



Republika ng Pilipinas
LALAWIGAN NG SURIGAO DEL SUR
BAYAN NG CORTES

Tanggapan ng Sangguniang Bayan
(Office of the Municipal Council)

August 7, 2026

The Honorable Chairman and Members
Sangguniang Panlalawigan
Tanggapan ng Sangguniang Panlalawigan
Capitol Hills, Tandag City, Surigao del Sur

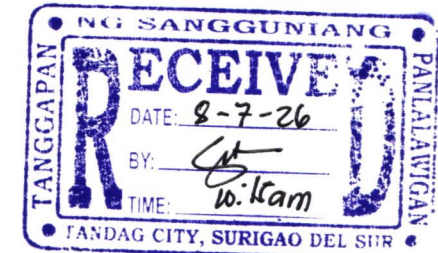
Thru: **Mr. Edgar G. Perez, II, J. D.**
Secretary to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan
Tanggapan ng Sangguniang Panlalawigan
Capitol Hills, Tandag City, Surigao del Sur

Sir/Madam:

Greetings!

Respectfully submitting the approved **Municipal Ordinance No. 17** series of 2026 of this municipality dated August 4, 2026 entitled: **"AN ORDINANCE DECLARING BAKWITAN CAVE LOCATED IN BARANGAY TUBORAN, MUNICIPALITY OF CORTES, SURIGAO DEL SUR, AS A LOCAL CONSERVATION AREA, PROVIDING FOR ITS PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT, REGULATION, AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR"** for your review and appropriate action.

Thank you very much.



Very truly yours,

CYKEE C. DOTE

Local Legislative Staff Officer II
Acting Secretary to the Sangguniang Bayan



Republika ng Pilipinas
Lalawigan ng Surigao del Sur
BAYAN NG CORTES

Tanggapan ng Sangguniang Bayan
(Office of the Municipal Council)

Refer To: Committee on Environmental Protection
and Ecology

**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 51ST REGULAR SESSION OF THE 19TH SANGGUNIAN BAYAN
OF CORTES, SURIGAO DEL SUR HELD AT THE MUNICIPAL SESSION HALL ON AUGUST 4, 2026**

Present:

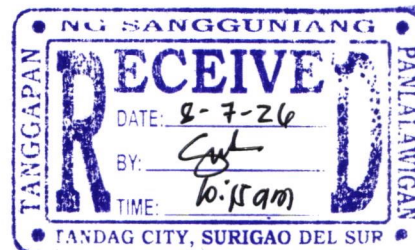
Hon. Cherry B. Daraman
Municipal Vice Mayor
Regular Presiding Officer

Regular Sangguniang Bayan Members

Hon. Hazel G. Pasok
Hon. Ronald S. Cubero
Hon. Joven P. Rivera
Hon. Adrian Y. Pono
Hon. Sedfrey G. Cuartero
Hon. Lydia I. Gabisay
Hon. Manuel D. Bagnol
Hon. Mercedette V. Dumagan, MPA

Sangguniang Bayan Member

- do -
- do -
- do -
- do -
- do -
- do -
- do -



Ex-Officio Member

Hon. Carmelito S. Montenegro
Hon. Julieta A. Arlegui
Hon. Vincent L. Quiño

IPM Representative
ABC President
SK Fed. President

Absent: None

MUNICIPAL ORDINANCE NO. 17
(Series of 2026)

**AN ORDINANCE DECLARING BAKWITAN CAVE LOCATED IN BARANGAY TUBORAN,
MUNICIPALITY OF CORTES, PROVINCE OF SURIGAO DEL SUR, AS A LOCAL CONSERVATION AREA,
PROVIDING FOR ITS PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT, REGULATION, AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION,
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

Introduced by: **HON. MERCEDETTE V. DUMAGAN, MPA**

Seconded by: **All Members Present**

WHEREAS, Bakwitan Cave in Barangay Tuboran is a natural formation with ecological, geological, and cultural significance;

WHEREAS, caves serve as habitats for diverse wildlife and are vital for groundwater systems and biodiversity conservation;

WHEREAS, the Municipality recognizes the need to protect Bakwitan Cave from destruction, overuse, and environmental degradation;

WHEREAS, there is a need to regulate access and promote sustainable ecotourism for the benefit of the local community;



PROVINCE OF SURIGAO DEL SUR
Office of the Secretary to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan

Tel. No.: 086-2115832
Email: ossp@surigaodelsur.gov.ph

OSSP-26-06164

WHEREAS, Local Government Units are empowered under the law to enact measures for environmental protection and sustainable development;

NOW, THEREFORE, in view of the foregoing, this Ordinance is enacted.

