of these municipal maps, the Kalayaan ECAN Map was approved by the PCSD.

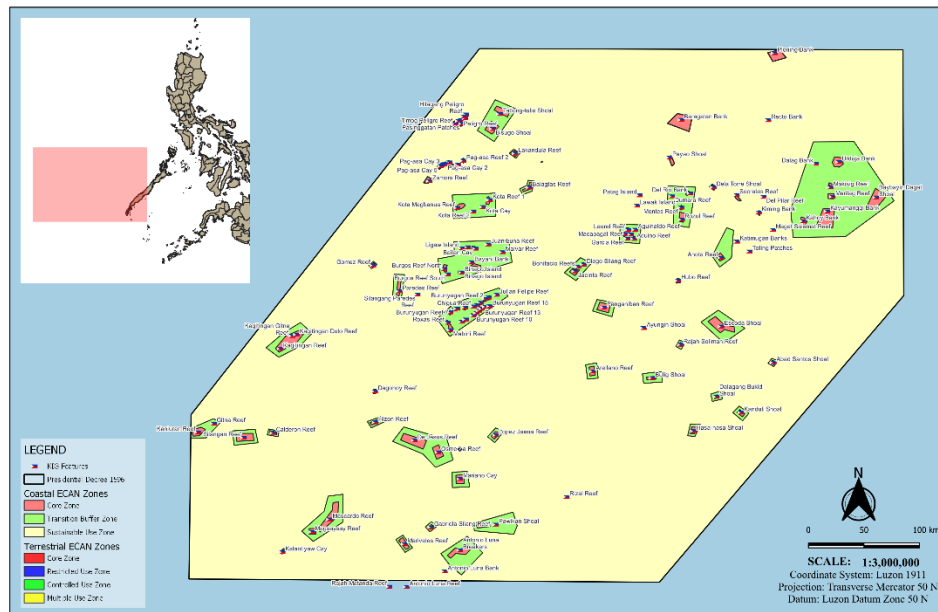


Figure 9. Updated ECAN Map of Kalayaan Islands Group, as approved by the PCSD on November 15, 2023.

Additionally, the PCSDS prepared two (2) policy papers in support of SEP and ECAN: (a) *Frequency on ECAN Map updating*; and (b) *Assemblage of Oil Palm Governance and Land-Use Changes in an Island Environment: The Case Study of Pulot Watershed in Palawan Province, Philippines*. The latter was co-prepared with the Palawan State University (PaSU) and the Provincial Government of Palawan. Moreover, the organization conducted a study on the Indigenous People (IP) group of Taytay, Palawan, as potential to be declared as Indigenous Community Conserved Area (ICCA).

b. Operation of Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) Clearance System

The COVID-19 pandemic, among its socio-cultural, political, environmental, economic and other impacts, had forced the shift of government services from face-to-face to digital. Fortunately, the PCSDS was able to adopt to this change by launching the Biodiversity Resource Access Information Network (BRAIN) at the height of the pandemic in 2020. The BRAIN is a web-based information management platform developed by PCSDS in collaboration with the USAID Protect Wildlife Project. It is a comprehensive platform that features various information systems and tools, including but not limited to: (a) geospatial tools; (b) public reporting; (c) online permit applications; and (d) case build-up and documentation. The staff are working on additional features such as: (a) intelligence database; (b) criminal reports and analysis; and (c) inter-agency coordination.

