



The Wetland School Project

PROPOSED CONCEPT AND CONFIGURATION

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Acronyms

AMWS	Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary
BMB	Biodiversity Management Bureau
CEPA	Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation, and Awareness
CENRO	City Environment and Natural Resources Office
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
DOT	Department of Tourism
ERDB	Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IRA	Internal Revenue Allotment
LGA	Local Government Academy
LGU	Local Government Unit
LPPWP	Las Pinas Paranaque Wetland Park
MAO	Municipal Agriculture Office
NCR	National Capital Region
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PO	People's Organization
RAWES	Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services
SCPW	Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetland, In
UN	United Nations
UPLB	University of the Philippines Los Baños
VMG	Vision, Mission, Goals

I. Background and Introduction

Since its inception more than 20 years ago, the SCPW has focused its activities in communicating the importance of wetlands and advocated for its conservation and wise use. This has been demonstrated in the numerous and intensive communication strategies and campaigns which are also in support of the efforts of the national authority that has now resulted in tangible outcomes in terms of increased public awareness and stakeholder capacity.

Over the years, the SCPW has developed CEPA approaches, methods, tools and materials and implemented events and activities successfully within their area of operations. These CEPA gems can be more useful if these are shared among the different stakeholders that may benefit from them. Examples of these are Ramsar Site managers who are still struggling how to prepare their very first CEPA Action Plan and those which need updating. Schools and Local Government Units may also employ the Wetlands BioBlitz guide to employ citizen science that includes RAWES in its curriculum. The SCPW Manual for conducting Youth Ecological Camps has been successfully used in more than 100 high schools and was tapped by the UN World Food Program as a platform for teaching students about wetlands and Disaster Risk Reduction Management.

To have a systematic way of disseminating this information and increase the capacity of wetland workers, particularly in the Local Government and local communities in implementing conservation measures, the SCPW is envisioning the establishment of a "Wetland School" that will not only make these materials available but will also conduct training on how to use them. This document presents the proposed concept and configuration of the said Wetland School.

Vision

The SCPW Wetland school is a center of excellence for wetland education.

Outcome

Capacity and capability of wetland stakeholders to implement the National Wetland Action Plan at the national and local levels are increased.

Rationale

- A national policy on wetlands is currently being pushed at the Philippine Congress. This stipulates the preparation and implementation of a National Wetland Action Plan.
- There is a need to have a more robust information on wetlands particularly those outside of protected areas to guide planning, restoration and development.
- The recent Mandanas Ruling provides increased IRA for LGUs that will be allocated for additional devolved functions such as environmental protection and natural resources conservation.
- Although there are many resources and guidelines that have been produced and are available on the internet, finding the appropriate material for the need of specific wetlands in the country is time-consuming. Moreover, those personnel on the ground need guidance as to what references are useful for their purpose.
- There is a lack of well-trained and motivated individuals that can spearhead wetland conservation on the ground. Addressing this barrier through the Wetland School may lead to improvements in wetland conservation and provide impetus towards the implementation of initiatives particularly in this Decade of Ecosystem Restoration.
- Wetland school is a specialized school, a center of excellence for wetland education.

Target Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the Wetland School include but are not limited to the following:

- Local Government Units particularly the MENRO, CENRO, MAO*
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), People's Organizations (POs)*
- Young advocates*
- Planners (professional organizations)
- Wetland Managers
- Decision-makers
- Education Sector/Teachers

*Primary Target Beneficiaries

II. The Configuration Process

To come up with the ideal configuration of the SCPW Wetland School, we conducted consultation workshops, FGDs, interviews and fielded a survey questionnaire to target key stakeholders. More than 150 persons participated or were part of the process of soliciting inputs on the subject of configuring the Wetland School. Below is a brief description of the proposed Wetland School based on the consultations conducted.

The idea of a Wetland School was to optimize the use of CEPA materials, including capacity-building modules that SCPW has developed through the years. This means not just sharing the content in various forms, but also providing training on how to use them. A core group was convened to define and elaborate on the ideal configuration of the “Wetland School” that will serve as the framework for its development and implementation. Aside from that, we also solicited inputs through the Wetland News, Wetland Views online talk, at the Global Lake Marathon and also through interviews and FGDs with key personalities and groups.

