



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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Introduction

This annual report was prepared for the Tubbataha Protected Area Management Board (TPAMB) and shared with our partners and donors whose guidance, oversight, and support continue to sustain the protection of Tubbataha. Your collective commitment remains essential to everything that we do.

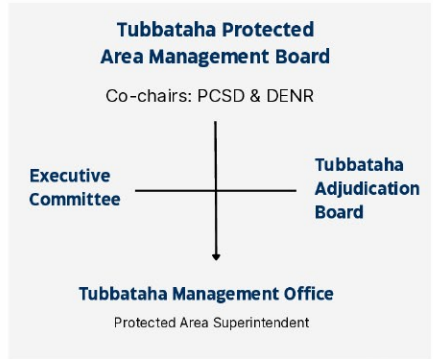
These pages provide a snapshot of our work in 2025: the progress achieved on the ground (or at sea), the resources entrusted to us and how they were managed, and the key milestones that advanced our conservation goals. The report is intentionally concise, mindful of your time, while clearly showing how policy direction, management decisions, and partner support translated into concrete outcomes for the park.

Through another demanding year, the TPAMB's leadership and the continued partnership of our supporters enabled us to stay focused, adapt to challenges, and keep Tubbataha strong, wild, and well cared for.

Overview

Republic Act No. 10067, otherwise known as the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (TRNP) Act of 2009, is the main statutory framework for the management of Tubbataha. It established a 97,030-hectare no-take zone in the middle of the Sulu Sea under both the National Integrated Protected Area System Act (RA 7586) and the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan Act (RA 7611).

It also established the inter-institutional Tubbataha Protected Area Management Board (TPAMB) as the park's sole policy-making body, with the Tubbataha Management Office to implement these policies.



Our Vision

A World Heritage Site that is effectively conserved to maintain ecological integrity contributing to the equitable distribution of benefits and sustained socio-economic development of present and future generations.



Our Mission

We, the stakeholders of Tubbataha, commit to conserve its outstanding universal value through responsible stewardship and genuine partnerships.

The TRNP General Management Plan

2025-2030

The TRNP General Management Plan (GMP) serves as the blueprint for conserving and managing Tubbataha effectively. The TMO develops the plan which is implemented upon the approval of the TPAMB.

The goals for the management of Tubbataha is to:

- preserve the outstanding universal value of Tubbataha and to manage it in a sustainable basis
- protect biological diversity and maintain ecological balance
- provide benefits to communities
- support global conservation goals

The plan provides a clear guide for managing manpower, funds, and other resources more effectively. It focuses on building strong partnerships, improving compliance, and using research to inform decisions. By promoting responsible tourism and encouraging greater community involvement, the plan aims to ensure a sustainable future for the Tubbataha Reefs.



Our Five Management Programs

- Biodiversity and Habitat Protection, Research, Monitoring, and Restoration
- Community Development and Resource Management
- Communication, Education, and Public Awareness
- Institutional Strengthening, Partnership, and Capacity Development
- Crosscutting Management Program

2025 at a Glance

Conservation Results and Key Indicators

Protection and Compliance



Ecosystem Health



People and Community



2025 at a glance

Conservation Results and Key Indicators

Tourism



Public Awareness and Engagement



Financing Conservation



2025 Highlights



The Tubbataha Management Office and partners initiated the Satellite Telemetry of Seabirds project—the first seabird telemetry study in the Philippines—using satellite tags to track the movements, feeding areas, and threats faced by Tubbataha’s seabirds across the flyway.

TMO Researcher Gerlie Gedoria was selected as one of five new Fellows under The Nippon Foundation-University of Edinburgh Ocean Voices Programme. This fellowship provides Gerlie with a platform to expand her work and professional development in marine conservation and governance through rigorous research, international collaboration, and mentorship.