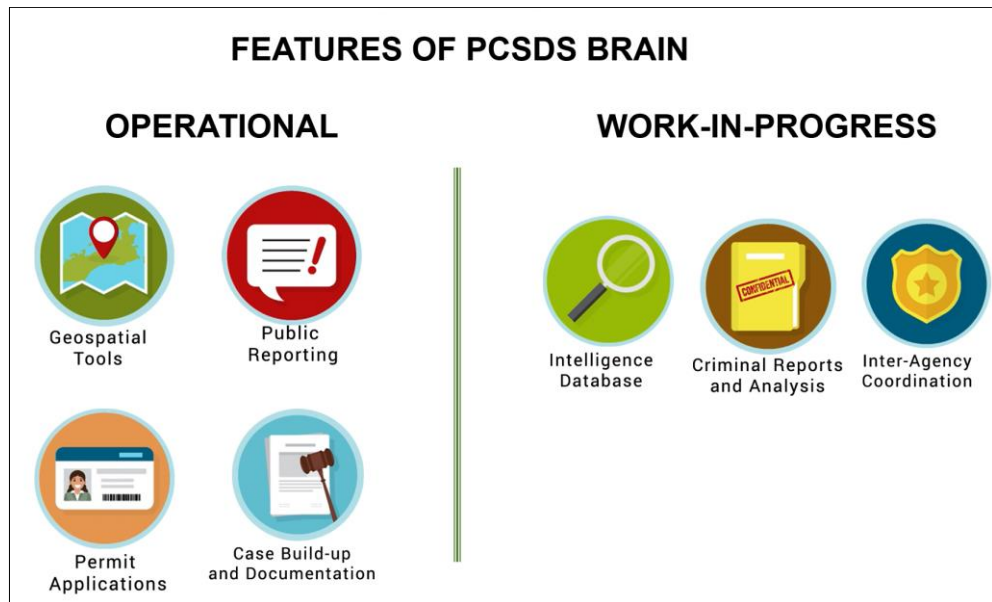


Figure 10. Features of the BRAIN platform (operational and work-in-progress).

With the help of the BRAIN platform, the PCSD and the PCSD Staff issued **109 SEP Clearances** (for projects under Category A, B and D), **82 ECAN Zoning Certifications** (for projects under Category C), **4,681 wildlife-related permits**, and **564 chainsaw-related permits**.



Figure 11. Conduct of field evaluation of projects prior to issuance of SEP Clearance: (a) Casa Mira Project Site in Barangay San Pedro, Puerto Princesa City (left) and (b) Ojala Beach House in Barangay New Agutaya, San Vicente, Palawan (right).

As both the SEP Clearance System and Permitting system do not conclude with issuance of permits, the PCSDS District Management Divisions (DMDs) monitor and inspect projects and establishments, specifically on their compliance to the terms and conditions stipulated in the SEP Clearance, wildlife permits, and chainsaw permits issued to the project proponents. This year, the staff, together with the ECAN Boards, monitored **604 projects and/or establishments**, with **220** having SEP Clearance, **185** without SEP Clearance, **186** having wildlife permits, and **13** having chainsaw permits.



Figure 12. SEP Clearance compliance monitoring of projects, such as: (a) Oil Mill Plant of Kalasagin Farmer's Producers Cooperative located at Barangay Tubtub, Brooke's Point, Palawan on January 18, 2023 (left); and (b) Alam Indah Homestay located in Busuanga, Palawan on February 1, 2023 (right).

The PCSDS DMDs conducted the studies on Reef-Fish-for-Food (RFF) in Northern and Southern Palawan, with the aims of analyzing the volume of RFF traders and catchers per municipality, and ensuring the sustainable harvest of RFF and other economically important species.

