

Nurturing Native Trees for a Sustainable Future: BatStateU and EDC Collaborate on Arboretum Project

The Philippines is a significant biodiversity hotspot with a unique and pristine vegetation cover. Approximately 25.7% of the country, or about 7,665,000 hectares, is covered by forests. Among these, 11.2% (around 861,000 hectares) is classified as primary forest, the most biodiverse and carbon-dense type of forest. However, the exceptional biodiversity of the Philippines is threatened by various human activities, including population pressure and illegal logging. Lobo, located in the Southern Luzon Biogeographic Region, is an essential center of plant biodiversity.

Unfortunately, much of its natural forest resources have been converted to agriculture and settlements due to historical domestic logging and current road network expansion. To preserve and sustain the remaining natural forest in Lobo, the establishment of an arboretum through ex-situ conservation is proposed. The College of Agriculture and Forestry of BatStateU Lobo offers a BS Forestry program that requires botanical gardens and arboretum as outdoor learning facilities for students and study areas for faculty researchers. Through collaboration with the Energy Development Corporation (EDC) of the Lopez Group, an arboretum in Lagadlarin Experimental Station is planned as part of the BINHI program, which focuses on biodiversity preservation at the species level. The goals of establishing the arboretum are to propagate native and endemic tree species and provide learning sites for students studying botany, taxonomy, dendrology, and ecology. The project also aligns with the college's goal to establish a hectare-sized botanical garden, as proposed in the Land Use Development and Infrastructure Plan (LUDIP) submitted to CHED. The arboretum was planned to be dedicated to commemorate the 25th year of BatStateU CAF as a college. The collaboration with EDC provides essential physical resources, including planting materials, signages, and monitoring and maintenance resources.



Site Ocular inspection for proposed BINHI Arboretum site

On May 27, 2022, a significant milestone was reached through a virtual Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signing between the Energy Development Corporation (EDC) and Batangas State University (BatStateU), represented by their respective executives and BatStateU President, Dr. Tirso A. Ronquillo.



Virtual MOA Signing between Executives of EDC and President Dr. Tirso A. Ronquillo of BatStateU TNEU

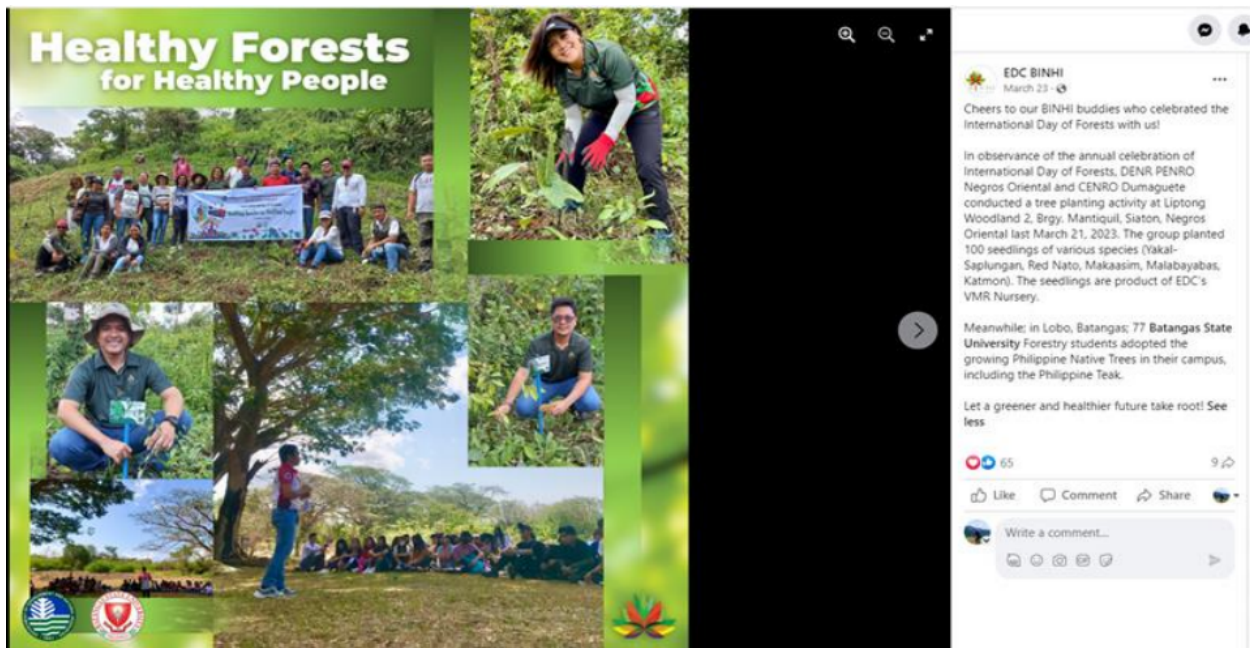
During the MOA signing, both parties demonstrated their commitment to support and promote the BINHI Arboretum, a crucial initiative aimed at preserving and propagating endangered premium Philippine timber tree species. They agreed to use various public awareness platforms, such as social media, websites, and others, to raise awareness about the importance of the BINHI Arboretum and its mission.

Furthermore, a permanent 2,000 square meters tree planting area was designated within the Lagadlarin Experimental Farm, which would serve as the BINHI Arboretum. This dedicated space would be utilized to cultivate and showcase native and endemic tree species, contributing to the conservation of biodiversity in the Southern Luzon Biogeographic Region. In addition to designating the planting area, both parties also committed to undertaking preparatory activities for the BINHI Arboretum. These activities included tasks such as weeding, hole digging, and providing tree guards to ensure the successful establishment and growth of the planted trees.



BINHI Arboretum Launching

The collaboration between EDC and BatStateU also extended to data sharing and information exchange. Both parties agreed to cooperate in the sharing of valuable data, updates, and information related to the monitoring and maintenance of the planted trees. This shared knowledge and collaboration would enhance the success of the BINHI Arboretum and aid in the long-term preservation of the endangered tree species. Through this virtual MOA signing, the Energy Development Corporation and Batangas State University solidified their partnership and commitment to environmental conservation and biodiversity preservation. The BINHI Arboretum project is set to be a remarkable example of cooperation between a private corporation and an educational institution, working together for the greater advantage of biodiversity protection and sustainable environmental practices.



Tree Nurturing Activity conducted by Professors and Students of BatStateU TNEU Lobo during International Day of Forests posted in EDC social media site.



Frequent care and maintenance conducted by BS Forestry students