

**DENR Administrative Order  
No. 15  
May 10, 1995**

**SUBJECT : Revised General Guidelines in the Implementation of the  
Sub-classification of Forestlands and Other Inalienable  
Lands of the Public Domain.**

To facilitate the systematic discharge of functions in the implementation of the sub-classification survey of forest lands and other inalienable lands of the public domain, the following revised regulations and guidelines are hereby promulgated.

**Sec. 1. Basic Policy.** It shall be the policy of the government to implement a system of land use classification that will promote optimum, equitable, and just utilization of the inalienable public lands. In line with the policy, the government shall undertake the sub-classification of forestlands and other inalienable lands of the public domain.

**General Objectives:**

- A. To determine the most suitable and rational use and proper allocation of lands with due consideration to biophysical, economic, socio-cultural and ecological factors;
- B. To provide a basic reference in planning developmental activities of the government;
- C. To provide a more comprehensive data base for land resources managers and users on the best use of forestlands and other public forest lands considering local, regional and national needs and priorities;
- D. To provide data as basis of decisions about multiple or competing uses of forestlands, national parks, mineral lands and other public lands thereby minimizing, if not altogether solving, land use conflicts.

**Specific Objective:** To sub-classify the approximately 15,000,000 hectares of forestlands and other inalienable lands of the public domain.

**Sec. 2. Coverage of Sub-classification.** The sub-classification of forestland and other inalienable public lands shall include the classified as well as the unclassified forestlands, national parks and all other components of NIPAS areas and other public lands which include military, civil and other similar reservations.

**Sec. 3. Definition of Terms.** For purposes of this Order, the following terms shall be understood or interpreted as defined hereunder:

- A. **Forestlands** - is the mass of land of the public domain comprising of the public forest, permanent/established forests or forest reserves and other forest reservations.
- B. **Public Forest** - is the mass of land of the public domain which has not been the subject of the present system of classification for the determination of which lands are needed and not needed for forest purposes.
- C. **Permanent or Forest Reserves** - are lands of the public domain which have been the subject of the present system of classification and determined to be needed for forest purposes.
- D. **Public Lands** - is the term uniformly used to describe so much of the national domain as has not been subjected to private rights devoted to public use. In some circles, public lands are habitually used in a limited sense to describe such lands as are subject to sale or other modes of acquisition or concession under general laws; although generally the same or synonymous to lands of the public domain.
- E. **Agricultural Lands** - areas which are extensively used for production of agricultural crops. These lands are primarily intended for cultivation, livestock production and agro-forestry.
- F. **Industrial Lands** - are those lands primarily devoted to the pursuit of an industrial enterprise, such as manufacturing and other related establishments.
- G. **Commercial Lands** - areas which are devoted to establishments where exchange of goods and services are made.
- H. **Residential Lands** - refer to lands which are intended primarily for human habitation.
- I. **National Parks** - refer to a forest reservation essentially of natural wilderness character which has been withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or any form of exploitation except in conformity with approved management plan and set aside as such exclusively to conserve the area or preserve the scenery, the natural and historic objects, wild animals and plants therein and to provide enjoyment of these features in such areas.

- J. **Wildlife Sanctuary** - comprises an area which assures the natural conditions necessary to protect nationally significant species, groups of species, biotic communities or physical features of the environment where these may require specific human manipulation for perpetuation.
- K. **Wilderness Area** - land of the public domain which forms part of the NIPAS area and has been reserved as such by the President to preserve its natural conditions, maintain its hydrologic quality, and restrict public use in the interest of national welfare and security.
- L. **Military Reservation** - refers to forestland which has been reserved by the President for military purposes.
- M. **Resettlement** - refers to areas within public forest lands reserved for occupancy by designated minority classes as well as for settlement of displaced and excess population from other urban areas. This also refers to lands of the public domain which have been proclaimed by the President for specific purposes, such as town sites, resettlement areas and ancestral lands.
- N. **Ancestral lands** - refers to the land occupied, possessed and utilized by individuals, families or clans who are members of the indigenous cultural communities since time immemorial by themselves or through their predecessors-in-interest continuously to the present except when interrupted by war, force majeure or displacement by force, deceit or stealth.
- O. **Mineral Lands** - are those lands in which minerals exist in sufficient quality and grade to justify the necessary expenditures in extracting and utilizing such minerals.
- P. **National Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS)** - is the classification of all designated protected areas to maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems, to preserve genetic diversity, to ensure sustainable use of resources found therein, and to maintain their natural conditions to the greatest extent possible.
- Q. **Protected Areas** - refers to identified portions of land and water set aside by reason of their unique physical and biological significance, managed to enhance biological diversity and protected against human exploitation.
- R. **Protection Forest** - refers to identified portions of land and water set aside by reason of their unique physical and biological significance, managed to enhance biological diversity and protected against human exploitation.