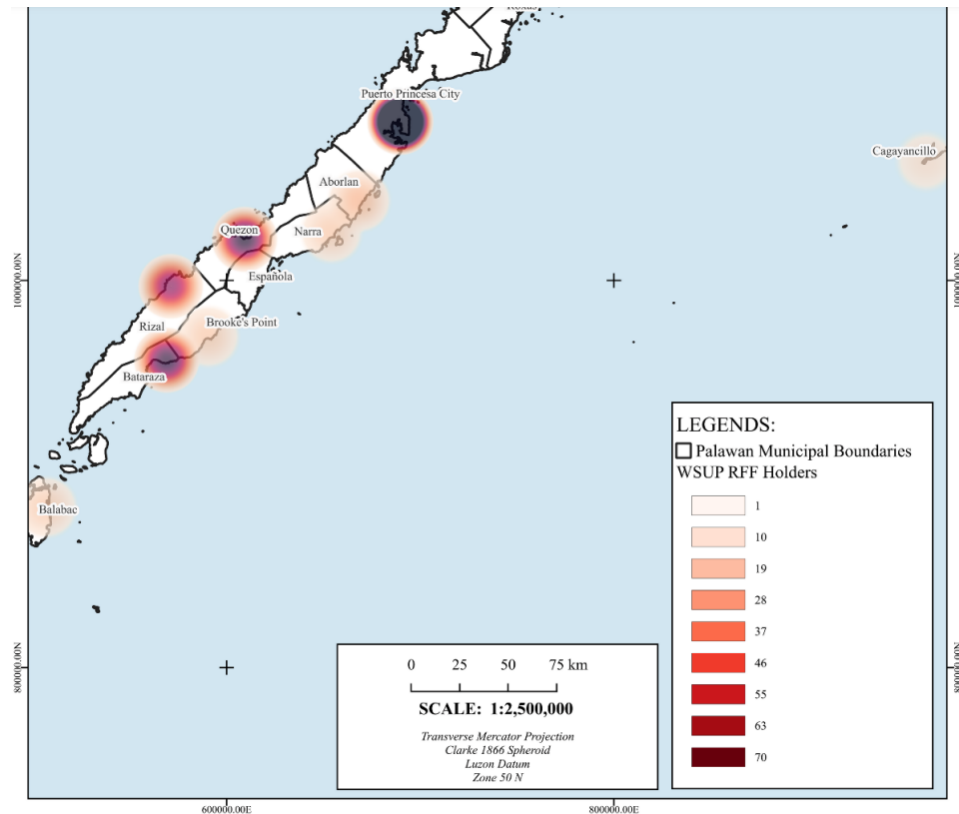


Figure 13. Heatmap for the holders of Wildlife Special Use Permit (WSUP) for RFF in Southern Palawan including Puerto Princesa City.

Furthermore, the PCSDS DMD North conducted research on compliance to protection of marine turtle link habitats for Northern Palawan. Meanwhile, the PCSDS DMD South developed the *Marine Turtle Management Plan for Identified Important Link Habitats* in the municipalities of Narra and Balabac, Palawan. Additionally, the PCSDS DMD Calamian conducted validation of turtle nesting sites in Busuanga, Palawan.

