

## **DENR CLASSIFIES 42 CAVES IN SOUTHERN MINDANAO** □



A total of 42 out of 500 identified caves in Southern Mindanao have been classified in accordance with their best uses by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

DENR Regional Executive Director for Region 11 Joselin Marcus Fragada said that cave classification is part of the priority thrusts of DENR Secretary Ramon J. P. Paje to assess and determine the most appropriate sustainable use, protection and management of the country's caves, including the resources found therein.

“Cave classification is a process of assessing and determining the appropriate sustainable use

of caves with due consideration on the cave's biodiversity as well as its archaeological, historical, cultural and potential socio-economic values," Fragada said.

Republic Act No. 9072, also known as the National Caves and Cave Resources Management and Protection Act, mandates the DENR to develop and implement a national program for the management, protection and conservation of caves and cave resources, in coordination with other agencies of the government such as the National Museum, National Historical Institute, Department of Tourism and concerned local government units.

Based on DENR Memorandum Circular No. 2007-04, caves are classified into three categories, namely Class I, Class II, and Class III.

Class 1 caves are those with archeological findings and are for scientific and educational purposes only. These caves can also be utilized for exploration, mapping and photography.

Caves with wildlife that cannot be disturbed are classified as Class II. Visitors, with cave guides, are allowed only to a certain point of the cave.

Class III covers caves where the whole part is allowed for spelunking provided that they are accompanied by cave guides. These are the caves most appropriate for ecotourism purposes, according to Fragada.

Of the 42 classified caves in Southern Mindanao, 12 were classified as Class I which include nine in Davao del Norte, one in Compostela Valley, and another two in Davao Oriental.

Belonging to Class I caves in Davao del Norte are Kapunit Cave and GR Cave in the Kapalong town; Mangitngit Cave in San Isidro; Borja Cave in New Corella; Garcia Cave, Baong Cave, Taclobo Cave 1 and 2 and Santol Cave in Island Garden City of Samal.

Sto. Nino Cave No. 5 is the only cave in Compostela Valley province to have passed the Class I requirements, along with two other caves in Davao Oriental, namely Mera Cave I and Mat-I Cave 3.

Caves classified as Class II, on the other hand, totaled 23, of which 17 are situated in Davao del Norte; four in Compostela Valley and two in Davao Oriental.

Caves classified as Class III include four in Davao del Norte, namely: Kambal Cave, Bandera Caves 1 and 2, and Linggasakan Cave; two in Compostela Valley (Sto. Niño Caves 2 and 3) and Mat-I Cave 2 in Davao Oriental. #