- R. Protection Forest - forestlands outside NIPAS obtained essentially for their beneficial influence on soil and water in particular and the environment in general. These are areas above 50% in slope and more than 1,000 meters in elevation. Includes the critical watersheds, mossy forest, strips of specified width bordering rivers, streams, shoreline and reservoir, and steep, rocky areas and other naturally unproductive lands.
- S. Production Forest - forestlands tended primarily for the production of timber. These are areas below 50% slope and less than 1,000 meters in elevation. This includes natural and man-made forests.
- T. Parks/Outdoors Recreation Areas - refers to lands delineated for the protection of scenic areas in all forestlands which are potentially valuable for recreation and tourism.
- U. Grazing Land - refers to the portion of the public domain which has been set aside, in view of the suitability of its topography and vegetation, for the raising of livestock.
- V. Agro-forest Areas - areas allotted for the implementation of a sustainable management for land which increase overall production, combines agricultural crops, tree crops and forest plants and/or animals simultaneously or sequentially and applied management practices which are compatible with the cultural patterns of the local population.
- W. Fishfarm/Fishpond Areas - a body of water (artificial or natural) where fish and other aquatic products are cultured, raised or cultivated under controlled conditions.
- X. Growth Centers - small towns or large villages which have the potential of becoming nuclei for the future economic, social and political development of the surrounding areas.
- Y. Integrated Area Development Project Areas - are areas identified, developed and coordinated by Program Offices aimed to promote countryside development.

**Sec. 4. Sub-classification Categories.** This land uses for which sub-classification shall be carried out within the inalienable lands of the public domain classified as forestlands, mineral lands and national park under Article XII, Section 3 of the new Constitution of the Philippines and as defined by the New Constitution, PD 704, PD 705, LOI 1262 and other applicable laws:

## FORESTLANDS:

- (a) Agricultural
- (b) Industrial or Commercial
- (c) Residential
- (d) Resettlement
- (e) Ancestral lands
- (f) Grazing
- (g) Protection
- (h) Production
- (i) Agro-forest
- (j) Fishfarms/Fishponds

Forestland areas with slope gradients below 18% which are potential lands for development purposes and are categorized herein as residential, commercial and settlements shall be reclassified as alienable or disposable lands after Congress shall have determined by Law the specific limits of the public domain. The disposition of these lands will provide lands for the landless in pursuit to the objectives of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program of the government.

## MINERAL LANDS

## NATIONAL PARKS

- (a) Strict nature reserve
- (b) Natural park
- (c) Natural monument
- (d) Wildlife Sanctuary
- (e) Protected landscapes and seascapes
- (f) Resource reserve
- (g) Natural biotic areas; and
- (h) Other categories established by law, conventions or international agreements which the Philippine Government is a signatory

**Sec. 5. Establishment of Priority Areas.** Sub-classification activities shall proceed in accordance with the following priorities:

- (a) Integrated area development projects
- (b) Community-based forestry program areas
- (c) Other government developmental projects
- (d) Growth centers
- (e) NIPAS areas
- (f) Ancestral lands

**Sec. 6. Program Management.** The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall be charged of implementing and managing the sub-classification of the forestlands and other inalienable lands of the public domain. The program shall be carried out by adopting the attached Revised Organizational Structure composed of the DENR Secretary as the over-all project head, supported by the National as well as the Regional Technical Evaluation Committees with their corresponding Secretariat or Staff and the Land Evaluation Parties (LEPs)/ Sub-classification Teams.

- A. The Office of the Secretary. - As the over-all head, the Secretary of the DENR shall oversee the systematic implementation of the sub-classification activities. He shall see to it that all completed zonification plans/sub-classification project reports are properly reviewed and evaluated by National Technical Evaluation Committee (NTEC) for his approval.
  