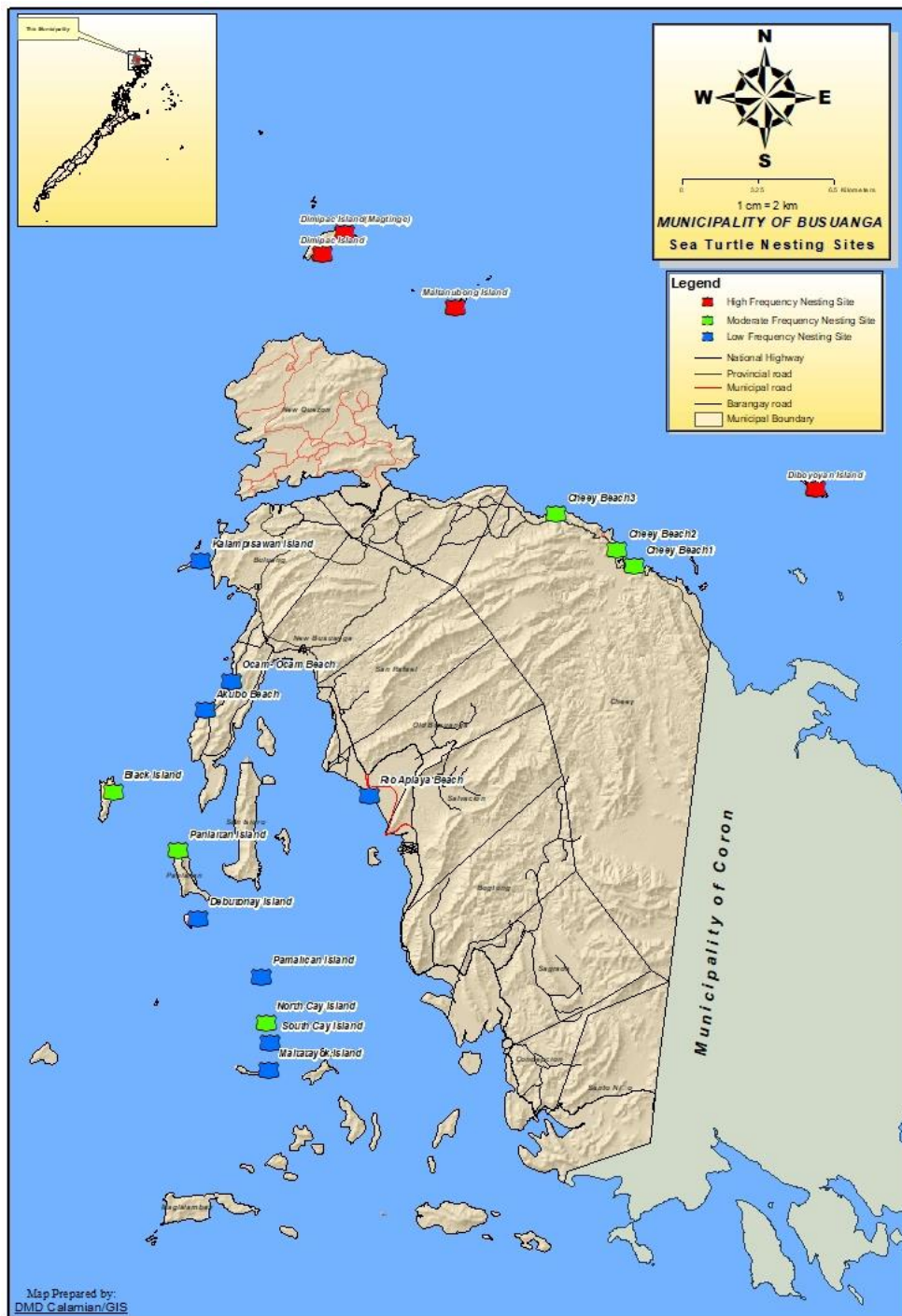


Figure 14. Map of Validated Turtle Nesting Sites in Busuanga, Palawan.

c. Wildlife and Cave Management

The PCSDS team continued on ensuring that on-ground implementation of environment-related policies were carried out. The 15 Wildlife Traffic Monitoring Units (WTMUs) located in 12 municipalities actively pursued environmental law enforcement. The activities include the inspection of **488,134** assorted cargoes and **51,339** boxes of Reef Fish for Food (RFF) and other species.



Figure 15. Inspection activities of the Wildlife Traffic Monitoring Units (WTMUs).

A total of **66 apprehensions** were made on violations of RA 9147, RA 9175 and PD 705, in relation to **243 enforcement activities** conducted (including surveillance, enforcement operations, investigations, monitoring, and prevented patrol). These have led to the filing of **seven (7) criminal cases**. Following these filed cases as well as previous cases filed by PCSDS, the staff appeared in **46 Trial Court hearings** in 2023. Meanwhile, violations made by individuals or groups to PCSD Administrative Orders resulted in the filing of **22 administrative cases** by PCSDS. These cases were heard by the PCSD Adjudication Board, where **eight (8) cases** were resolved in 2023. Relative to wildlife law enforcement, the agency identified **ten (10) trade routes** utilized for illegal wildlife trade. Identification of these routes will help in the transboundary management of wildlife trade.

In terms of caves and cave resources, the staff reviewed **two (2) cave management plans** and reactivated **two (2) Municipal Cave Committees (MCCs)**. **Two (2)** cave management plans were presented to the MCCs concerned for their adoption.

d. Advocacy, Communications and Education

The PCSDS continued its efforts towards a more environment-caring citizenry while aspiring for inclusive development, using innovative and creative efforts and strategies (especially social media and the support of our partners) to contribute to positive behavioral change in our stakeholders. For 2023, the ECAN Education and Extension Division (EEED) of PCSDS produced **5,980** copies of printed IEC materials, **ten (10)** audio-visual presentations (AVPs), and **nine (9)** informational videos/visual materials on the environment and sustainable development. These printed and digital materials were disseminated to various stakeholders during IEC campaigns and other events of PCSDS and partners. Meanwhile, the staff produced **four (4)** issues of newsletters which were posted on the PCSD website (<https://pcsd.gov.ph/>).