III. The SCPW Wetland School Configuration

A. Platform

The configuration essentially takes off from the initial concept put forward in this project which includes a financing scheme on the operation and sustainability of the Wetland School. The facility will initially, in the short term, be an online hub that will offer short courses, seminars/webinars, and contain CEPA materials that were developed by SCPW. In the medium term, it is envisioned that the main physical home of the Wetland School will be in the two Wetland Centers that the SCPW supports, namely the Las Piñas – Parañaque Wetland Park in Metro Manila and the Paligui Wetland Park in Candaba, Pampanga. In the long term, other physical satellite sites for the Wetland School will be established in the other two major island groupings of the Philippines, in the Visayas and Mindanao. Ideally, all Ramsar Sites should have a satellite Wetland Center that offers at least

two training courses or modules specific to their local target audience. A replication template on how to establish a local Wetland School will be developed to support the establishment of these physical sites. The virtual learning hub, however, will be lodged at the SCPW website.

B. The Virtual Resource Hub

One feature of the Wetland School is the Virtual Resource Hub that will be created as a sub-website within the SCPW web page. This hub will contain CEPA materials including flyers, brochures, posters, bite-sized videos and other knowledge products relevant to wetland conservation. In the short term (three years), the target is just to upload SCPW's knowledge products so that people and organizations may use them in their communication campaigns with just the usual proper citations employed in its use. It was the view of the majority of those consulted that a sharing protocol might be too premature to impose considering that we first have to test if the virtual resource hub will work. The idea was to first get a good number of hits then come up with a creative sharing protocol that is simple but promotes exchange of knowledge through the communication materials or knowledge products. In time, other organizations and agencies will be invited to also share knowledge products and other materials to be covered by an agreement, if feasible.

A more important feature that was emphasized was the availability of know-how and resources to produce CEPA materials. This means that the facility should be able to produce CEPA materials and provide instructions or training on how to produce them. This entails a set of creative people with the skills to create appropriate messages and produce them in various media. The idea of a pool of creative CEPA practitioners came up and thus will be pursued. Training on the conceptualization and production of CEPA materials will also be included in the courses to be offered.

C. Content

In terms of content, below are the priority topics identified that should be included in the curriculum of The SCPW Wetland School:

- Fundamental knowledge that managers need to know about wetlands, particularly in the Philippine context where different types of wetlands respond to different pressures or perturbations

in the environment. We need to understand how these wetlands are responding to the pressures. Understanding the ecological character of wetlands is indeed a fundamental knowledge that every wetland manager needs to know.

- Building knowledge and skills on mapping and also databasing activities. In terms of wetland management, we always start with wetland profiling activities and wetland assessment, biophysical assessment, biological assessment, and it takes a lot of skills and knowledge to do specific methodologies on biodiversity assessment.
- Most of our wetlands, especially the bigger ones, are being utilized by the local communities and local government units. They are being promoted as ecotourism sites and ecotourism activities that should really be carried out in a more prudent manner – understanding how each activity can potentially affect the character of wetland and understanding how to temper tourism activities such that it would not impact negatively on a wetlands.
- A good understanding of economic values of our wetland so that we can understand them in terms of how much we can save from flooding for instance, because of the services these wetlands are offering us, and we would understand the importance of managing these wetlands because of their ecosystem services.
- The role of wetlands in terms of disaster risk assessment and reduction is one of the fundamental contents that a Wetland School can offer to the stakeholders.
- Anything CEPA is a fundamental requirement by the Ramsar also in terms of managing wetlands. At this point, even the Ramsar sites that are being managed by the DENR field offices have difficulties in coming up to a CEPA Plan. Crafting CEPA plan is not simple, and it is also a process that needs to be learned. The SCPW has been advocating CEPA for a very long time and has this module already developed that can be shared in what we anticipate as the Wetland School.
- Best practices in wetland conservation in the form that will be understood and appreciated by target audiences.
- Special topics that SCPW specializes in, ie designing Wetland Centers, organizational development Organizational Development (Defining VMG, Action Planning), Resource Mobilization, how to conduct Youth Ecological Camps, conducting inventory and profiling using SCPW toolkits, wetland restoration toolkit, among others.

