

Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (PPSRNP), Palawan



Area:
22,202 hectares

Administrative unit:
Puerto Princesa City

Background

The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (PPSRNP) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Ramsar Wetland Site, encompassing the Puerto Princesa Underground River (PPUR) and adjacent tropical limestone forests. It is renowned for its unique karst system (a distinctive landscape formed by the dissolution of soluble bedrock) and supports a diverse array of lowland rainforest species.

Conservation challenges within the PPSRNP include:

- Pressures from tourism: Increased tourist activity puts more strain on the area's natural resources and systems.
- Resource exploitation: Wildlife and timber poaching, and land conversion encroach on natural habitats and ecosystems, threatening biodiversity and disrupting ecosystem functions.
- Waste management, including household sewage and agricultural effluents: Poor waste management harms the surrounding environment and degrades ecosystem services.

Ecosystem Functions & Services

The PPSRNP delivers critical ecosystem services while also serving as a cultural icon and educational landscape that reinforces local identity and global environmental stewardship.



Provisioning services

The Park protects the catchment of the PPUR and associated river systems, such as the Cabayugan and Babuyan Rivers, which sustain freshwater availability for local communities, and help maintain water quality and quantity crucial for domestic use.



Regulating services

The intact mountain-to-sea forests and associated vegetation help sequester carbon, regulate local climate patterns, and buffer ecological fluctuations.



Economic products

The Park and its surrounding buffer areas support community-based livelihood initiatives among Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities, including the sustainable use of non-timber forest products such as almaciga resin, agroforestry-based enterprises, and community-based sustainable tourism.



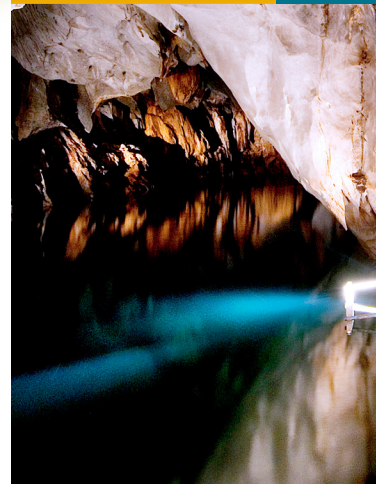
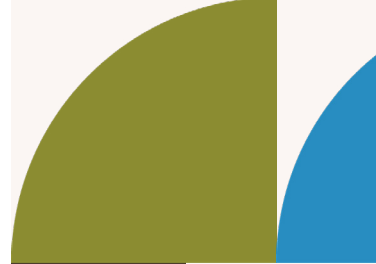
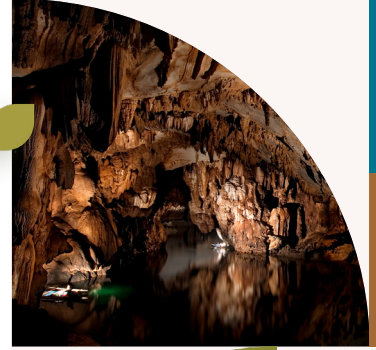
Supporting services

The PPSRNP encompasses a full mountain-to-sea ecosystem with diverse forest formations—including limestone, freshwater swamp, and mangrove forests—that support numerous plant and animal species. At least 800 plant species and over 250 vertebrate species have been identified, including endemic and threatened wildlife such as the Palawan hornbill and Palawan Peacock-Pheasant.



Cultural value

The PPSRNP lies within and adjacent to the Ancestral Domains (ADs) of the Tagbanua and Batak IPs, whose cultural practices and traditional knowledge are intertwined with the landscape and inform local conservation values. Community-based sustainable tourism initiatives also provide opportunities for visitors to learn about local culture, traditional resource management practices, and the ecological significance of the Protected Area (PA).