BE IT ORDAINED by the Sangguniang Bayan of the Municipality of Cortes, Surigao del Sur, in session duly assembled:

SECTION 1. TITLE

This Ordinance shall be known as the "Bakwitan Cave Local Conservation Ordinance of 2026."

SECTION 2. DECLARATION OF POLICY

It is hereby declared that the policy of the Municipality of Cortes to protect, conserve, and sustainably manage its natural resources, biodiversity, and ecological systems for the benefit of present and future generations. The Municipality recognizes the importance of maintaining ecological balance and environmental integrity through the conservation of forests, rivers, coastal areas, wildlife, and other critical habitats, including caves as vital ecosystems and part of the community's natural heritage. It further promotes sustainable and community-based ecotourism that supports environmental protection, cultural preservation, and local economic development. The Municipality shall ensure that the utilization and development of natural resources are carried out in a responsible and sustainable manner, consistent with environmental conservation, disaster risk reduction, and climate resilience principles.

SECTION 3. LEGAL BASIS

This Ordinance is enacted pursuant to:

RA 7160 – Local Government Code of 1991;
RA 9147 – Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act;
RA 7586, as amended by RA 11038 – National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1992, insofar as applicable;
RA 9072 – National Caves and Cave Resources Management and Protection Act;
RA 9003 – Ecological Solid Waste Management Act;
RA 9275 – Clean Water Act;
RA 8749 – Clean Air Act;
RA 9729 – Climate Change Act;
RA 10121 – Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act;
RA 8371 – Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (if applicable);
RA 9512 – Environmental Awareness and Education Act;
PD 1586 – Environmental Impact Statement System;
Relevant DENR Administrative Orders and other applicable laws.

SECTION 4. DECLARATION OF BAKWITAN CAVE AS A LOCAL CONSERVATION AREA

Bakwitan Cave located in Barangay Tuboran is hereby declared a Local Conservation Area in recognition of its ecological, geological, cultural, and tourism significance. The Municipality of Cortes shall ensure the protection, conservation, and sustainable management of the cave and its surrounding environment to preserve its biodiversity, maintain its ecological integrity, and promote responsible and community-based ecotourism for the benefit of present and future generations.

SECTION 5. COVERAGE AND BOUNDARIES

The Local Conservation Area shall cover the entire Bakwitan Cave system, including its entrances, surrounding buffer zones, and adjacent forest and watershed areas necessary for the protection and preservation of its ecological integrity and biodiversity. The conservation area shall encompass all critical habitats and natural features associated with the cave ecosystem to ensure effective environmental management and sustainable conservation. A technical survey, mapping, and delineation of the metes and bounds of the conservation area shall be conducted by the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to establish the official boundaries of the Local Conservation Area.

SECTION 6. CLASSIFICATION

Bakwitan Cave has been classified as a Class II cave pursuant to DENR Administrative Order No. 2024-08, which allows limited and controlled use; access is not open to the general public without regulation, and entry is permitted only for the following purposes: Guided ecotourism activities, scientific research, and educational tours.

