

Six months to save Boracay

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SUSTAINABLE Tourism Development has been the subject of both international and domestic discourse, and is particularly important when the life cycle of many tourist destinations, including Boracay, is at risk of irreversible collapse. In his study, “A New Approach to Sustainable Tourism Development,” Frederico Nato has cautioned developing countries and pointed to evidence how overexploitation and over-development has caused many tourist destinations irreversible damage arising from environmental degradation and consequent loss of revenues.



The problem hounding Boracay has been persistent for over two decades — presence of algal bloom along Boracay’s shoreline has become more frequent and pronounced. The phenomenon, which at the onset could only be observed for a week, turned into months.

At least two hundred businesses and thousands of local residents have not installed pipelines connecting to the province’s septage and sewage treatment plant.

In 2015, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) had already noted that coliform bacteria levels in a drainage outlet that empties into the sea in Sitio Bulabog in Boracay had already exceeded safe standards by at least 47x, or 47,460 most probable number (mpn) per 100 millimeter (ml). The safe level for swimming is 1000 mpn per ml.

Two days ago, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) started the demolition of structures that occupy the 12-meter government road right-of-way and cleaning or declogging of existing drainage lines along Boracay Circumferential Road.

Secretary Mark Villar said the rehabilitation will be carried out, strictly following the 6.10-meter carriageway standard on both sides — a standard consistent with the 2008 municipal ordinance imposing a minimum setback requirement of at least six meters from the center of the road.

The Boracay Circumferential Road, spanning 5.2 kilometers, will be divided into three sections. The first phase will start from Cagban Port to Rotonda (1.4 km), the second from Rotonda to Brgy. Balabag (1.9 km), and the third from Brgy Balabag to Brgy. Yapak (1.9 km). The project will also have sidewalks for pedestrians and bike lanes.

Roads on the island are narrow due to road right-of-way violations, with structures closely built along national roads, resulting in carriageways being shared by vehicles, pedestrians, and merchants.

The project will incorporate an improved drainage and sewerage system along the main road to contain inland flooding and waste discharge.

DPWH has already employed at least 150 construction workers and 18 heavy equipment to start the demolition. It will implement a 24/7 construction schedule to meet the six-month deadline posed by President Rodrigo Duterte.