- B. The National Technical Evaluation Committee (NTEC). The National Technical Evaluation Committee shall be composed of the Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and Project Management and the Administrator of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) as Chairperson and Co-Chairperson, respectively. DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations and Programs, and Bureau Directors shall constitute its members. NTEC shall have the following functions:
  - 1. Provide over-all direction and administration in project planning, development, implementation monitoring and evaluation;
  - 2. Establishment and maintenance of the necessary linkages with the National Land Use Committee (NLUC) and other institutions/agencies involved in land use planning to ensure coordinated and expeditious implementation of the program;
  - 3. Evaluate and endorse to the Office of the Secretary all completed zonification plans/sub-classification project reports prepared in accordance with the policy, objectives and established guidelines.
  - 4. Recommend policies and procedural guidelines for a more accelerated and effective sub-classification outputs as maybe observed or noted in the process of implementation.

5. Review previous outputs of the regional LEP teams and recommend action for its revision and/or finalization.
  6. Issues additional instructions/circulars as may be necessary for effective implementation of the sub-classification project.
  7. Ensure that outputs and results of sub-classification efforts are used and integrated in the overall ENR planning process.
- C. **The National Sub-Classification Secretariat (NSS).** The NTEC shall be supported by a National Sub-classification Secretariat (NSS) with the Director of Remote Sensing and Resource Data Analysis Department (RSRDAD), NAMRIA as its Executive Officer. The members of the Secretariat shall be composed of the technical representatives from the Forest Management Bureau (FMB), Lands Management Bureau (LMB), Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB), Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB), Mines and Geo-Sciences Bureau (MGB), Planning and Policy Service Office and other representatives of agencies who are directly involved in the sub-classification project. The NSS shall be attached to RSRDAD, NAMRIA considering the availability of data base information and updated maps including equipments/instruments and materials necessary to facilitate planning and evaluation, data processing and documentation of sub-classification activities. As a support to the NTEC, the NSS shall perform the following functions:
1. Review and evaluate thoroughly the zonification/sub-classification project reports and accompanying maps in accordance with implementing guidelines especially the expanded outline for Land Evaluation and Potential Land Use as prescribed under Appendix K of the Forestland Evaluation for Integrated Land Use Planning before endorsement to the Secretary through the NTEC for approval.
  2. Referral of the zonification/sub-classification reports to the appropriate Bureaus or technical agencies concerned for comments/suggestions as basis for a comprehensive determination on the final land use of the sub-classified areas under report.

3. Exercise technical supervision over the Land Evaluation Parties (LEPs) implementing specifically sub-classification project.
4. Keep an updated data base of the status of sub-classification in different Regional offices.

D. The Regional Technical Evaluation Committee (RTEC). - The Committee shall be chaired by the Regional Executive Director with the Regional Technical Director of the Forest Management Services (FMS) as Vice-Chairperson. The members of the Committee shall be composed of the Regional Technical Directors of LMS, EMS, PAWS, ERDS, MGS, PENROs, CENROs and other Regional heads of offices/agencies. The RTEC through the DENR Regional Executive Director may request the participation of the members of the Regional Development Council (RDC), and Regional Land Use Committee (RLUC) in the presentation/deliberation of completed zonification/sub-classification reports before same are finally endorsed to the NTEC for final evaluation/documentation/approval.

The RTEC is charged with the following responsibilities:

1. Prepare an annual regional sub-classification program indicating the area coverage and corresponding manpower, financial and other resource requirements;
2. Identify priority areas for sub-classification within its regional jurisdiction and program resource requirements in coordination with all the agencies involved to include local government units.
3. Manage and supervise the actual survey, classification and mapping operations in its respective regions.
4. Recommend to the Office of the Secretary, through the NTEC, the most suitable and acceptable land uses in the project areas within its regional jurisdiction.
5. Establish and maintain linkages with the RDC, NLUC, LGUs and other institutions/agencies whose participation in the sub-classification process are essential to ensure coordinated and expeditious acceptance of the program.



6. Endorses the completed zonification/sub-classification reports to the Secretary through the RED and NTEC for final review, evaluation and approval.
  7. Recommend supplementary guidelines as a solution to the problems encountered in the process of implementation of the project.
- E. **Regional Sub-classification Secretariat (RSS).** A Regional Sub-classification Secretariat headed by the LEP Coordinator shall likewise be created to support the RTEC. The members of the RSS shall be composed of the Forest Management Specialist of the Regional Technical Management Services of the DENR. The RSS through the RTEC may request the participation of the technical representatives of other regional offices/agencies in the implementation process of the sub-classification project.
- F. **The Land Evaluation Parties (LEPs).** The Land Evaluation Parties deployed in the regions shall maintain their organizational set-up, composed of the Coordinators, Team Leaders with forester-members and cartographers under the administrative supervision of the Regional Executive Director.