Philip Stein partnered with TMO through the Watch Tubbataha initiative to launch its first professional dive watch, inspired by the park. The company sponsored a seven-day “Watch Tubbataha” expedition that produced a documentary and the coffee table book WatchTubbataha: Time in the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park. Proceeds from book sales were donated to support reef conservation, along with a one-time donation to Tubbataha, reflecting shared values of endurance, timelessness, and long-term stewardship.

2025 Highlights



The Tubbataha Lego Model created by Ateneo Students (Source: Ateneo de Manila University website)

The Ateneo de Manila Junior High School BluBLOC Juniors Team placed in the Top 25 in Asia (Primary Division) at the 2025 Legoland Malaysia School Challenge with a LEGO® model inspired by the Tubbataha Reefs, highlighting reef biodiversity through corals, marine life, and a whale shark.



Source: Nel Andrade/Manila Bulletin

In Cainta, Rizal's 2025 SumBingTik Festival, a Tubbataha-inspired float featuring corals, sea creatures, and a scuba diver became one of the most cheered entries, bringing images of the reef to the streets and promoting marine biodiversity and eco-tourism.

These examples show how Tubbataha inspires art, culture, and creativity, especially among the youth, transforming the reef into a shared symbol of biodiversity, pride, and responsibility for protecting the ocean.

2025 Highlights



Protected Area Superintendent Angelique “Mama Ranger” Songco was honored by the U.S. Department of State with the International Women of Courage Award for her decades of leadership in safeguarding Tubbataha Reefs. This global recognition highlighted both her personal commitment and the park’s role as a model for effective marine protected area management worldwide.

Protecting Tubbataha

Compliance and Enforcement



Rangers on patrol.

Rangers conducted 136 patrols—surpassing the 120-target. All six relieving trips were completed, keeping operations seamless. This year, three vessels were apprehended for illegal entry. All cases progressed to legal action.



Ship-to-shore movement during a relieving trip in December 2025.



TMO/Thea Valenzuela



TMO/Thea Valenzuela

Joint inspections of the new ranger station in June included engineers from the Provincial Government of Palawan, DENR-PENRO, and Mamsar, together with TMO staff and marine park rangers.

Ecosystem Monitoring

Overall reef health remained stable despite climate pressures.

Reef Benthos

Tubbataha coral community remained resilient. The shallow reefs (5 meters) maintained stable hard coral cover from 2022 to 2025, with overall coral diversity increasing across all monitoring sites.

While some localized declines occurred in dominant species, these were station-specific and did not impact the overall reef health.

At deeper stations (10 meters), coral cover declined gradually due to the cumulative effects of bleaching events and strong typhoons. Despite these environmental pressures, stable diversity levels and recovery trends indicate a strong capacity for regeneration.



Reef Fish

The reef fish community remained healthy. Shallow reefs continue to maintain high fish biomass and species richness, meeting or exceeding national standards for healthy reefs in the Philippines.

Biomass increased over time even as fish numbers declined slightly, indicating a shift toward larger fish. Key groups, such as herbivores and commercially important species, remained well represented, thereby supporting reef function.

In deeper stations, both fish biomass and density declined, showing a reduction in overall fish abundance compared with previous years. These declines were most evident in schooling and pelagic fish groups that link the reef to offshore food sources.



Seabirds

This year, 42,000 seabirds were recorded, marking the highest count in 40 years. Notable increases were seen in the populations of Brown Noddy, Sooty Tern, and Brown Booby.

A major highlight is the presence of Cocos Booby (*Sula brewsteri*)—recently identified as a separate species from the Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*)—as a new breeding resident.

The Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*) population is steadily increasing, with a new juvenile successfully fledged, bringing the total to five since the species' return in 2016.



*The Cocos Booby (*Sula brewsteri*) has one of the most restricted breeding ranges of any booby, making its presence in Tubbataha especially significant.*

Water Quality

Water quality parameters remained generally within healthy standards. In 2025, pH levels and dissolved oxygen across the park met or exceeded the national Class SA standards for protected waters.

