



Background

The Leyte Gulf lies off the eastern coast of Leyte Island and the southwestern coast of Samar Island, forming a highly productive marine and coastal ecosystem that supports numerous coastal communities. Within the province of Eastern Samar, several coastal municipalities are situated along the gulf: Balangiga, Giporlos, Guiuan, Lawaan, Mercedes, Quinapondan, and Salcedo. There are also eleven marine reserves in the Gulf. The interconnected ecosystems in the Gulf sustain services that support fisheries crucial to food security.

Conservation challenges in the Leyte Gulf include:

- **Overfishing and destructive fishing methods:** The use of dynamite and fine-mesh push nets contributes to habitat degradation and declining fish stocks.
- **Pressure on coastal ecosystems:** Storm damage from typhoons, coastal pollution, and siltation significantly reduce biodiversity and disrupt nursery functions of mangrove forests, reducing their ability to attenuate wave energy and protect shorelines.
- **Resource management gaps:** Limited local enforcement capacity and political influence in coastal patrols hinder consistent protection of municipal waters.

Area:
1,314,700
hectares

Administrative units:
Samar and Leyte

Ecosystem Functions & Services

The Leyte Gulf provides a wide range of ecosystem functions and services that support biodiversity, sustain coastal livelihoods, strengthen climate resilience, and contribute to the well-being of surrounding communities.



Provisioning services

The Leyte Gulf is a major fishing ground for municipalities in Leyte and Samar islands. Mangrove areas, in particular, support the production of fish, shrimp, mud crabs, anchovies, and other species that are vital to local diets and livelihoods by serving as breeding and nursery habitats.



Regulating services

Mangroves play a key role in regulating coastal processes by stabilizing shorelines, reducing erosion, improving water quality through sediment trapping, and buffering storm surges and wave energy. These functions are increasingly important in the context of the region's climate change risks and ecosystem-based adaptation efforts.



Economic products

It supports a range of marine and coastal resources that sustain local livelihoods for the surrounding communities and provinces. Meanwhile, mangrove ecosystems and adjacent coastal habitats serve as breeding grounds, nurseries, and habitats for commercially important species, such as fish, mudcrabs, shellfish, and seaweeds.



Supporting services

The Leyte Gulf's coastal ecosystems help protect shorelines from storm surges, coastal erosion, and wave action, reducing the impacts of typhoons and other extreme weather events. Mangroves and seagrass beds also improve water quality by trapping sediments, filtering pollutants, and storing carbon, contributing to climate change mitigation and healthier coastal waters.



Cultural value

The Leyte Gulf is of immense historical and cultural significance as the site of the Battle of Leyte Gulf in 1944, a defining event in Philippine and World War II history. This legacy has fostered a strong sense of patriotism and local identity among surrounding communities, complementing the Gulf's enduring role in supporting coastal livelihoods and traditional stewardship of marine resources.



Key Projects Supported by Forest Foundation Philippines

Project 1:

SCALING UP COMMUNITY-BASED MANGROVE MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION MECHANISMS IN FOUR MUNICIPALITIES IN EASTERN SAMAR (PHASE 2)



Grantee:
Philippine Rural
Reconstruction
Movement (PRRM)



Project Duration:
2026–2027 (1 year)



Project Amount:
Forest Foundation
Fund:
PHP 5,976,790
Counterpart Fund:
PHP 1,024,000



Project Summary:

Building on the conservation gains and lessons from the previous phase, this project aims to strengthen the community-based mangrove management and protection mechanisms established in the Phase 1 project in Lawaan and Quinapondan, and replicate the interventions across Barangays Bacjao and Poblacion 6 in the municipality of Balangiga, and Barangays Coticot and Parena in the municipality of Giporlos. With this expansion, the project will scale up efforts to improve the management of an additional 221 hectares of mangrove forests.

The project will continue institutionalizing community stewardship, providing a model for sustainable mangrove management. The project will facilitate the formulation and implementation of the Mangrove Management and Protection Plans (MMPPs), strengthen the organizational, governance, and financial capacities of People's Organizations (POs) in the four barangays, and support restoration of 20 hectares of degraded mangroves. The project will enhance existing livelihoods as incentives for communities that actively protect and conserve mangroves.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of community-led mangrove conservation along the Leyte Gulf, the project will facilitate the establishment of Local Conservation Areas (LCAs) in partnership with the Local Government Units (LGUs) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Lawaan and Quinapondan as pilot sites to reinforce local protection and governance mechanisms.



Project 2:

ENHANCED MANGROVE ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION AND RESTORATION FOR GROWTH AND EMPOWERMENT IN SAMAR ISLAND (EMERGE)



Grantee:

Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC)



Project Duration:

2025–2027 (2 years)



Project Amount:

Forest Foundation Fund:

PHP 9,828,539

Counterpart Fund:

PHP 4,950,106



Project Summary:

The project seeks to strengthen the protection, restoration, and sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems in the municipalities of Guiuan and Salcedo, Eastern Samar. These municipalities encompass significant coastal and marine ecosystems within the Guiuan Marine Resource Protected Landscapes and Seascapes (GMRPLS), the Guiuan–Salcedo Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), and the Samar Island Natural Park (SINP), yet continue to face threats from land-use conversion, illegal resource extraction, pollution, and the growing impacts of climate change.

The project works with local communities to improve the management of 311 hectares of mangrove forests while enhancing livelihoods and climate resilience through community-based conservation and the development of sustainable mangrove ecotourism enterprises. Key interventions include conducting ecological and climate risk assessments, restoring and rehabilitating degraded mangrove areas, strengthening community-based protection through expanded Bantay Gubat and Bantay Dagat networks, establishing mangrove nurseries, and implementing regular forest and coastal patrols.

It also supports the establishment of community-managed, climate-integrated mangrove ecotourism enterprises in Guiuan and Salcedo by building the capacity of POs and community members in ecotourism management, ecological monitoring, and sustainable natural resource governance. Through these efforts, the project aims to create sustainable livelihood opportunities, increase public appreciation of mangrove ecosystems, reduce pressures on coastal resources, and contribute to the long-term conservation of Eastern Samar's critical landscapes and seascapes.



Project 3:

ENHANCING CAPACITIES FOR MANGROVE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION MECHANISMS IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF LAWAAN AND QUINAPONDAN IN EASTERN SAMAR (PHASE 1)



Grantee:
Philippine Rural
Reconstruction
Movement (PRRM)



Project Duration:
2023–2025 (2 years)



Project Amount:
Forest Foundation
Fund:
PHP 7,455,800
Counterpart Fund:
PHP 456,000



Project Summary:

The project strengthened the capacities of the communities in Barangay Maslog and Taguite in the municipality of Lawaan, and Barangay Sto. Nino and Sta. Margarita in the municipality of Quinapondan on mangrove management and protection. The four POs were positioned as primary stewards through co-management arrangements with LGUs to manage approximately 423 hectares of mangrove forests, and formulate and implement their respective Mangrove Management and Protection Plans (MMPPs).

The implementation of the MMPPs include strengthening forest law enforcement and forest protection through the organization and deputization of the Sentinels, who conduct regular patrolling and monitoring, and enrichment planting in over 20 hectares of degraded areas. Additionally, livelihoods were enhanced through aqua-silviculture, small-scale aquaculture, and the establishment of the Maslog Mangrove Eco Park. These interventions provided additional household incomes, thus reducing pressure on mangroves.

Moreover, the Jollibee Group Foundation (JGF) provided additional support for the restoration of another 10 hectares of mangroves and the provision of patrol boats for the two municipalities.

For more information:

Forest Foundation Philippines
2F Valderrama Building, 107 Esteban St.,
Legaspi Village, Makati City, Metro Manila,
Philippines 1229

(+632) 8891 0595 • (+632) 8864 0287
info@forestfoundation.ph
partnerships@forestfoundation.ph
www.forestfoundation.ph

@forestfoundationph
@forestfoundationph
Forest Foundation Philippines
@ForestFoundationPhilippines