



History of Philippines' Engagement in the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia

1993	The Philippines began hosting the Regional Office/Secretariat of the GEF/UNDP/IMO project on Marine Pollution Prevention in the East Asian Seas (MPP-EAS).
1994	Along with Xiamen, China, Batangas Bay, Philippines was established as the first demonstration site for integrated coastal management (ICM) implementation in the East Asian Seas (EAS) region. As an innovative process for managing coastal and marine areas, ICM makes use of the ridge-to-reef management approach and is adaptive, iterative, and integrative in nature. It promotes horizontal integration (i.e., multi-stakeholder involvement) as well as vertical integration (i.e., involvement and linking of various levels of governance).
1995	The First Regional Training Course on the Application of ICM System in Marine Pollution Prevention and Management was held in China, Philippines, and Singapore. Batangas Coastal Resource Management Foundation (BCRMF), a group of private companies, was established in support of the Batangas Bay ICM Demonstration Project.
1996	The Environment and Natural Resources Office (ENRO) was established by the Batangas Provincial Government. It serves as the coordinating office of the Batangas Bay ICM Demonstration Project. The Batangas Bay Environment Protection Council was established (through provincial ordinance) as the multi-sectoral coordinating mechanism of the Batangas Bay ICM Demonstration Project.
1999	The Philippines designated Manila Bay as one of the pollution hotspots for the implementation of the MPP-EAS project.
2000	The country joined the second phase of the PEMSEA evolution cycle (i.e. GEF/UNDP/IMO Building Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia) together with Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, RO Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The Province of Bataan established its Bataan ICM Program and became PEMSEA's first ICM parallel site, a province implementing its own ICM program that is purely funded by the provincial government in partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders.
2001	The Manila Bay Coastal Strategy Declaration was signed by national and local governments.
2003	Together with 11 other countries in the EAS region (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, RO Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet nam), the Philippines signed the Putrajaya Declaration of Regional Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) during the inaugural EAS Congress hosted by the government of Malaysia. The SDS-SEA embodies the shared vision of the countries and other stakeholders for the sustainable development of the Seas of East Asia. It serves as a common platform for regional cooperation and as a framework for policy and program development and implementation at the national and local levels for the sustainable development of the coasts and ocean in the EAS region.

2004

The Province of Cavite established its Cavite ICM Program and became one of PEMSEA's ICM sites.

2006

The Philippines signed the Haikou Declaration that designated PEMSEA as the regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the SDS-SEA and provided it with a governance structure and operating modality during the 2nd EAS Congress held in Haikou, China.

The Provinces of Bataan, Batangas, and Cavite joined the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments for Sustainable Coastal Development (PNLG), which was created during the 2nd EAS Congress.

The Philippines issued Executive Order No. 533 adopting ICM as the policy framework for the sustainable development of the coastal and marine environment and resources.

2007

The Philippines constructed the PEMSEA Office Building within the DENR Compound in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines. A 10-year agreement was signed, providing PEMSEA with the use of the building and its amenities within the DENR compound.

The Province of Batangas published the first local provincial State of the Coasts report in the EAS region.

2008

The Philippine Supreme Court issued a continuing mandamus requiring 13 government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve Manila Bay by implementing the Operational Plan for the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy.

The Province of Guimaras established its ICM program and became PEMSEA's ICM site. In the same year, the province was formally inducted as a PNLC member.

De La Salle Lipa (DLSL) and Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan (XU) in the Philippines were designated as PEMSEA Learning Centers and members of the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC).

2009

The Philippines hosted the 3rd EAS in Manila, Philippines. The event brought together more than 1,000 participants from countries within and outside the EAS region.

The country adopted the Manila Declaration where, together with 10 other countries in the region, it committed to strengthen the implementation of ICM and climate change adaptation in the EAS region.

With Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, Indonesia, Lao PDR, RO Korea, and Timor-Leste, the country also signed the agreement recognizing the international legal personality of PEMSEA.

The Province of Bataan hosted the 2009 PNLC Forum, which convened more than 100 local chief executives and technical staff from 9 PEMSEA country partners.

2010

The Philippines hosted the stocktaking meeting of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), recognizing PEMSEA and the SDS-SEA as a regional governance mechanism and framework, respectively, for the sustainable management of the Seas of East Asia.

The University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) was designated as a PEMSEA Learning Center and PNLC member.

2011

As PNLC members, the Provinces of Bataan, Batangas, Cavite, and Guimaras signed the Dongying Declaration on Building a Blue Economy through ICM.

The Philippine Ports Authority adopted the Port Safety, Health and Environmental Management (PSHEM) Code and Recognition System and initiated its implementation in the ports of Iloilo and Cagayan de Oro.

DENR Undersecretary Analiza Rebuelta-Teh was elected as Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Session of the EAS Partnership Council (PC) for the period 2011-2013.

