

# P&G PARTNERS WITH CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL ON THE PALAWAN PROJECT IN THE PHILIPPINES, A PROVINCE CALLED “LAST ECOLOGICAL FRONTIER”

## PARTNER



## LOCATION



### PALAWAN, PHILIPPINES

Mt. Mantalingahan Protected Landscape (MMPL),  
Cleopatra's Needle Critical Habitat Area (CNCH)

## BACKGROUND

The island of Palawan has much of the last frontier forests of the mega-diverse country that is the Philippines. The province of Palawan is known as the Philippine's “last ecological frontier”, according to [UNESCO in 2018](#), where its archipelago composed of main island and more than 1,700 islands. Based on the IUCN classification, it has 105 out of the 475 threatened species in the Philippines, where of the 105 threatened species, 67 are endemic to the Philippines. Palawan is home to several Indigenous peoples who have stewarded the lands and waters for generations.

Its coastal and marine ecosystems include coral reef (379 species of corals), seagrass meadow (13 species), and mangrove (31 species, distributed in 44,500 hectares of mangrove forests, the highest remaining mangrove cover in the Philippines). It also harbors several marine mammals such as marine turtles, dugong, and whale shark.

- **Mount Mantalingahan (MMPL)**, the highest peak in Palawan, provides more than US\$ 5.5 billion in ecosystem services to people.

- o Ecosystem services are benefits to people provided by natural environment and healthy ecosystems. Examples for Mount Mantalingahan (MMPL) includes water, soil conservation, food, flood control, carbon sequestration, non-timber forest products, medicinal plants, traditional and ceremonial sites for local communicates, and natural attractions (waterfalls, caves, etc.) and for tourism.

- o This mountain is also home to indigenous Palawans who have lived on this land for thousands of years with roughly 3,000 families depending on the water that flows from the mountain for their agriculture, drinking water, and livelihoods

- **Mount Mantalingahan (MMPL)** holds over half its original forest cover, is a key biodiversity area where new species are still being discovered and provides an essential watershed for the 200,000 people that depend upon it

- o The mountain's substantial forest cover also plays an important role in absorbing and storing carbon. For the entire MMPL area, the forests cover about 100,000 hectares, approximately 79% of the total land area, three-quarters of which is primary forest playing a macro-climatic function by acting as a significant carbon sink. ([UNESCO, 2015](#))

- o Like many forests in this region, it faces considerable threats — including illegal logging and wildlife poaching, conversion to agricultural land, mangrove loss and unsustainable mining. In response to these threats, in 2009, over 120,000 hectares of this range was declared the largest terrestrial protected area

- **Cleopatra's Needle Critical Habitat (CNCH)** in Puerto Princesa City was declared a critical habitat in December 2017 and is home to countless endemic species such as the Palawan Pangolin.

- Cleopatra's Needle Critical Habitat (CNCH) total area is 41,350 hectares and within this is Cleopatra's Needle Mountain, part of the Cleopatra's Needle Mountain, which is the city's highest peak at an altitude of 1,593 meters

- Efforts are being undertaken to protect its pristine forest located near the world-renowned [Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park \(PPSRNP\)](#), a World Heritage Site

- o PPSRNP contains one of the world's most impressive cave systems, with intact old-growth forests and distinctive wildlife. It is approximately 22,202 hectares and contains an 8.2km long subterranean river system.

## OPPORTUNITY

The goal for this project to protect, improve, and restore Palawan's forests and critical ecosystems (such as mangroves) in partnership with Indigenous Populations and local communities. This is in order to increase and diversify livelihood opportunities, and to promote adoption of sustainable financing mechanisms that increase the value of standing forest, promote alternative markets, and secure long-term support for the management – including support for the development of ancestral domain, forest land use, and protected areas – of each protected and/or critical habitat area.

The project will work to implement a set of interventions related to ancestral domain and natural resource planning, management, and implementation to achieve impacts such as reduction in habitat and essential ecosystems due to poor infrastructure planning and commodity driven land conversion, reduction in illegal logging, and strengthened access and usage rights to land and coastal resources for indigenous communities. Furthermore, the work will unlock opportunities to support investment in sustainable production, sustainable tourism, and ecosystem markets such as forest carbon or blue carbon.

Given the early phases of this project, more in-depth information will be shared as it progresses. Currently we have a high-level overview of activities for each year, with overall project timeline depending on outcomes and/or delays (such as any activities impacted due to current global pandemic) of the previous stage: :

- **Year 1:** Project Design and Implementation (of activities specified for first phase of implementation) for Blue Carbon and Forest Carbon Work
  - o Step 1: Feasibility Assessments
  - o Step 2: Project Design and Development, and Implementation
- **Year 2:** Project Design Document (PDD) Development, Project Validation, and Continuous Project Implementation and Management
- **Year 3:** Project Verification and Continuous Project Implementation and Management

## PROJECT IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

P&G and Conservation International will work collectively across the landscapes with various stakeholders to ensure the co-benefits of this project will impact the groups who are affected by the region.

- This includes includes Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, Local and National Government Agencies, Protected Area Management Boards, civil society and private sector – to implement a set of interventions related to natural resource planning, management to achieve impacts; such as reduction in habitat and essential ecosystems.
  - o This is due to poor infrastructure planning and commodity-driven land conversion, reduction in illegal logging, and strengthened access and usage rights to land and coastal resources for indigenous communities
- Furthermore, the work will unlock opportunities to support investment in sustainable production, sustainable tourism, and ecosystem markets such as forest carbon or blue carbon

- When using a rapid analysis, a project across all 3 sites **could generate about 420,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>/year** of avoiding emissions from deforestation in a conservative scenario. This represents about a third of the emissions from the island of Palawan. However, this estimate does not include benefits from activities related to blue carbon (mangroves, etc.) included, the project will have greater carbon reduction/sequestration impact.



**420,000 tCO<sub>2</sub> / YEAR**

- More specific numbers for each project site will continue to be determined during site selection and in first year of project development.

• An important component of the project is to build the capacity of IPLC leaders to effectively negotiate with external development actors. This is important to ensure that the benefits arising from this intervention will be long lasting and will be sustained. If the IPLCs are not empowered to negotiate with development actors in the future, conservation gains will be temporary because extractives will be able to aggressively pursue their agendas, whereas if IPLCs are able to negotiate they can continue to safeguard the environment in Palawan.



IMAGE LIBRARY



© Conservation International | Mt. Mantalingahan Protected Landscape



© Conservation International | Mt. Mantalingahan Protected Landscape



© Conservation International | Palawan Fisherman



© Conservation International | Coron Bay Palawan



© Conservation International | Palawan Mangroves