D. Format and Delivery

The materials and knowledge products in the Virtual Resource Hub will be mostly in easy to read and digest format such as bite-sized videos, powerpoint presentation decks, flyers, brochures and the like. Templates for these formats will also be developed. Aside from these knowledge products, modules and training courses that the SCPW has developed will also be uploaded to the hub.

In terms of delivery, the preferred mode at the moment is still through virtual means particularly for lecture type courses, ie webinars. For topics that do not need field exposure, e-learning modules may be provided on the website using Knowledge Sharing Sessions as format. These E-Learning modules will be made available so that it can be accessed by the target audience at their convenience. For modules or courses that will require field work, hybrid mode will be explored to enable other stakeholders who cannot travel to training site to participate. The use of livestreaming and production of videos as tools for these sessions shall also be optimized.

E. Sustainability

One sustainability strategy would be if a wetland school can have some government support mechanism or partnership with training institutions such as the Development Academy of the Philippines, the Environment and Natural Resources Academy, or the Local Government Academy. At the national level, the SCPW and the DENR have already started this partnership, and have been supporting each other in terms of capacity building for wetland conservation. This should continue together with other stakeholders, like the universities and other training institutions. The recent devolution of functions which includes, environmental management through the Mandanas Ruling, is a great opportunity to attain sustainability through revenues that can be generated from fees from participants from the Local Government.

Other sources of funding that can be explored include corporate sponsorships and other Corporate Social Responsibility modes, as well as bilateral and multilateral funding agencies.

More importantly, charging of training fees should be included in the sustainability plan of this facility. It is also highly recommended that a

Business Plan be prepared for the operation, management and sustainability of The SCPW Wetland School.

F. Accreditation

The Wetland School courses are not meant to replace a degree. It should be the LGU and communities who should be capacitated, so the primary target beneficiaries should be these sectors. Accreditation, particularly for LGUs is important so they earn CPD points, if they finish a course.

TESDA or the Civil Service Commission (CSC) accredits private learning institution which can offer specific or specialized training for a certain skill, so if the wetland school will be accredited by them, the wetland school can then be like school who are offering diploma or certification, then the students are willing to pay and the wetland school will have the right to charge fees. This could be a long-term goal for the facility.

G. Pool of Experts

A pool of experts and Resource Persons on wetland management and conservation will be organized to ensure that the school will continuously have qualified instructors and mentors.

iv. Proposed Timeline for the Development of The SCPW Wetland School

Activities	Term/Period		
	Short 1-3 years	Medium 5-7 years	Long 8-10 years
Creation of an online learning hub (sub-website)			
Uploading of existing SCPW CEPA materials in the subwebsite			
Organize pool of experts and Resource Persons			
Production of new CEPA materials and training modules			

Conduct of training and other capacity-building activities			
Preparation of a Business Plan			
Establishment of a physical site for the wetland school at the LPPWP and the Paligui Wetland Center			
Establish partnership with training institutions			
Acquire accreditation for the training courses			
Establishment of satellite sites in other parts of the country (Ramsar Sites, major wetlands)			

V. Indicative Budgetary Requirements (Short Term: 2023 – 2026)

Activities	Indicative Budget (in PHP)
Maintenance of an online learning hub (sub-website)	360,000.00
Production of new CEPA materials and training modules; content creation	200,000.00
Conduct of training and other capacity-building activities (virtual/hybrid/face-to-face)	500,000.00
Preparation of a Business Plan	100,000.00
Establishment of a physical site for the wetland school at the LPPWP and the Paligui Wetland Center (does not include actual construction of infrastructure)	100,000.00
Management and Operations	1,800,000.00
Total	3,060,000 or Approx. USD56,000.00

VI. The SCPW Wetland School Core Group

Below are the members of the Core Group that worked on The SCPW Wetland School project.

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