



English ▾



Eco-Business



Winner | Asian Digital Media Awards 2024

[News](#) [Opinion](#) [Podcasts](#) [Videos](#) [EB Studio](#) [Topics](#) [SDGs](#) [More+](#) [Edition ▾](#)

[News](#) • [Carbon & Climate](#)

Philippines' environment department rejects Masungi bid to halt georeserve wind project

Masungi has filed a motion for reconsideration, following its previous appeal for the agency's eviction order in March. The legal tussle highlights complexities of siting renewables projects where there are competing claims over land.



A drone shot taken in late 2023 shows drilling operations by Rizal Wind Energy Corp, backed by Singapore-based Vena Energy, on rock formations in Masungi Georeserve. Image: [Masungi Georeserve](#)



By [Hannah Alcoseba Fernandez](#)

7 minute read • Nov. 18, 2025

The Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has rejected an appeal of Masungi Georeserve Foundation, Inc (MGFI) to reconsider its decision allowing the construction of a 603-megawatt (MW) wind farm that would cut across protected areas within the Sierra Madre mountains in Rizal province.

MGFI, the nonprofit that manages the georeserve, [filed](#) a cease-and-desist order with the government early last year, and called for the revocation of the environmental compliance certificate issued to a proposed wind energy farm built by the Rizal Wind Energy Corp (RWEC), a [joint venture](#) by Singapore-based energy developer Vena Energy and Aboitiz Renewables, Inc, a subsidiary of Philippine utility firm Aboitiz Power Corp.

RWEC commenced activities in the Tanay municipality in late 2023, with the plan to erect [12 wind turbines](#). In its latest filing, MGFI [warned](#) that the project would entail



Drilling rigs in nature reserves: Tensions heighten as Philippine clean energy projects encroach on conservation areas

[Read now →](#)

widespread road construction that may lead to forest clearing, vegetation damage, and visual disruption of the natural landscape. The group estimated that it would impact up to 1,000 hectares of multiple protection zones, including the Masungi Karst Conservation Area, which was declared a strict nature reserve and wildlife sanctuary more than three decades ago.

The limestone formations in the site's karst ecosystem are also highly sensitive to human activity and development, they said.



Known for its distinctive limestone rock formations, the Masungi Georeserve is a geological park and conservation area that protects some 2,700 hectares of degraded forestland in the mountainous communities of Pinugay, Baras, Cuyambay, and Tandang Kutyo in Tanay, Rizal-some 50 kilometres east of Metro Manila.

Image: [Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc](#)

However, in a recent notice dated 30 July sighted by Eco-Business, the DENR dismissed MGFI's request, concluding that its investigation found no violations.

“No sufficient basis has been established to conclude the existence of grave or irreparable environmental damage that would necessitate the issuance of a cease and desist order,” said the document signed by Robert Angelo Metin, officer-in-charge and regional director of the Calabarzon region, where Masungi is located.

Metin confirmed that there was no ongoing development or construction on the site: “The halted status of the project and the minimal on-site activities undertaken significantly mitigate the potential for any substantial adverse environmental impact.”

MFGI submitted a motion for reconsideration shortly after the DENR’s decision was handed down.

Billie Dumaliang, director for advocacy and board trustee of MGFI, whose family has been managing conservation efforts in the georeserve for close to three decades, said they are hopeful that the government will re-evaluate the motion for reconsideration, given new research that discovered species believed to be extinct in the park and the area’s inclusion in a new map of key biodiversity areas in the Philippines.

She added that they are also engaging the DENR’s Protected Area Management Board, a multi-sectoral policy-making body that decides on all matters related to planning and resource protection, including the approval of RWEC’s permits.

Vena Energy has said previously that it has adhered to all government regulations in the pursuit of the wind farm project, highlighting that it secured an environmental compliance certificate issued by a regional bureau under DENR, following a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study.

DENR’s decision comes amid the government’s push for wind energy development to meet its renewable energy targets. It is aiming to increase the [Philippines’ renewable energy share to 35 per cent by 2030 and 50 per cent by 2040](#).

The Philippines has awarded power deals for [2.5 GW of new onshore wind projects](#) as it finalised results of its last renewable energy auction held in March. Rizal and Ilocos Norte have been identified as priority zones for onshore wind farm development.

Meanwhile, offshore wind capacity is expected to grow from 19 to 50 GW by mid-century, drawing from the currently awarded offshore wind service contracts totalling

67.26 GW, according to [latest estimates](#) by international trade association Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC).

Legal complexities

DENR's rejection of MFGI's appeal is the latest in a series of legal tussles between the two parties. The environmental agency [ordered in March the eviction](#) of MFGI from the forests of Rizal – a move that could terminate their globally-recognised conservation work in the protected area.

The order stemmed from the Dumaliang family's alleged failure to execute terms within the contract under a [supplemental joint venture agreement](#) (SJVA) signed in 2002.

This agreement required Blue Star Construction and Development Corp, the Dumaliang family-owned firm behind Masungi Georeserve, to extend the coverage of the original 1997 joint venture agreement by adding 300 hectares to the conservation project area. This extension was intended to support additional government housing units for various government agency employees.