Rising sea surface temperatures present a persistent challenge. For the third consecutive year, water temperatures exceeded the 30°C threshold. While these elevated temperatures are linked to global bleaching events, the current high dissolved oxygen levels may help mitigate metabolic stress on marine organisms.

Maintaining long-term monitoring and exploring real-time data logging remain essential to tracking Tubbataha's resilience against climate change.





Fish Inventory

Our 2025 fish inventory documented 15 new species, bringing the total record for Tubbataha to 800 species. Surveys in the lagoons revealed 46 species that live exclusively in those habitats. The lagoons of both atolls serve as a primary area for new discoveries.

Shark Monitoring

The shark survey recorded an average of seven sharks per hectare, indicating a high shark abundance. Across 18 dives, grey reef and whitetip reef sharks accounted for 96% of all sightings, with Triggerfish City and Shark Airport as the most active sites, including a school of 26 grey reef sharks observed at Triggerfish City.



Seabird Habitat Monitoring and Restoration

Bird Islet experienced a 22% loss in land area and a 16% reduction in circumference over the past year, underscoring the continued effects of erosion. Although seawall construction increased the size of the South Islet, poor conditions for trees and saplings on both islets continue to limit natural nesting habitats. Annual beach profiling by rangers also recorded erratic elevation drops at the north and south corners of Bird Islet, highlighting the ongoing erosion affecting the park's already limited land area.

Restoration efforts are focused on creating resilient nesting environments. To mitigate habitat loss, the park is implementing the following measures::

- **Nesting Structures:** Artificial structures are constructed to serve as immediate nesting alternatives for Black Noddies due to limited vegetation.
- **Tree Planting and Protection:** Reforestation efforts include planting native trees and installing tree guards to protect vulnerable saplings from environmental stress.



Ranger Field Monitoring and Protection

Rangers conduct regular research and debris management to safeguard the park's ecosystems. Between June 2024 and June 2025, monitoring efforts focused on beach profiling, marine turtle populations, and the removal of marine debris. These activities, conducted in collaboration with law enforcement, provide essential data on habitat changes and emerging threats to Tubbataha.

Monitoring data reveals evolving habitat conditions and significant wildlife activity.

- **Beach Profiling:** Annual surveys of Bird Islet show sand accretion at the southwest corner, while the north and south corners experienced erratic elevation drops. Notable cavities in the sand were attributed to frequent sea turtle nesting activity in these areas.
- **Marine Turtles:** The surveys between June 2024 and June 2025 recorded a total of 446 individuals, with consistent sightings across the North and South Atolls.
- **Marine Debris:** Rangers removed 1,073.9 kg of debris, primarily fishing discards, which pose lethal entanglement risks to wildlife. Large items like fish aggregating devices (FADs) from commercial vessels outside the park were major contributors to the total weight.



Sustaining Life and Livelihoods

Community Engagement



Representatives from the local government of Cagayancillo—Sander Favila, Joven Magbanua, and Gardo Bungay - pose with Mama Ranger after receiving their Certificates of Completion in the Marine Park Ranger Training.

Cagayancillo Bantay Dagat personnel were trained and engaged in enforcement and management practices as marine park rangers. The lessons and experience gained from working in Tubbataha are applicable in managing local reserves in Cagayancillo.

Ten percent (10%) of conservation fees were allocated for livelihood initiatives and MPA management in the municipality.

Members of the Cagayancillo Women's Group for Tubbataha were also able to sell their handmade plushies in Tubbataha during the dive season.



Sander Favila (third from left) and Gardo Bungay (seventh from left) join fellow Marine Park Rangers during a coastal cleanup at Cagayancillo Marine Park after September training and a December deployment.

Education and Youth



Two school-based awareness campaigns were carried out to promote understanding of marine conservation and the importance of Tubbataha. Scholaris Learning and Development Center organized a field trip for their Grade 4–6 students, building on lessons on the Philippines' role in the Coral Triangle and Palawan's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Tubbataha. The activity enabled students to deepen their knowledge, particularly through an immersive 360° VR experience.