2012

The PEMSEA Headquarters Agreement was signed between the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines and PEMSEA.

The country signed the Changwon Declaration on Blue Economy together with 10 other countries in the EAS region at the 4th EAS Congress held in Changwon, RO Korea. The Changwon Declaration also adopted the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2012- 2016 in pursuit of an ocean- based blue economy.

2013

The PEMSEA Headquarters Agreement was ratified by the President and Senate of the Philippines.

The country drafted the National ICM Program for Sustainable Development of the Coastal and Marine Environment and Resources of the Philippines as mandated by Executive Order No. 533. The program targets the development and implementation of effective ICM programs in partnership with local governments, covering more than 20 percent of the country's coastline in the next 5 years.

The University of the Philippines – Marine Science Institute was designated as a PEMSEA Regional Center of Excellence in coral reef research and marine protected area (MPA) management as well as a member of the PNLC.

The Port of Iloilo received PSHEM System Level 1 Certification.

DENR Undersecretary Analiza Rebuelta-Teh served as Chair of the Intergovernmental Session of the EAS PC from 2013 to 2015.

Dr. Antonio La Viña, Associate Director for Climate Policy and International Relations of the Manila Observatory, was elected as Co-Chair of the EAS PC for the period 2013-2015.

The Philippines hosted the 5th EAS PC Meeting and a number of succeeding meetings of the Council and its Executive Committee (EC).

2014

The country joined the seven-year regional GEF/UNDP Project on Scaling up the Implementation of the SDS-SEA, which aimed to catalyze actions and investments at the regional, national and local levels to rehabilitate and sustain coastal and marine ecosystem services and build a sustainable coastal and ocean-based economy in the EAS region. The project supported the establishment of learning sites for the application of ICM in climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, coastal and marine habitat protection and restoration, fisheries management, livelihood support, water resource management, pollution reduction, and waste management. The learning sites include provinces in the Manila Bay Area region (Bataan, Cavite, and Pampanga), Verde Island Passage (Batangas, Oriental Mindoro, and Romblon), Guimaras Province, and Macajalar Bay.

The Port of Cagayan de Oro received PSHEM System Level 1 Certification.

2015

The Philippines endorsed the 2015 SDS-SEA framework together with 10 other countries in the EAS region during the 5th EAS Congress held in Da Nang, Viet Nam. The 2015 SDS-SEA framework is a package of relevant principles, regional and international action programs, agreements, instruments, and implementation approaches for achieving sustainable development of the Seas of East Asia. It offers a regional framework for countries and other stakeholders to implement regional and international commitments.

The Philippines signed the Da Nang Compact, which reaffirms the EAS countries' commitment to implement the SDS-SEA and lays down the post-2015 strategic targets of PEMSEA. The Compact is the region's support for the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other relevant international and regional commitments related to the coasts and ocean.

The Provinces of Bataan, Batangas, Cavite, and Guimaras received ICM System Level 1 Certification in 2015.

De La Salle Lipa, Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan, and UP Visayas were designated as PEMSEA Learning Centers.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between PEMSEA and the Ports of Batangas and General Santos for the implementation of the PSHEM System.

2016

The Ports of Batangas and General Santos received PSHEM System Level 1 Certification.

Dr. Antonio La Viña, Associate Director for Climate Policy and International Relations of the Manila Observatory, served as Chair of the EAS PC for the period 2016-2019.

2017

An independent third-party assessment was conducted to objectively evaluate the coverage of ICM programs using the ICM Code as basis. It covered 12 regions, 32 provinces, and 73 municipalities/cities for the assessment.

A 25-year agreement was signed with the Government of the Philippines for the use of the PEMSEA office building and its amenities.

2018

The Philippines hosted the 6th EAS Congress in Iloilo. The country signed the Iloilo Ministerial Declaration, which commits to pursue PEMSEA's self-sustainability post-2019 and endorsed the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2018-2022. The plan consists of priority governance and management programs to operationalize the SDS-SEA and is aligned with international commitments such as the UN SDGs, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Aichi Biodiversity targets.

The Province of Guimaras hosted the 2018 PNLG Forum, which convened more than 100 local chief executives and technical staff from 9 PEMSEA countries.

Cavite State University (CvSU) was designated as a PEMSEA Learning Center and PNLC member.

2019

The Philippines finalized its first National State of the Ocean and Coasts, which highlights the contribution of the ocean economy to the country and serves as a mechanism to monitor ocean health, investment, and net returns from ocean-related economic activities and the outcomes of policies and governance that espouse the blue economy approach.

The Philippines conducted a review of national policies, legislations, and institutional mechanisms for sustainable development of coastal and marine areas and resources in the Philippines.