Led by the Coordinators, the Land Evaluation Parties shall be under the technical supervision of NAMRIA through the RSRDAD specifically in the operation of the sub-classification project and shall be charged with the following functions and responsibilities:

1. Prepare and submit to the RTEC annual work and financial program with a comprehensive map showing the proposed area to be sub-classified;
2. Undertake the implementation of sub-classification work in accordance with the Expanded Guidelines for Land Evaluation and Potential Land Use;
3. Comply with the technical instructions of NTEC through NAMRIA as the need arises.

**Sec. 7. Survey/Zonification/Mapping Procedures.** Once the categories of the areas for sub-classification have been determined and decided, actual sub-classification survey and mapping shall then proceed according to the following procedures:

- A. Based on the priorities established in Section 5, subject areas shall be

identified by the RTEC in coordination with the NTEC. Sub-classification survey and mapping shall then proceed by either province or municipalities for effective project monitoring in coordination/consultation with the Local Government Units (LGUs).

- B. Designation of categories and delineation of boundaries shall be done by interpretation and analysis of the most recent aerial photos, satellite data as well as legal references of the subject area, supplemented by data/information gathered from the field. These data shall include among others, topography, slope, soil profile, type of vegetation, various hydrologic parameters, climate and other information necessary for the documentation of the project area for sub-classification.
- C. On the basis of the inherent biophysical and socio-economic characteristics of the project area, the most suitable land use shall be ascertained.
- D. Land capability and land suitability maps shall be prepared for logged-over/open areas and those to be allocated as agro-forest areas. This is to determine the most suitable crops/tree species which can be planted in the area. Laboratory and field activities in this regard shall be according to the standard operating procedures.
- E. Categories delineated from aerial photos/satellite maps shall be transferred to scale 1:50,000 base maps in the absence of bigger scale maps for purposes of presentation. For documentation purposes, however, exact boundaries shall be laid out and monumented by ground survey. All photogrammetric, land surveying and cartographic works shall conform with existing rules and regulations.
- F. Final output shall be a map of the project not smaller than 1:50,000 scale showing in color code, the various zonifications and a narrative report following the expanded outline for Land Evaluation and Potential Land Use of the Procedural Manual on Forestland Evaluation for Integrated Land Use Planning.

**Sec. 8. Processing and Approval of Zonification Sub-Classification Documents.**

- A. The base maps including thematic maps and narrative reports of the area zonified/sub-classified by the LEP shall be forwarded by LEP Coordinator to the RTEC who shall evaluate the reports, maps with supporting documents and certify them according to their technical soundness and conformity with the regional developmental plans.

- B. Upon certification, the RTEC endorses through the RED the complete sub-classification report to the NTEC for further/final review and evaluation.
- C. Upon confirmation of the complete report through its NSS, the NTEC forwards the reports to the Secretary for final approval.
- D. In cases of conflicts or difference of opinions, the Secretary/NTEC shall be convened for resolution and final decision.

**Sec. 9. Funding Requirement.** Funds for the implementation of the sub-classification project shall be provided by the DENR Regional Office for the Regional Land Evaluation Parties which will include the amount needed by the RTEC. A separate budget shall be allocated by the DENR Central Office for the operations of the NSS which will include the amounts needed by the NTEC.

**Sec. 10. Repealing Clause.** This Order revises pertinent provisions of Ministry Administrative Order No. 225, Series of 1983, revokes Department Order No. 3, Series of 1975, and Department Memorandum dated September 28, 1988. Governing provisions of Department Administrative Order No. 35, Series of 1993 not applicable or inconsistent with the standard procedures and guidelines in the implementation of the sub-classification project are likewise revoked.

**Sec. 11. Effectivity.** This Order takes effect immediately.

**ANGEL C. ALCALA**  
Secretary

RECOMMENDING APPROVAL:

**BEN S. MALAYANG, III**  
Undersecretary for Field Operations and Programs

**RICARDO M. UMALI**  
Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and  
Project Management

**JOSE G. SOLIS**  
Undersecretary, Administrator, NAMRIA

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