Key Projects Supported by Forest Foundation Philippines

Project 1:

TRANSFORMATIVE ALLIANCE FOR NATURE RECOVERY AND WELFARE OF FORESTLANDS IN PUERTO PRINCESA SUBTERRANEAN RIVER NATIONAL PARK



Grantee:

Magayen It
Buenavista
Multi-Purpose
Cooperative
(Buenavista MPC)



Project Duration:

2024–2026 (2 years)



Project Amount:

Forest Foundation
Fund:

PHP 9,323,263

Counterpart Fund:

PHP 277,304



Project Summary:

Typhoon Odette caused extensive damage to the PPSRNP and nearby barangays, resulting in severe ecological and socio-economic consequences. The storm uprooted trees, damaged vegetation, disrupted habitats, and caused significant biodiversity loss, endangering rare species.

A U.S. Agency for International Development-Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans, and Landscapes (USAID-SIBOL) assessment reported that over 58% (9,619 hectares) of forests were affected. Ecosystem services were disrupted, with altered water flows, soil erosion, river siltation, and landslides severely impacting local livelihoods.

Communities dependent on forest resources, including the Tagbanua, experienced substantial income losses, while Community-Based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) Associations suffered damage to key assets. These challenges increased economic vulnerability and led to reports of illegal tree cutting and fishing, further threatening the Park's recovery.

The project addressed these impacts through a three-pronged strategy emphasizing ecological restoration, strengthening People's Organizations (POs), and livelihood development. It contributed to the rehabilitation of 111.67 hectares of damaged forestlands, enhancement of the capacities of four POs to contribute more effectively to the restoration and conservation of the PPSRNP, and the development of Biodiversity-Friendly Enterprises (BDFEs) to sustain recovery efforts.

Through these interventions, the project fostered the locally-led, sustainable recovery of forested areas by restoring ecosystem functions and improving the socio-economic resilience of affected communities, providing a model for integrated disaster response and conservation within the PPSRNP.

Project 2:

FOSTERING OUTDOOR READING AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP TOGETHER (FOSTER)

**Grantee:**

Ekomunikatib
Multimedia
Consultancy Services

**Project Duration:**

2023–2024 (9 months)

**Project Amount:**

**Forest Foundation
Fund:**
PHP 1,349,998

Counterpart Fund:
PHP 598,200

**Project Summary:**

The project was implemented to address persistent forest threats within the PPSRNP by promoting environmental education and responsible conservation behavior, particularly among youth. The project was implemented in collaboration with the PPSRNP-Protected Area Management Office (PAMO), the Department of Education-Puerto Princesa City Division, and six public elementary schools to strengthen youth-focused conservation education and communication initiatives.

Over a nine-month period, the project developed and published four storybooks with audiovisual versions, conducted storytelling caravans, produced an interactive board game, carried out teacher training, and distributed educational materials. These activities reached over 500 grade 5 and 6 students, fostering their understanding of forest resources, ongoing threats, and conservation solutions, while engaging them through child-friendly, empowering storytelling.

The project enhanced environmental awareness and knowledge among the participating students, strengthening their capacity to act as advocates for forest conservation. By integrating PPSRNP's Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) strategies and supporting the Department of Education's capacity development initiatives, it promoted cross-sectoral collaboration and documented learning experiences to inform future programs.

Project 3:

FOREST PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE THROUGH INCLUSIVE SOCIAL FENCING STRATEGIES IN PUERTO PRINCESA SUBTERRANEAN RIVER NATIONAL PARK

**Grantee:**

Sabang Sea Ferry
Multi-Purpose
Cooperative
(SSFMP)

**Project Duration:**

2023–2025 (2 years)

**Project Amount:**

**Forest Foundation
Fund:**
PHP 8,848,048.70

Counterpart Fund:
PHP 2,610,000

Project Summary:

The project strengthened the PPSRNP, a PA with a globally renowned ridge-to-reef ecosystem, by addressing the compounded challenges of post-pandemic recovery and the impacts of Typhoon Odette.

The project engaged POs to lead forest restoration and protection activities, enhancing ecological resilience, while supporting the communities that depend on the Park. Interventions prioritized climate adaptation and disaster preparedness, ensuring that recovery efforts incorporated resilience against destructive activities and future climate hazards.

The project advanced forest and landscape recovery by supporting 500 hectares of Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) and strengthening protection mechanisms. It also enhanced the capacities of participating POs and community members, building both individual skills and collective organizational capabilities.

