



**ASSESSMENT OF FISH DIVERSITY ALONG CHICO-AGNO RIVER
IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ASINGAN, PANGASINAN AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION**

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RINA ZENANDA CASIMIRO-PAR

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RINA ZENANDA CASIMIRO-PAR



ABSTRACT

Conservation efforts and sustainable utilization of biological resources start with proper identification of the target species, and assessment of their population status and vulnerability - information that the academe can provide as basis for policy decisions of local government units. Only through holistic and cooperative efforts on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development can biological resources meet human current needs as well as the needs of the future generation.

There were four (4) indigenous species and 11 introduced species in Chico-Agno river in Asingan, Pangasinan during the fish catch survey conducted from March to June 2013, using hook and line, gill net and low voltage electrocution, the latter is considered illegal but is popularly used. Fishers catch fish regardless of size, discarding the small, non-marketable sized fish as wastes. The mesh size of gill net is about 1 cm, which is far below the 3 cm mesh size allowed by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. Gill net provided the highest catch per unit effort (CPUE) of 2.7 kg/hr.

Fishers considered fishing as an additional source of livelihood. Farming is the major source of income among respondent fishers. Income from fishing is not sufficient to support a family and fishing is limited during rainy season only. More, a portion of the river dries up during summer.

The local government of Asingan, Pangasinan has a regular program to stock the Chico-Agno river with tilapia fingerlings, an introduced species which is widely accepted as food. If fish introduction in the river has to be a regular activity of the local government unit, the use of all male tilapia fingerlings is recommended. Introduction of other alien species is not encouraged.

It was observed that water and solid wastes are directly emptied into the river. There are no other programs or policies that would directly support river rehabilitation or increase the population of indigenous fish species. There is a need for the local government of Asingan, Pangasinan to provide the necessary governance support to implement R.A. 8550 or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998.



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