However, the DENR later [cancelled this agreement](#) due to issues including the lack of a required presidential proclamation declaring the land for housing purposes, the absence of proper bidding processes, and failure to deliver the promised housing project within five years.

DENR [said](#) the area intended for the housing projects was used by the Dumaliang family to build a resort that charges visitors for day treks to caves, stone formations, trails, and rope bridges.

The garden cottages covered by the original 1997 joint venture, which were originally intended as housing for government employees, are now venues for weddings and pre-nuptial shoots for which the Dumaliangs also charge a fee, it added.

But Masungi's developers argued that they submitted letters to the department, pleading for them to fulfill its responsibilities before the government employee housing plan could be carried out.

Under their agreement, DENR was supposed to have delivered land that is free from encroachers and adverse claimants before the housing project could start. But the

agency failed to do so, said MGFI.

A motion for reconsideration was likewise filed by MGFI challenging the cancellation, but it is still pending at the DENR.



Billie Dumaliang, director for advocacy and board trustee of Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI) attends the senate hearing on 11 April 2025 concerning the DENR's cancellation of its agreement with Masungi. To her left is her father, Ben Dumaliang, president of Blue Star Construction Development Corporation, which established the nonprofit MGFI. Image: [Senate of the Philippines](#)

Indigenous people (IP) from the Dumagat-Remontado tribe residing in Rizal province welcomed the government's eviction order of Masungi's developers, declaring in a [statement](#) that the firm had been using environmental advocacy allegedly as a pretext for abuse.

Eleonor Atencio, president of the Indigenous Peoples Association of Tanay (*Samahan ng mga Katutubo ng Tanay*), recounted to Eco-Business how houses of IP elders were supposedly barricaded by Masungi authorities in order to clear the area to build one of the georeserve's trails leading to the rock formations in 2013.

The incident led to the tribe filing a case against Masungi, allegedly violating their rights to ancestral domain, which progressed into a congressional hearing only eight years later.

Dumaliang argued that the land that Masungi operates on is beyond IP law, which states that titled properties like theirs are “legally outside the ancestral domain boundaries.”

The land where Masungi is located was titled to the government as early as the 1950s, and was later committed in 2002 to a joint venture. It has since served as the legal safeguard for its conservation work, protecting it from other land-use interests in the area, Dumaliang told Eco-Business.

Masungi’s land title existed before the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) approved the issuance of a certificate of ancestral domain to the tribe in 2009, she said.



Eleonor Atencio, Indigenous Peoples leader of the Dumagat Remontado tribe (extreme left) with elders from her tribe in an interview with Eco-Business earlier in April. Image: Karen Marie Gayod

Apart from the DENR, Masungi had previously faced threats of eviction from the Bureau of Corrections, which is in charge of the safekeeping and rehabilitation of prisoners.

In 2023, Masungi's campaigners were [confronted](#) by personnel from the corrections facility who arrived at the geopark, asserting their right to build a new headquarters in the area.

The Bureau of Corrections maintained that the land's title has been transferred to them by the Registry of Deeds in Morong, Rizal as of September 2022. But after protests from environmentalists and advocates, the bureau [shelved](#) its plans.

Mitzi Jonelle Tan, international spokesperson for Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines, said that if Masungi is forced out by the DENR, there is a "big threat" that the Bureau of Corrections will push forward with its construction plans. This will disrupt a critical watershed that helps prevent flooding and ensures water security for surrounding communities, she warned.

Related to this story

Topics

[Carbon & Climate](#) / [Energy](#)

Regions

[Philippines](#)

Tags

[biodiversity](#) / [clean energy](#) / [ecosystem services](#) / [forests](#) / [NGOs](#) / [renewable energy](#) / [wind](#) / [conservation](#) / [inequality](#) / [equality](#) / [Indigenous peoples](#) / [nature](#)

SDGs

[10. Inequality](#) / [11. Cities](#) / [15. Biodiversity](#)

Related Stories and Press Releases



Opinion / Policy & Finance

Can the Philippines fulfill its 2024 climate ambitions?



News / Carbon & Climate

Natural capital went mainstream in 2024 – what's next for 2025?



News / Energy

Local communities question Philippines law allowing for wind farm construction in protected area



Receive the latest insights daily or weekly.

Sign up for our newsletter →

[Back to top ↑](#)



Sections

[Home](#)
[News](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Videos](#)
[Podcasts](#)

[Special Reports](#)
[Industry Spotlight](#)
[Feature Series](#)
[Regions](#)
[Changing Course](#)

Services

[Events](#)
[Jobs](#)
[Press Releases](#)

[EB Studio](#)
[Intelligence](#)

Subscribe

[Eco-Business subscriptions](#)
[Newsletters](#)
[EB Enterprise](#)
[Facebook](#)
[Twitter](#)

[Linkedin](#)
[Instagram](#)
[Telegram](#)
[RSS](#)

About

[About Us](#)
[Our Team](#)
[Join Us](#)

[Advisory Board](#)
[Contributors](#)
[Contact Us](#)

Policy

[Republishing Guidelines](#)
[Op-ed Guidelines](#)
[Press Release Guidelines](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)
[Terms & Conditions](#)