2020

PEMSEA completed the GEF/UNDP/PEMSEA Project on Scaling up the Implementation of the SDS-SEA where the Philippines, together with 11 other countries in East Asia, has covered 40 percent of the region's coastline with ICM programs.

ICM Bill was filed at the 18th Congress in line with the priority legislative agenda of the environment and natural resources sector of the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022. The bill supports the institutionalization of ICM at the national and local level governance systems.

The Provinces of Bataan and Batangas were awarded with the ICM Level 2 Certification whereas the Provinces of Cavite and Guimaras were re-certified for ICM Level 1 during the 2020 PNLG Forum hosted by Xiamen, China.

2021

PRF initiated the DENR-PEMSEA Special Project on the Assessment of Coastal and Marine Initiatives in the Philippines, covering foreign-assisted projects that were implemented in 2008- 2020. The first phase involved the development of an integrated evaluation framework, evaluation methodology, indicators, and survey instruments for assessing target projects.

PRF hosting arrangements (i.e., allocation and operation of the office space and amenities) were appraised at an annual value of USD 215,000, serving as the Philippines' in-kind contributions to PEMSEA.

The World Bank commissioned the PRF to produce reports entitled "World Bank/PEMSEA Assessment of Policies and Regulations to Guide Country Dialogue at National Level and Facilitate Actions at Local Levels to Reduce Plastic Waste in the Philippines." The reports from this project can be accessed here: [national](#) and [local](#).

The Philippines participated in the 7th EAS Congress hosted by the Royal Government of Cambodia. The Congress culminated in the adoption of the Preah Sihanouk Ministerial Declaration, which was signed by the Philippines and 10 other countries in the EAS region. The Declaration endorsed the development of the PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030 as the region's decadal strategic guide, anchored on the SDS-SEA vision and commitment to blue economy and aligned with the countries' green recovery plans and programs as well as key international environmental commitments.

The Provinces of Bataan, Batangas, and Guimaras signed the Preah Sihanouk PNLG Declaration during the 2021 PNLG Forum hosted by Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia. This Declaration adopted the PNLG Strategic Action Plan 2022-2030 and expressed the commitment of PNLG members to pursue a blue economy in upholding the SAP and regularly report their progress thereof.

2022

PEMSEA is formulating the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027. DENR representatives are members of the regional technical working group that was formed for this particular purpose.

PEMSEA concluded a three-year project called the ASEAN Norwegian Cooperation Project on Local Capacity Building for Reducing Plastic Pollution in the ASEAN Region (ASEANO) through improved knowledge and capacity-building on the sources, release, transport, and fate of plastic pollution. As the implementing agency of the Philippine component, PRF worked in close collaboration with the Provincial Government of Cavite through the Provincial Government of Environment and Natural Resources (PGENRO), DENR, and two local universities, CvSU and De La Salle University in Dasmariñas (DLSU-D). The Imus River Basin in Cavite, which is one of the major tributaries of Manila Bay, served as the pilot site of the Philippine

component. The tools and lessons from the ASEANO Project are encapsulated in the Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank (<http://aseano.seaknowledgebank.org/>).

PEMSEA completed the EU/GIZ Ship Waste Management in Philippine Ports Project in Batangas Port, one of the national components of the regional initiative entitled “EU/GIZ Rethinking Plastics: Circular Economy Solutions to Marine Litter regional project.” This Philippine project pilot-tested a digital waste notification and cost recovery scheme at Batangas Port and was managed by a core project team comprised of the Philippine Ports Authority–Port Operations and Services Department, Batangas Port, Expertise France, and PRF. Other organizations involved in the implementation include the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Maritime Industry Authority, and Philippine Coast Guard.

PEMSEA completed the project preparation phase of the IKI/IMO Project on Reducing Maritime Transport Emissions in East and Southeast Asian Countries (Blue Solutions Project) with the Philippines as one of the 5 participating countries and the Department of Transportation serving as the National Focal Agency. The 5-year project is expected to start in 2023.

PRF is implementing the Ecological Solid Waste Management Project in Cavite Province that is funded by the Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines, Inc. The project aims to implement the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) and assist in alternative livelihood and social development programs of the Caritas Diocese of Imus Foundation, Inc. These will be done through capacity-building for local governments and communities, enhancement of livelihood opportunities for target communities, and conduct of information, education, and communication campaigns on circular economy and solid waste management. The project is being implemented in 5 communities in Cavite in partnership with Caritas Diocese of Imus Foundation, Inc. and the Cavite PGENRO.

A web-based River Basin Integrated Information Management System (RBIIMS) was deployed in DENR's production server (<https://rbco-rbiims.denr.gov.ph>) as a joint undertaking between PRF and DENR KISS and RBCO. Training of key DENR personnel from Regions 6, 7, 10, and 11 was conducted in July 2022 for the pilot roll-out of the RBIIMS in E2RB Regions (GIZ/DENR Ecosystem-Based Management and Application of Ecosystem Values in Two River Basins in the Philippines Project).

