

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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DENR TO AUDIT ALL FOREST MNGM'T CONTRACTS

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has ordered a review of all integrated forest management agreements (IFMAs) following the suspension of logging operations in Zamboanga.

In an order, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu designated Undersecretary for Policy and Planning Jonas Leones as head of the seven-member performance evaluation committee (PEC) which is tasked to provide directions on the conduct of the performance audit of all existing IFMA contracts nationwide.

"The PEC will lead in the planning of the assessment activities and harmonize the conduct of the assessment in

the different regions to ensure that the integrity of forests in providing goods and services are maintained," Cimatu said.

An IFMA is a production sharing deal between DENR and a qualified applicant, which grants the latter the exclusive right to develop, utilize and manage a specified area of forestland and forest resources for a period of 25 years. It may be renewed for another 25 years.

Cimatu ordered the creation

of 14 performance evaluation teams (PET), clustered into Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao island groups.

"The PEC has to consolidate and analyze the findings and recommendations of the PETs, including the penalties and sanctions, if warranted," Cimatu said.

The audit will cover five aspects: technical, legal, environmental, economic and impact on agricultural areas.

Cimatu directed DENR regional directors to ensure that each of the 14 PETs will have experts from the Environmental Management Bureau and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau as members.

He specifically directed the PETs to scrutinize the 25-

* DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENT AND
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year comprehensive development and management plan (CDMP) approved by the DENR for each of the IFMA holder.

Operating on the principle of sustainable forest management, the CDMP details every facet and stage of forest management that an IFMA holder should implement as it establishes tree plantations while protecting and enhancing the remaining forest cover within the concession area.

A secretariat, consisting

of experts from the Forest Management Bureau, will also be created to provide technical and administrative support to PEC and PETs, especially in the gathering of documents vital to the undertaking.

The PEC, through the Secretariat shall ensure the immediate implementation of activities and monitor day-to-day activities of the PETs and document all activities of the performance evaluation.

President Duterte ordered

the suspension of several logging firms in Zamboanga following massive floods and landslides that hit parts of Mindanao just before Christmas last year.

Data showed that the country has an existing 102 IFMAs with a combined area of 727,982 hectares.

Of these, however, only 89 IFMAs will be covered by DENR's review as the remaining 13 are located within the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.