Meanwhile, at Gregorio Oquendo Memorial School, a storytelling session was conducted in celebration of Marine Protected Area Day, where children read “Ako, siKlawni ng Tubbataha, Nanalangin” to raise awareness about marine protected areas and the threats they face. Together, these initiatives helped foster early appreciation and understanding of marine ecosystems among young learners.



Managing Visitors and Tourism



A jam-packed ranger station welcomes tourists eager to experience the park.



219
Dive Trips



16
Dive Boats

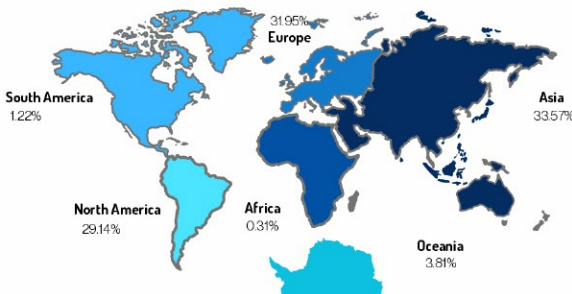


3,604
Tourists

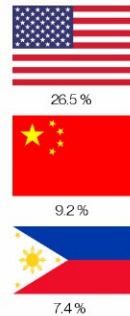


3 out of 5 divers are **MALE**

Demographics by Region



Top 3 Nationalities

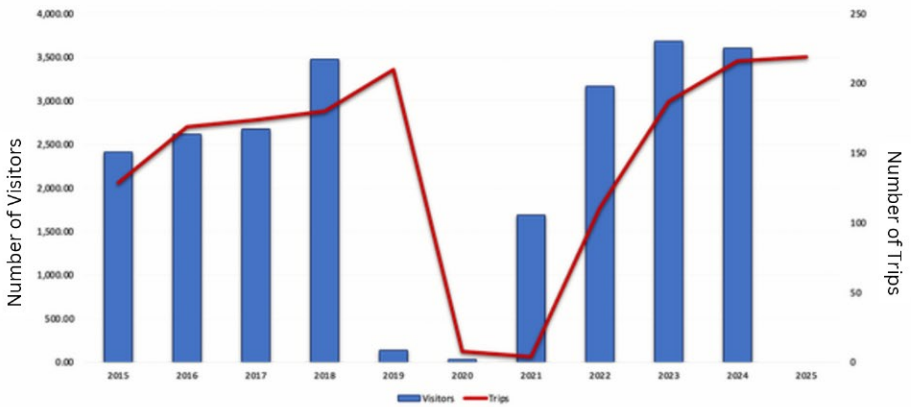




Conducts pre-departure briefings to vessel crews and tourists.

Briefings were conducted on 80% of all trips, setting clear expectations on park rules and reinforcing responsible practices to protect the reef.

Trip and Visitor Summary 2015-2025



Three consultation meetings with dive operators were held to gather operational feedback and identify ways TMO can better support dive operations.

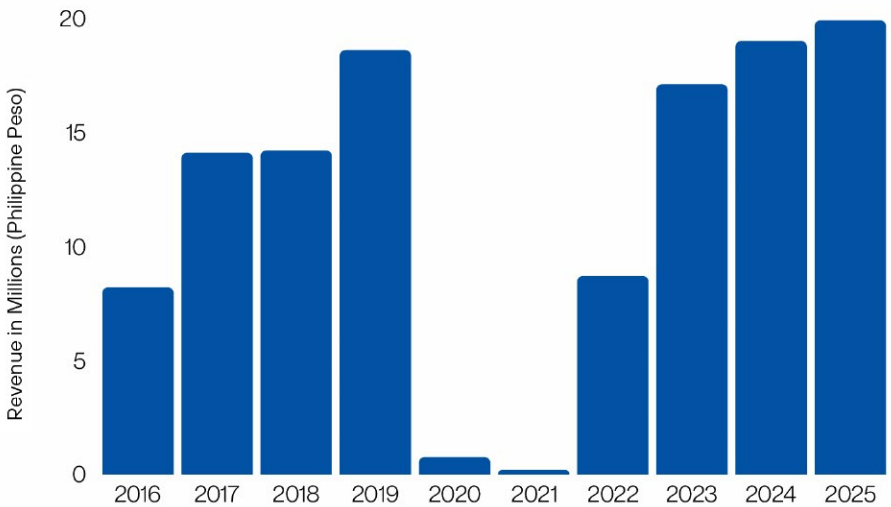


Visiting tourists stop by the ranger station to greet the marine park rangers and purchase merchandise.

Merchandise

In partnership with Saguda Palawan, Inc., merchandise such as T-shirts, sun hats, and headware are sold at the ranger station every summer.

Tourism Revenue Summary from 2015–2025



Revenue is higher by 0.9M this year due to increase in vessel entry fees

Building Public Support

Exhibits



The opening of the Shark Summit Exhibit, organized in partnership with Save Philippine Seas and Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines

We participated in three public exhibits to raise awareness and engagement on marine and environmental conservation. These included the MANA 2025 Exhibit, which highlighted the Philippines' role as a maritime nation; the Shark Week Exhibit, organized with Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines and Save Philippine Seas, which focused on the importance and threats facing sharks.



This exhibit was made possible with the generous support of Pilipinas Shell Foundation, Inc.

The 12th Meeting of Partners of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership Exhibit, which underscored the need to protect migratory bird habitats. Together, these exhibits strengthened public understanding of marine biodiversity and conservation.



TMO with Ms. Amy Fraenkel (CMS), Dr. Musonda Mumba (Ramsar Convention), and Mr. Jerome Montemayor (ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity) at the Tubbataha Reefs exhibit booth during the 12th Meeting of Partners of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership.

Communication Materials



Short film by Catkin Media featuring Tubbataha's pioneering seabird satellite telemetry project—the first of its kind in the Philippines.

During the 12th Meeting of Partners of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership, Tubbataha showcased its seabird conservation work through a short film on the satellite telemetry project, a seabird card game, and an interactive seabird fact sheet accessed via touchpad. These tools helped visitors understand seabird ecology, migration, and the need to protect key breeding sites like Tubbataha in an engaging, accessible way.



A visitor learns about Tubbataha's seabirds through an interactive learning tool.



The digital designs of Tubbataha's dive rules and dive map was printed and distributed to the dive operators of the park,

During the tourism season, TMO used information materials to promote responsible diving and citizen participation. Infographics on tourism rules and regulations, a Tubbataha dive map, and QR codes allowed tourists to access guidelines, submit citizen science data, and share testimonials, reinforcing both compliance and stewardship among visitors.

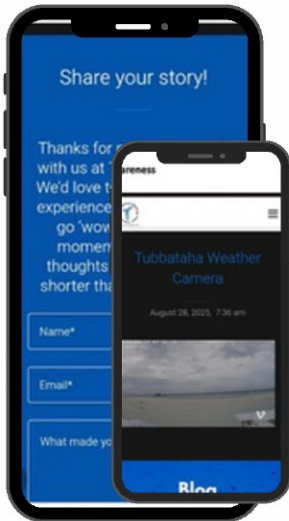
Media and Digital Engagement

TMO's social marketing efforts significantly expanded public awareness and engagement. More than 200 news features amplified conservation messages nationwide. The film screening of *Fragile Frontier: The Climate Story of the Palawan Biosphere Reserve* highlighted the global significance of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Tubbataha.

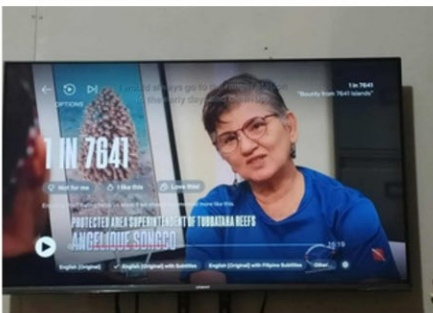


Business Mirror news feature on Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, showcasing its global importance and ongoing protection work

The team also participated in the PCSDS radio program for Coral Bleaching Awareness Month. Enhancements to the official website—such as the Tubbataha weather camera, a testimonial corner for visitor stories, and accessible copies of the 2024 Annual Report—improved transparency and user experience. These efforts drove 42,263 website visits and substantial online growth, including 3.5K new social media followers and 32K total followers to date, underscoring growing public interest in Tubbataha's conservation work.



New website features: Tubbataha weather camera and testimonial corner for tourists to share their stories.



Tubbataha featured in One of 7,641, Episode 4 on Netflix.



Participation in the PCSDS radio program in celebration of Coral Bleaching Awareness Month

Strengthening the Institution

Capacity Building

TMO strengthened both its technical and institutional capacity through staff training in strategic thinking, digital tools, coastal monitoring, coral taxonomy, marine park ranger skills, and scuba diving first aid, among other areas. The team also participated in key scientific and policy forums and strengthened its governance and financial management through DBM- and COA-led courses on budgeting, public financial management, property and supply management, and government expenditure regulations.



Coastal Monitoring Field Equipment, Observations and Data Analysis Training



Scuba Diving First Aid Training for Diving Professionals



24th Comprehensive Marine Park Ranger Training



The Tubbataha scientific advisory body



Coral Triangle Regional Workshop



2025 General Assembly of the RCEP Member States World Heritage Cooperation Alliance

Funding Conservation

Partnerships

We offer our sincere thanks to the organizations and individuals whose support has been essential to our success this year. We are especially grateful to our anonymous donors for their generosity and confidence.



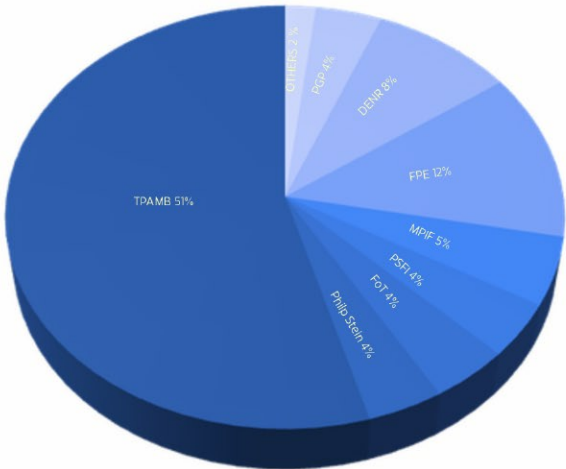
Mr. Antonio Moraza
Ms. Chrissie Bone

Dr. Kent Carpenter
Dr. Klaus Stiefel

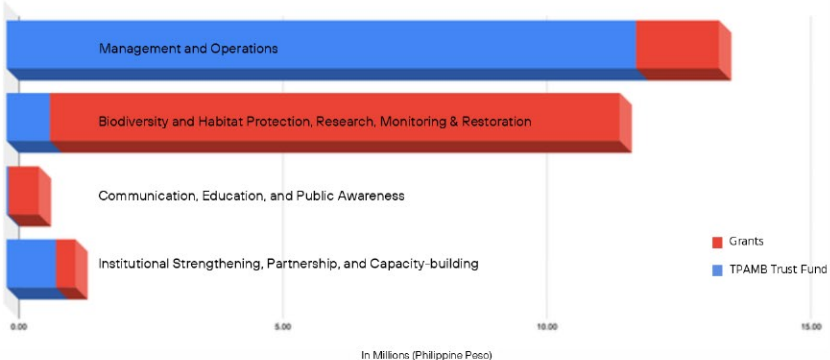
TRNP Trust Fund

Established under Section 17 of RA 10067, the TRNP Trust Fund consists mainly of conservation fees paid by tourists and is used to finance the management of Tubbataha. Collections from each year are allocated for use the following year, and any unexpended funds are retained in the TRNP Trust Fund.

2025 Source of Funds



Investing in Conservation



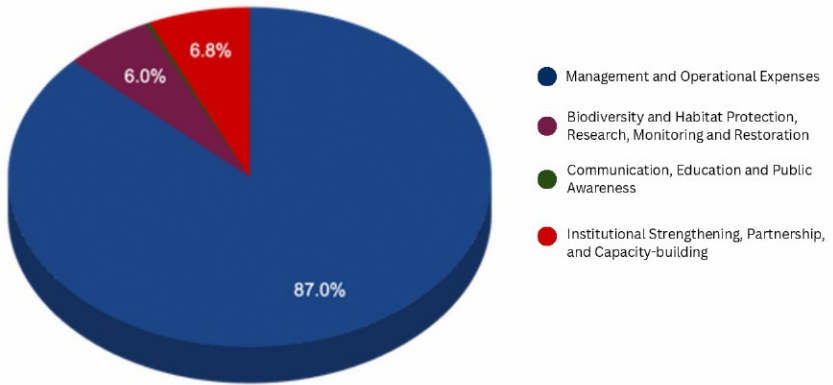
The total budget for 2025 was ₱27.014 million, with the largest allocation directed to management and operational expenses.

Where did the funds go?

The TPAMB spent ₱13.69M, accounting for 50.70% of the total budget. The funds were allocated as follows:

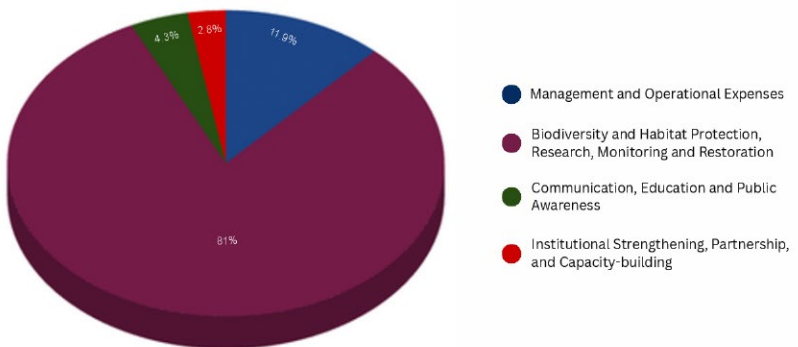
- ₱ 11.9M for Management and Operational Expenses
- ₱ 817,000 for Biodiversity and Habitat Protection, Research, Monitoring and Restoration
- ₱ 37,000 for Communication, Education, and Public Awareness
- ₱ 931,000 for Institutional Strengthening, Partnership, and Capacity-building

2025 Use of TRNP Trust Fund



Grants provided an additional ₱13.3M. These contributions helped sustain operations and protection in Tubbataha, underscoring the vital role of partnerships in long-term conservation.

2025 Use of Grants



Who We Are



Tubbataha Protected Area Management Board

The TPAMB, established under Republic Act 10067, is the multi-sectoral policy-making body for the Tubbataha Reefs. Composed of representatives from diverse sectors, the TPAMB harmonizes conservation goals with stakeholder interests through policy development and strategic direction.

Tubbataha Management Office

The Tubbataha Management Office (TMO), established under Section 14 of Republic Act No. 10067, oversees the day-to-day operations of Tubbataha. Headed by the Protected Area Superintendent, the TMO operates through various units, including research, enforcement, communications and education, and visitor management.



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Protected Area Superintendent

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Rose Lyn B. Magbanua
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