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# Bike run raises funds to protect Palawan's Mt. Mantalingahan

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PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, Philippines -- A campaign to save the forests of Mt. Mantalingahan in southern Palawan got a boost Saturday, when a bike run staged by hundreds of mountain bikers, including a senator, raised funds from local and international donors.

Some 200 bikers, joined by Senator Pia Cayetano, chair of the Senate committee on environment and an avid biker, joined the event that raised over P250,000 from donors, including Shell Philippines Exploration BV and Conservation International (CI).

The event, organized by the National Union of Journalists-Palawan and local bike associations, was supported by donors who pledged funding for livelihood activities of local communities that would be affected by the planned conversion of Mantalingahan into a protected area.

Cayetano led a bike run north of the city proper that attracted hundreds of bike enthusiasts, including children and foreign tourists.

Marvi Trudeau, an official of Pilipinas Shell Foundation Inc., said Shell Philippines and companies under the Malampaya Service Contract 60 committed to put in P25 for every kilometer covered by each biker who participated in the event.

CI, for its part, said it was putting up a major contribution to set up an "endowment" facility whereby operations and management of the proposed protected area would be funded by the fund's interest earnings.

"The proceeds will be used to support livelihood activities in Mt. Mantalingahan. We are working with CI and other groups to detail the implementation of the projects that will be funded by the Bike for Nature project," Trudeau said.

Dr. Artemio Antolin of CI said the biking activity helped raise local and international awareness of Mt. Mantalingahan "as a key biodiversity area."

Antolin said Mt. Mantalingahan needs to be conserved in the wake of the rapid expansion of mining activities around the mountain range and threats of illegal logging.

The proposal to declare Mantalingahan a protected area has been endorsed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and is awaiting a presidential proclamation from Malacañang this year, according to Jaynee Baldera of CI Palawan.

CI scientists, who conducted an exploration in 2007 in the high portion of the planned 120,457-hectare "protected landscape" some 200 kilometers south of Puerto Princesa City, were able to collect new species of plants and animals, including an orchid and a mountain shrew never before known to science.

City Mayor Edward Hagedorn, the provincial government of Palawan and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines-Palawan Chapter jointly supported the activity.

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