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DENR to implement strict measures in Mla Bay

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is set to implement more stringent enforcement measures against polluters of the Manila Bay.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said the department would be stricter in enforcing laws on solid waste and wastewater in the bay as part of the government's efforts to clean-up several bodies of water in the country.

"The DENR is changing its paradigm of enforcement, prioritizing and doing a clean sweep of all dischargers of volume and toxic wastewater, randomizing inspections, imposing holidays on those who have not secured wastewater discharge permits, and raising penalties and surcharges for those who still do not have them after the prescribed amnesty period," Cimatu said.

Cimatu unveiled last week the plans of the DENR during the first consultation meeting with Manila Bay stakeholders,

which would help the department comply more effectively with the writ of continuing mandamus issued by the Supreme Court in 2008, directing the DENR and 13 other government agencies to clean up and rehabilitate Manila Bay.

The environment chief said the operational plan for Manila Bay aims to remove illegal structures along the bay and its tributaries, and relocate people living nearby.

"These people are discharging directly into our waterways so it

is no surprise that fecal coliform is very high in our urban water bodies," Cimatu said.

The DENR considers Manila Bay as one of the most urgent rehabilitation projects, considering that about 30 percent of the country's population live within the Manila Bay basin and 17 river systems drain into it.

"The country's economic losses from neglecting sewage can reach up to P78 billion a year, which is on top of the losses in ecosystem services and biodiversity," he said.

*DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR)