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MALOLOS CITY, Bulacan — Provincial officials will implement a massive tree-planting program for the Sierra Madre mountain range in the eastern side of Bulacan that will be in conjunction with a project to rehabilitate the heavily-polluted Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando river system.

This was revealed yesterday by Governor Wilhelmino M. Sy Alvarado after meeting Wednesday night with officials of different government agencies and the New York-based environmental watchdog Blacksmith Institute.

The Blacksmith Institute team headed by John Kieth, Jim Darling, Dr. Robert Kurkjian and BI country coordinator Jenny Amparo are still holding consultative meetings with local government units and stakeholders at the Hiyas ng Bulacan Convention Center, here.

Alvarado said that the provincial government is now coordinating with Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Ramon Paje and officials of the Manila Water and Sewerage System.

The program will center on planting trees to save the rainforest cover of the Sierra Madre particularly at the watershed areas of Angat and Ipo dams.

During the meeting, Alvarado told the Blacksmith team that plans are underway for the dredging of the MMO river system, as well as the planting hundreds of thousands of mangroves along the said rivers, which the Blacksmith Institute has branded as among the 30 mostdirtiest rivers in the world.

He said that the provincial government is also coordinating with the mayors of Caloocan City and Valenzuela city in the cleaning of the river system since most pollutants came from industries in those cities.

“We are not playing politics here. Everybody, especially the communities in the said areas, must help in cleaning the rivers, “ Alvarado said.

The Blacksmith team said that their role is to initiate proposals and technical solutions that’s why they are conducting the consultative discussion.

“Everything goes down to the river. For the dredging to be successful we must stop the source of the pollution,” said John Kieth of the Blacksmith Institute.

The governor said that the negative image of the rivers should be erased because investors are

now looking north of Metro Manila and they can't promote the province unless the bad image will be erased.

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