In terms of capacity building of stakeholders, the staff conducted two (2) Training Needs Assessments (TNAs) in the municipalities of Cuyo and Magsaysay. The staff also conducted two (2) training activities, namely: (a) **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Training of Teachers and Pilot Teaching** (for teachers and students) held collaboratively with the European Union Global Diaspora Facility; and (b) **Enhancement of Capability of Relevant Agency** for local government officials and staff in both municipal and barangay levels of Rizal, Palawan. PCSDS organized various youth-focused activities which include the **World Pangolin Day Celebration, World Wildlife Day Celebration, Kiddie and Youth Wildlife Savers Club, 5th Youth Sustainability Leadership Camp, and the Environmental Youth Action Camp**. A total of **600 individuals** from elementary to secondary students were involved in these activities. The staff installed **nine (9)** PCSDS exhibits during events organized by PCSDS and partner institutions.



Figure 16. Photos during the World Wildlife Day Celebration last March 3, 2023 conducted collaboratively with PCSDS' partners - USAID and Gerry Roxas Foundation.



Figure 17. Grades 4-6 pupils from selected elementary schools in Puerto Princesa City were the participants of the Kiddie and Youth Wildlife Savers Club activity last May 2023. They were able to learn about water quality and how important safe water is to daily life.



Figure 18. Participants of the Environmental Youth Action Camp present their outputs during the development of media campaign plans focused on biodiversity conservation.



Figure 19. The campers from Leonides S. Virata Memorial School in Rio Tuba, Bataraza, Palawan actively participated during the activity entitled "Web of Life".

To further reach out to the communities and partners, PCSDS through EEED organized **22 IEC campaigns** for the general public. The campaigns reached a total of **1,132 individuals** who represented various sectors, such as local government units (barangay/municipal/city), communities, teachers, students, religious groups, agriculture sector, former rebels, uniformed personnel, national government agencies (NGAs), non-government organizations (NGOs), and media.



Figure 20. IEC Campaigns conducted in Bataraza, Palawan (left) and at the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

The PCSDS also organized different activities in celebration of Women’s Month 2023. The said activities focused on involving various categories of women audiences and their roles in biodiversity conservation and nation-building. These activities include National Women’s Month Celebration 2023 Kick-off Activity, International Women’s Day Celebration, Lecture Sessions on Women’s Health, International Day of Forests Tree Planting Activity, and Search for Miss WomEnvironment 2023.

e. ECAN Monitoring and Evaluation System

Monitoring the environment is an important part of sustainable development. It is a mechanism to determine whether RA 7611 and other mandated laws as applied in Palawan can attain its objectives of protecting the environment to ensure the continuous flow of ecosystem goods and services that are required of an efficient functioning economy for an equitable society. The PCSDS conducted environmental monitoring within the framework of Environmental Monitoring and Evaluation System (EMES) as stipulated in RA 7611. The PCSD Staff monitored 25 rivers across the province of Palawan in terms of water quality, and operating the PCSD Environmental Laboratory. Moreover, the staff conducted water quality monitoring of two (2) UNESCO World Heritage Sites: (a) Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (TRNP) and (b) Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (PPSRNP).



Figure 21. The PCSD Staff during the collection of water samples as part of the water quality monitoring of rivers in Southern Palawan.



Figure 22. Conduct of laboratory analyses on collected water samples at the PCSDS Environmental Laboratory.

Additionally, the staff produced **nine (9)** land cover and land use change maps as part of the geospatial analysis, landscapes and land use change monitoring undertaken for southern Palawan.

f. Knowledge and Research Management

The Palawan Knowledge Platform (PKP) is an online platform launched in 2014 for sharing biodiversity information and data regarding Palawan. It managed to grow into 34 member institutions, and regularly conducts quarterly meetings since its inception. The PKP partnership maintains one (1) knowledge-sharing site (<https://pkp.pcsd.gov.ph>), which has garnered 38,077 online page views this year. The solid knowledge and information in PKP are being used to formulate technically sound plans and policies, develop robust methodologies for mainstreaming ECAN into local conservation and development plans, and conduct monitoring and evaluation more effectively.