The PRF initiated the second phase (i.e., field validation) of the DENR-PEMSEA Special Project on the Assessment of Coastal and Marine Initiatives in the Philippines, covering 5 foreign-assisted projects.

The DENR approved BMB Technical Bulletin No. 2022-02 on mainstreaming the integrated coastal management approach into the comprehensive land use plans of local governments. PEMSEA provided technical inputs in the formulation and ongoing roll-out of the Technical Bulletin, involving 16 DENR Regional Offices.

DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leones was elected as the EAS PC Co-Chair for the term 31 July 2022 – 30 July 2025. By virtue of PEMSEA's Rules of Governance, he will automatically assume the post of Council Chair for the term 31 July 2025 – 30 July 2028.

2023

The Philippines is one of the projects participating countries in the following projects: UNDP/GEF/ASEAN Reducing Marine Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows through Integrated River Basin Management in the ASEAN which was launched in 2023 and will run up to 2027 in 6 ASEAN member states, namely: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam. The project's outputs will include: state of the river basin reports; integrated river basin management plans, including investment plans from 7 priority river basins across the region, including two from the Philippines, the Imus Ylang Ylang River in Cavite and the Pasac Guagua River in Pampanga. Regional templates, guides and toolkits on integrated river basin management following the 'source to sea' principle will be also developed to ensure sustainability and replicability in other river basins.

RO Korea funded Marine Plastics Project which runs from 2023-2028 and will help capacitate local governments to reduce marine plastics pollution in 6 towns and cities in the Philippines, namely: Bulan, Sorsogon; Calbayog, Samar; Daan Bantayan, Cebu, Dipolog City, Puerto Princesa City and Tandag, Agusan del Sur. Expected outputs from the project include: baseline assessment reports at the project site and national levels; beach plastic monitoring toolkit; plastics databank to store data and analyze trends of plastics in the various sites; good practices and lessons on applying innovative solutions to reduce plastic pollution; inclusive financing mechanisms applied in the project sites and enhanced capacity of local governments, local academic and NGO partners.

2024

PEMSEA advanced regional cooperation through knowledge exchange and network expansion. A PNLC Study Tour in Batangas, Philippines, provided Tangerang Regency officials (Indonesia) with practical insights on Integrated Coastal Management (ICM). The PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC) grew with the addition of Mindanao State University–

Naawan, further strengthening regional, national, and local collaborations.

State of the Ocean and River Basin (SORB) Reports for the Kampong Bay River Basin (Cambodia), Nam Tha River Basin (Lao PDR), and Pasac–Guagua Watershed (Philippines) provided critical biophysical, socioeconomic, and governance data to guide targeted interventions. A multi-stakeholder workshop in July 2024 in Pasac–Guagua aligned mangrove restoration with river basin management strategies, engaging local officials, fisher cooperatives, and the private sector.

Innovative solutions were fostered at a workshop supporting six Philippine LGUs in designing pilot projects in their sites. Beach litter monitoring data from 10 project sites (6 in the Philippines, 4 in Timor-Leste) were uploaded to the EAS Marine Litter Data Center. A major milestone in April 2024 was the Learning Exchange Program (LEP) in Seoul, ROK, where 29 participants from the Philippines and Timor-Leste shared best practices on plastic waste management.

2025

Philippines hosted the 17th East Asian Seas Partnership Council Meeting where USec. Jonas Leones, Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, and International Affairs of DENR, assumed as EAS PC Council Chair.

Guimaras Governor Ma. Lucille Ledesma-Nava formally took her oath as President of the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) during its General Assembly on 17 September 2025.

DENR Philippines signed the Memorandum of Agreement for the implementation of the Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Project and the Marine Plastics ODA Project last July at the DENR Central Office in the Philippines.

ODA Signing of Mayors' Compact – signed by Mayors from Bulan (Sorsogon), Calbayog City (Samar), Daanbantayan (Cebu), Dipolog City (Zamboanga del Norte), and Tandag City (Surigao del Sur). This compact affirms their shared commitment to strengthening local actions to reduce marine plastic pollution.

ODA signing of Letters of Agreement (LOAs) – between PEMSEA and the same participating LGUs, detailing specific roles, responsibilities, and pilot project activities to be implemented at the local level.

IRBM Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus Report was finalized, including Imus-Ylang ylang-Rio Grande Rivers (IYRR) and Pasac-Guagua Watershed (PGW).

The IYRR was featured in the Project's River Basin Profile Story, entitled Restoring the Flow: Cavite's Imus-Ylang Ylang-Rio Grande Rivers.



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