

TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Regular Session, 2021

H. B. 22-44

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To conserve, protect, and enhance the CNMI's native plants and trees for generations to come and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE 22ND NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:

1 **Section 1. Short Title.** This Act shall be cited as the "CNMI Native
2 Protection Act of 2021".

3 **Section 2. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that plants and
4 trees play a very important role in our life. They are important in maintaining a
5 healthy environment, for example, by controlling erosion and water pollution, and
6 by helping to reduce air pollution. Furthermore, they improve the environment for
7 human activities everywhere, from indoor space to vast wilderness areas.

8 The Legislature further finds that plants and trees are also critical to human
9 health. They are the sole source of some of the essential amino acids, vitamins, and
10 other nutrients in our diet. For example, plants high in ascorbic acid, such as
11 peppers and citrus, prevent scurvy. Grains in the diet provide B vitamins.
12 Furthermore, many drugs were first discovered as plant products before methods

1 for their synthesis were developed. Nearly 25% of our medicines have key
2 plant/tree ingredients in them. The Legislature also finds that the Commonwealth
3 of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is a unique archipelago that parallels the
4 Marianas Trench in the northwestern Pacific Ocean. Over the years, the CNMI has
5 been touted as the best kept secret in the world due to its geological location and
6 year round tropical rainforest climate. But as of late, the Islands of the CNMI have
7 seen a influx of human occupation, thus, leading to many plants and trees that are
8 native to the CNMI to be disturbed or dead. The forestry of the CNMI has been
9 shaped by frequent tropical storms and typhoons, human caused grassland and
10 forest fires, ungulate rooting, browsing and trampling, mass soil movements and
11 erosion, nonnative insects and pathogens, invasive weeds, historical military
12 actions, and historical timber harvest. All have led to the decline of native plants
13 and trees in the CNMI.

14 Furthermore, the Legislature finds that government agencies along with
15 non-government agencies and community members have been out in the
16 community protecting and restoring the functional forest ecosystems of the CNMI.
17 For Saipan, there have been initiatives taken to replant native plants and trees all
18 around the island. A total of 945 native plants and trees have been replanted to
19 restore the natural beauty and ecosystem of Saipan, but due to human disturbances
20 and other causes, only 216 of the 945 plants and trees have survived. This
21 represents a 22% survival rate according to studies from the CNMI Forestry. The

1 Legislature further finds that it is imperative to maintain and preserve the natural
2 attractions of our islands for the benefit of future generations of the CNMI.

3 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to conserve, protect, and enhance the
4 CNMI's native plants and trees for generations to come. This Act shall be known
5 as the CNMI Native Plant Protection Act of 2021.

6 **Section 3. Amendment.** Title 2, Division 5 of the Commonwealth Code
7 is hereby amended by adding the new following sections to read as follows:

8 **“§101. Protection of Native Plants and Trees.**

9 All native plants and trees as defined by the rules and regulations set forth
10 by the Department of Lands and Natural Resources shall be protected by
11 this Act.

12 **§102. Promulgation.**

13 (A). The Department of Lands and Natural Resources shall promulgate
14 rules and regulations to implement the provisions set forth in §101 which
15 shall include fines and penalties.

16 (B). All fines and penalties collected pursuant to subsection (A) shall be
17 deposited into a revolving fund account for the Department of Lands and
18 Natural Resources. Any funds at the end of the fiscal year shall not lapse
19 and shall be available without fiscal year limitation. Said funds shall not be
20 reprogrammed or transferred back into the general fund, or any other
21 account.

1 **§103. Enforcement Authority.**

2 The Department of Lands and Natural Resources shall be responsible for
3 the enforcement of this Act.”

4 **Section 4. Severability.** If any provisions of this Act or the application of
5 any such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court
6 of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its
7 provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid
8 shall not be affected thereby.

9 **Section 5. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein
10 shall not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or
11 acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted
12 under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding
13 instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have
14 the effect of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal,
15 which shall already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

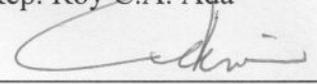
16 **Section 6. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by
17 the Governor, or its becoming law without such approval.

Prefiled: 3/12/2021

Date: 3/12/2021

Introduced by: 
Rep. Joel C. Camacho

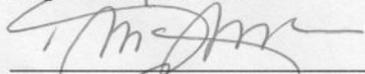
Rep. Roy C.A. Ada



Rep. Celina R. Babauta



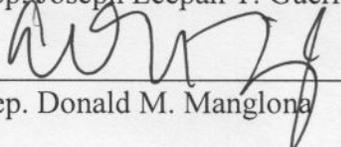
Rep. Ivan A. Blanco



Rep. Angel A. Demapan



Rep. Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero



Rep. Donald M. Manglona

Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao

Rep. Sheila J. Babauta

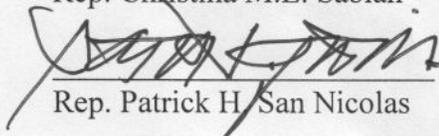
Rep. Vicente C. Camacho

Rep. Joseph A. Flores

Rep. Richard T. Lizama

Rep. Edwin K. Propst

Rep. Christina M.E. Sablan



Rep. Patrick H. San Nicolas

Rep. John Paul P. Sablan

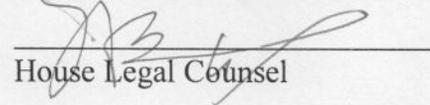
Rep. Leila H.F. C. Staffler

Rep. Edmund S. Villagomez

Rep. Denita K. Yangetmai

Rep. Ralph N. Yumul

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:


House Legal Counsel