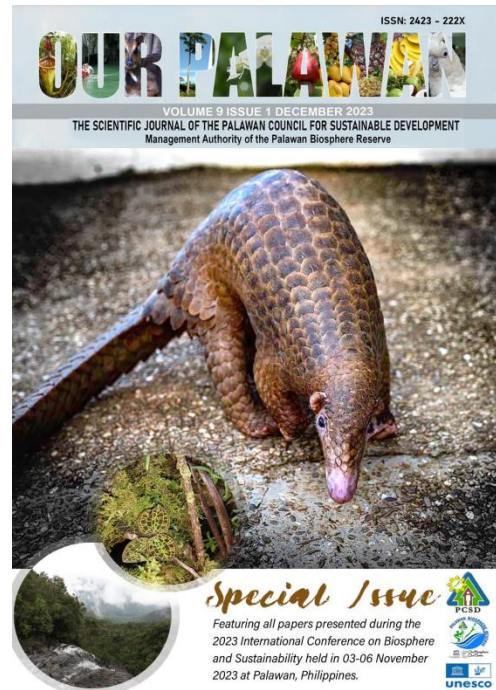


Figure 23. Cover page of Volume 9, Issue 1 of the *Our Palawan Journal*.

The PCSDS, in partnership with scientific experts from various academic institutions, produced **Volume 9, Issue 1** of *Our Palawan Journal*, the scientific publication of PCSD. One of the projects of PKP is the study titled *Monitoring Pollution from Plastics, Microplastics, Mercury, Metals, and Organic Loadings in Wildlife and Related Ecosystems in Palawan*.

Another collaborative activity among the PKP members is the conduct of the ***International Conference on Biosphere and Sustainability***, which is held every two years. The conference serves as platform for professional and amateur researchers to present their studies and researches to local and international audience. For 2023, it was held on 3-6 November 2023 at the Hue Hotel, Puerto Princesa City.



Figure 24. The International Conference on Biosphere and Sustainability (ICBS) conducted on 3-6 November 2023.

On February 2023, the PCSD staff convened the annual meeting of the **PCSD Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP)**, which is composed of experts and specialists in various fields of science. For 2023, the SAP members discussed the results of the Green Assessment conducted as input on the reconstruction and resiliency planning for Palawan post-Super Typhoon Odette. The SAP provided a set of policy recommendations for: (a) Green Assessment and Recovery Framework and (b) Utilization and Sustainability Mechanism; both for consideration by the PCSD.