By integrating CBST initiatives and livelihood diversification, the project contributed to improving socio-economic resilience alongside ecological recovery. These efforts reinforced the transformative power of community collaboration in conservation, contributing to a more sustainable, resilient, and secure future for PPSRNP and its surrounding communities.

Project 4:

SUPPORTING THE REHABILITATION ACTIVITIES OF FOREST-BASED TOURISM SITES IN PUERTO-PRINCESA SUBTERRANEAN RIVER NATIONAL PARK

**Grantee:**

Sabang Mangrove
Paddle Boat Tour
Guide Association
(SMPBTGA)

**Project Duration:**

2022-2023 (3 months)

**Project Amount:**

**Forest Foundation
Fund:**
PHP 500,000

Counterpart Fund:
PHP 61,000

**Project Summary:**

After Typhoon Odette struck, forest-based POs and CBST groups within the PPSRNP continued to face challenges in restoring normal operations. The typhoon had caused extensive damage not only to physical assets and natural resources, but also to organizational systems.

Coupled with reduced tourist arrivals due to COVID-19, many POs and CBST groups lacked the cash reserves and savings needed to repair or replace damaged facilities. The project addressed these challenges by supporting both the rehabilitation of key infrastructure and the improvement of organizational systems to reduce vulnerability to future hazards and uncertainties.

The project facilitated the rehabilitation of facilities at the Sabang Mangrove Paddle Boat Tour (SMPBT) site, and the cleaning and restoration of surrounding forest trails. In addition, it enhanced the grantee's financial and project management capacity, strengthening their organizational resilience.

These interventions not only restored the site's operational functionality, but also reinforced community-led conservation efforts, improved preparedness for future hazards, and contributed to the sustainable management of the PPSRNP.

Project 5:

FOREST FOUNDATION PHILIPPINES LEARNING SERIES 5 - PUNO NG BUHAY 5 AND WOW SERIES (FEATURING PUERTO PRINCESA SUBTERRANEAN RIVER NATIONAL PARK)

**Grantee:**

Knowledge Channel
Foundation (KCFI)

**Project Duration:**

2021-2023 (2 years)

**Project Amount:**

**Forest Foundation
Fund:**
PHP 8,000,000

Counterpart Fund:
PHP 37,125,000

**Project Summary:**

This project focused on media-based environmental education, covering all competencies related to "Plants and the Environment" in the K to 12 curriculum. It prepared young learners with foundational knowledge of Philippine forests, including the PPSRNP, with a focus on plants, heredity, variation, and ecosystems. The project engaged students in age-appropriate activities that promoted sustainable practices to protect and conserve forests.

The project also fostered the learners' appreciation of their communities' natural resources and encouraged participation in ecotourism initiatives. By using engaging media tools, storytelling, and interactive activities, the initiative empowered students to develop a sense of responsibility toward the environment, understand the importance of forest conservation, and become informed advocates for the sustainable management of PPSRNP and other forest landscapes in the Philippines.

Project 6:

PUERTO PRINCESA SUBTERRANEAN RIVER NATIONAL PARK FIELD GUIDE BOOK AS SOURCE OF INFORMATION, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNICATION MATERIALS



Grantee:
Kilang Likaslinang



Project Duration:
2019 (3 months)



Project Amount:
Forest Foundation Fund:
PHP 500,000
Counterpart Fund:
PHP 104,000



Project Summary:

The project broadened the Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) program of the PPSRNP by strengthening both its IEC initiatives and its collaboration with civil society groups within the Park. Building on the 2018 publication, "A Guide to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park", developed with support from Forest Foundation Philippines, the project expanded the use of IEC materials to reach wider audiences. These materials were integrated into existing platforms such as radio broadcasts, tourist information kiosks, and site museums to enhance public awareness of the Park's biodiversity and conservation value.

The project also strengthened partnerships with POs and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations (IPOs). It further encouraged innovative approaches to conservation communication, as Park Rangers used the educational posters and storybooks to engage communities more effectively alongside their enforcement role. Amid the impacts of COVID-19, the project strengthened multistakeholder participation, improved communication channels, and generated new approaches to biodiversity advocacy.

For more information:

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