



Republic of the Philippines  
**House of Representatives**  
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

Eighteenth Congress  
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5178

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**Introduced by Representative Florencio “Bem” G. Noel**

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

This bill seeks to strengthen the capabilities of forest rangers in enforcing the laws on preserving and protecting the environment by providing the necessary firearms, training and assistance.

Article II of the 1987 Constitution provides that:

*“Section 16. The State shall protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature.”*

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has long been at the forefront of the country’s battle for the protection, conservation, and rehabilitation of our environment. With the recent gruesome killing of Forest Ranger Bienvinido Veguilla Jr. in El Nido, Palawan, coupled with the finding of international nongovernmental organization, Global Witness, dubbing the Philippines as the most dangerous country for environmental defenders and foresters in 2018, it is clear that with respect to environmental protection, particularly forest protection, our agents and personnel are inadequately equipped and trained to enforce our laws and ordinances relative to environmental protection. Such inadequacies led to the proliferation and

continuation of prohibited practices and activities that contributes to the total degradation of our forests<sup>1</sup>.

It is now of transcendental importance that we strengthen enforcement capabilities of our forest rangers as well as other DENR enforcers responsible for the protection and preservation of our forests.

This bill aims to:

(a) Provide the forest rangers with firearms to be used in the performance of their duties during patrol, security measures or apprehensions;

(b) Provide necessary advanced communication, information, and defensive equipment;

(c) Provide proper education and training in the use of firearms, law enforcement strategies and tactics, making arrests, execute search warrants, and testifying in court, fire prevention and firefighting, how to assist in search and rescue operations, and providing emergency medical aid; and

(d) Require the cooperation and assistance of the PNP in all operations pertaining to investigation, apprehension, and prosecution of persons committing any acts in violation of Philippine environmental laws.

Thus, due to the public outcry and the unheard pleas of the DENR, it is incumbent upon us, the legislature, to pass a law enacting measures that will improve the capability of the forest rangers in protecting and preserving the environment.

In view of the foregoing, immediate approval of this bill is urgently sought.

  
FLORENCIO "BEM" G. NOEL

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/enemies-state/>





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**AN ACT**  
**STRENGTHENING THE CAPABILITIES OF FOREST RANGERS IN**  
**ENFORCING THE LAWS ON PROTECTING AND PRESERVING THE**  
**ENVIRONMENT BY PROVIDING THE NECESSARY FIREARMS,**  
**TRAININGS AND ASSISTANCE**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

SECTION 1. ***Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “*Forest Ranger Protection Act.*”

SEC. 2. ***Declaration of Policy.*** – It is the policy of the State to protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature. The State shall formulate and enforce measures to ensure the protection and preservation of our environment and natural resources not only for the present generation but for the future generation as well.

Towards this end, the State shall strengthen the enforcement capabilities of forest rangers by authorizing them to possess and carry firearms and equipments necessary to execute, implement and enforce the laws as well as the implementing the rules and regulations, to protect and preserve the forests and wildlife in the country.

SEC. 3. ***Possession and Carrying of Firearms by the Forest Rangers.*** – Forest rangers are hereby authorized to possess and carry firearm in the performance of their official duties within their areas of jurisdiction. The necessary firearms to be issued to forest rangers shall be determined by the Philippine National Police and the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources.

For purposes of this Act, *forest ranger* refers to an officer or employee of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) who, by the nature of the appointment or the function of the position, is authorized by law or by competent authority to execute, implement or enforce the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 705 otherwise known as the “*Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines*,” other related laws, as well as their implementing regulations.

SEC. 4. ***Safety Gear, Communication and Transportation.*** – The forest rangers shall be issued with a safety bullet-proof vest in all operations, and with advanced information technology equipment necessary for surveillance and

communication within their areas of jurisdiction. A means of transportation shall also be provided to allow the forest rangers to respond quickly to matters pertaining to their functions.

SEC. 5. ***Increased Deployment Ratio of Forest Rangers.*** – The Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources shall upgrade the deployment ratio of forest rangers to an average of at least one forest ranger per five hundred (500) to one thousand (1,000) hectares.

SEC. 6. ***Education and Training.*** – Qualified members of the PNP or AFP and other law enforcement agencies or bureaus shall provide education and training programs to forest rangers on the following:

- (a) Proper and responsible use of firearms and tactical self- defense training;
- (b) Lessons on laws and ordinances pertinent to the protection of the environment;
- (c) Strategies and tactics to undertake detection, surveillance, investigation and prevention of environmental crimes, and assist in their prosecution;
- (d) Procedure of arresting offenders with or without a warrant of arrest, how to serve search warrant, detaining arrested persons and proper way of testifying in the court;
- (e) Use of advanced information technology systems and effective information management relating to environmental crimes;



- (f) Conduct of search and rescue operations;
- (g) Emergency medical aid;
- (h) Fire prevention and firefighting; and
- (i) Other education and training programs necessary for the effective exercise of their duties and responsibilities.

SEC. 7. ***Law Enforcement Assistance.*** – Members of the PNP, AFP, barangay officials, or other persons authorized by law to protect and preserve the forest shall assist and actively work together with forest rangers upon prior coordination in performing the following duties:

- (a) Routine patrol of any area defined in Presidential Decree No. 705, where forest officers are authorized to enter and perform official duties and functions;
- (b) Immediate investigation of the reports and complaints provided in Section 80 of Presidential Decree No. 705;
- (c) Execute the warrant of searches and seizures; and
- (d) Lawful arrest with or without a warrant of any persons in violation of environmental protection laws and ordinances.

SEC. 8. ***Appointment of Personnel.*** – The Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources shall prepare the policy and guidelines on the selection and appointment of forest rangers in accordance with civil service, rules and regulations.

SEC. 9. ***Transitory Provision.*** – Individuals currently employed by the DENR as forest rangers on contractual basis shall be given priority in hiring for permanent positions provided they meet qualifications and standards required for the position.

SEC. 10. ***Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, in consultation with the Secretary of Interior and Local Government and the chief of the Philippine National Police, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 11. ***Appropriation.*** – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be charged to the appropriations for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 12. ***Separability Clause.*** – If any provision or part of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or any provision not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 13. ***Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders and their implementing rules, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. ***Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,