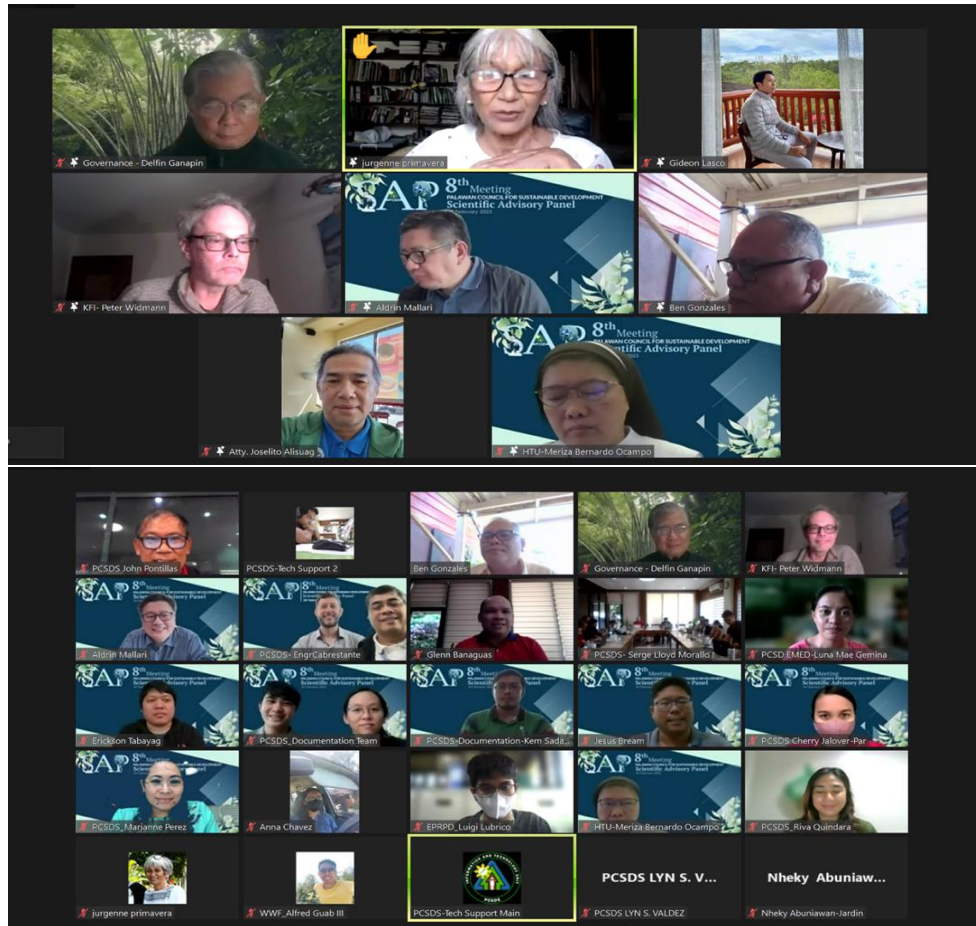


Figure 25. The 8th PCSD Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) meeting conducted via hybrid on 24 February 2023.

Lastly, the PCSDS, as the onsite Management Authority of the Palawan Biosphere Reserve (BR), partnered with the Philippine National Commission for UNESCO (UNACOM), Albay BR, and Puerto Galera, in the celebration of the **International Day for Biosphere Reserves** on the 3rd day of November 2023. The celebration includes educational exchange visits to the three (3) BRs in the Philippines (Palawan, Albay, and Puerto Galera).



Figure 26. (Left) PCSD Vice-Chair Hon. Ferdinand Zaballa during his message during the celebration of the 2nd International Day of Biosphere Reserves. (Right) PCSD Vice-Chair Hon. Ferdinand Zaballa and PCSDS Executive Director Atty. Teodoro Jose Matta, together with representatives from partner institutions which were awarded as SDG Champions during the celebration.

g. Resource Mobilization and Partnership Development

In line with the regular budget cycle of the national government, the staff prepared the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Agency Plans and Budget Proposal, and submitted the same to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the DENR, and the Congress (Senate and House of Representatives). Based from the National Expenditure Program (NEP) for 2024, the PCSDS prepared the FY 2023 Agency Work and Financial Plan (WFP) and submitted to DENR, for endorsement to DBM.

The agency has pursued collaboration with other local and international organizations to advance partnership opportunities in pursuing programs consistent with the mandates of the SEP and formalize implementation of mutually agreed capability development initiatives. On this premise, a total of **twelve (12) agreements** (including Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)) were forged with various entities, offices and institutions.



Figure 27. PCSDS Executive Director Atty. Teodoro Jose Matta, Deputy Director Abelardo Villacorta of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA), and NICA 4B Regional Director Ariel Perlado, during the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between PCSDS and NICA.

h. General Administrative Support Services (GASS)

The PCSDS, through the Administrative and Finance Division (AFD), provided administrative and support services to the operations of the Palawan ECAN Management Program. These include (a) budgeting, (b) financial, (c) accounting, (d) human resource, (e) information and communications technology (ICT), (f) procurement, (g) property and supply, and (h) general services.

Furthermore, the PCSDS developed **two (2) Information Systems (IS)**, and maintained and enhanced the **ten (10) existing IS**.

In terms of financial performance, the PCSDS was able to utilize **99.18%** of its annual allotment of **Php 129.996M** (which includes the Accounts Payables and Continuing Appropriations from FY 2022). The agency was able to disburse **Php 114.852M (90.44%)** out of its obligations of **Php 125.96M**.

In terms of PCSDS budget for its operations (i.e., Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and Capital Outlay (CO)), the organization attained a **98.44%** obligations budget utilization rate (BUR) and **87.51%** disbursements BUR.

IV. FY 2023 POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES AND ACTIONS TAKEN

A. Challenges, including constraints and bottlenecks in implementation and coping mechanisms

The year 2023 showed the PCSD and Staff faced challenges both internal and external to the organization. Internally, the single most major challenge of the organization was the limited permanent plantilla positions given the policies the PCSD and the PCSD Staff is expected to administer and enforce. These include RA 7611 or the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) for Palawan Act and the additional mandates of the Council under four existing special laws: RA 9147 or the Wildlife Act, RA 9072 or the Caves Act, RA 9175 or the Chainsaw Act, and RA 9003 or the Solid Waste Management Act. This was partly addressed by the approval by the DBM of 11 positions towards the end of 2023, based on the request of the organization in 2022. Another internal challenge, which is recurring, is the limited access to the agency's Wildlife Management Fund (WMF). While representation was made for the agency to be granted additional fund under Tier2 (New or Expanded Program) as part of its proposed budget, the agency was advised that whatever budget to be proposed under the WMF still considered as part of the fiscal space of the Department which the PCSD/S has to compete. This was addressed by the organization through the strengthening of its resource mobilization initiatives by accessing external funding.

The agency has to manage external challenges in the implementation of its organizational mandates. The final drafting of ECAN Zones Map was hindered by political boundary conflict between municipalities that share common baselines. The agency made initial attempt towards its resolution by convening a meeting with the Provincial Government of Palawan. Further actions need to be made involving other government agencies such as NAMRIA in resolving the issue that has bearing in the determination of Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA). IRA is partly based on the established political area of a Local Government Unit (LGU). Relatedly, many areas in the province are still Unclassified Public Forests (UPF) despite of many areas already developed, i.e. municipal and barangay centers. This issue, however, is being addressed by the DENR under the project Review and Updating of Forest Land Boundary Assessment and Delineation (FLBD) Project Output Vis-a-Vis Unclassified Public Forest of the Province of Palawan. Finally, the PCSD and the PCSD Staff are increasingly involved with the Philippine initiative in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), foremost of which are coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the 2020-2030 Strategic Development Plan for the Kalayaan Island Group (SDP-KIG). This plan is being implemented by PCSD, WESCOM, and other national and local government agencies/offices, with guidance from the National Task Force for West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS). Internal arrangements were made to manage the engagement of the organization by tapping other units within the organization.

V. WAYS FORWARD

A. Priority and new strategies to help achieve the goals and objectives of the organization in pursuit of the thrusts and directions of the present administration

The upcoming 2024 is exciting for the PCSD and the province of Palawan in spite of financial limitations considering the activities and engagements the agency is expecting in pursuance of its mandate on Sustainable Development and the agency's role in strengthening our rightful claim for sovereignty and safeguarding our patrimony in the WPS. The agenda for 2024 is aligned with the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) for Palawan and other mandated laws, the Philippine National Agenda on inclusive economic development and poverty reduction by ensuring the continuous production of ecosystem goods and services; and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) thru the establishment and institutionalization of advanced scientific decision support to agriculture, disaster risk management, and long-term planning.

First off is the implementation of an innovative project on environment and natural resources decision support to be funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). The project Environment and Natural Resources Information System (ENRIS) for Palawan Towards Food Security and Water Quality Improvement will establish a web-based Environment and Natural Resources Information System (ENRIS) that will contribute to the efficient land-use, maintenance of ecosystem condition and enhance provision of ecosystem services, water and food security, and climate change adaptability.

The PCSD and Staff is expected to further its engagement with partners notably by the governments of the United States and Australia on wildlife management and enforcement, marine spatial planning and monitoring, natural capital accounting, livelihood and capacity building, among others.