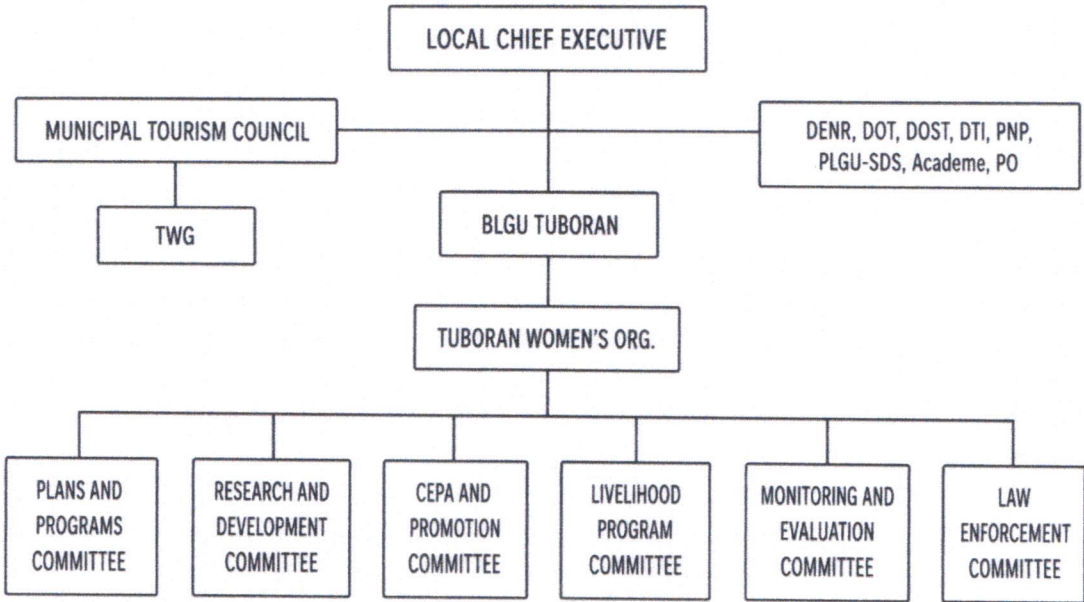
SECTION 7. ZONING

The area shall be divided into:

- Protection Zone** – No entry except authorized scientific research;
- Buffer Zone** – Limited regulated access;
- Ecotourism Zone** – Controlled tourism and visitor activities.

SECTION 8. CREATION OF CAVE MANAGEMENT BODY

- Local Chief Executive (LCE) - Chairperson
- Advisory and Technical Support Layer
 - Municipal Tourism Council
 - Technical Working Group (TWG)
 - National and Partner Agencies (DENR, DOT, DOST, DTI, PNP, Academe, etc.)
- BLGU Tuboran
- Tuboran Women's Association
- Functional Committees (Operational Core)



FUNCTIONS:

1. Local Chief Executive (LCE)

The Local Chief Executive serves as the highest local authority, providing overall policy direction, political support, and approval of key decisions related to cave management. This ensures that cave management is integrated into the LGU's development and environmental governance agenda.

2. Advisory and Technical Support Layer

Municipal Tourism Council

This body plays a key role in:

- Aligning cave management with tourism development policies;
- Ensuring ecotourism is regulated and sustainable;
- Coordinating tourism-related programs and promotions.

Technical Working Group (TWG)

Acts as the technical backbone, responsible for:

- Provides technical assistance in planning, development, and management of the cave;
- Providing technical recommendations;
- Supporting implementation of council decisions.

National and Partner Agencies (DENR, DOT, DOST, DTI, PNP, Academe, etc.)

These agencies provide:

- Environmental protection (DENR);
- Tourism development standards (DOT);
- Science and safety inputs (DOST, Academe);
- Enterprise and livelihood support (DTI);
- Security and enforcement assistance (PNP).

3. BLGU Tuboran

The Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU) is under the supervision of the Local Chief Executive (LCE) and provides support to the frontline implementer. It:

- Enforces local policies on the ground;
- Coordinates community participation;
- Supervises day-to-day management activities.

4. Tuboran Women's Association (TWA)

TWA serves as the frontline implementer:

- Implements day-to-day management and ecotourism operations;
- Leads livelihood development initiatives;
- Supports conservation activities.

5. Functional Committees (Operational Core)

These committees are the working units that translate plans into action:

Plans and Programs Committee

- Planning of cave management activities
- Policy and program development

Research and Development Committee

- Biodiversity and cave studies
- Data collection and documentation
- Science-based management support

CEPA and Promotion Committee

- Conservation education and public awareness
- Information campaigns and ecotourism promotion

Livelihood Program Committee

- Sustainable income projects for communities
- Ecotourism-related enterprises

Monitoring and Evaluation Committee

- Tracks implementation progress
- Assesses environmental condition and compliance

Law Enforcement Committee

- Ensures protection of the cave
- Implements rules and restrictions
- Coordinates with PNP and LGU enforcers

SECTION 9. PROHIBITED ACTS

Within the Bakwitan Cave Local Conservation Area, it shall be prohibited for any person or entity to destroy, remove, possess, collect, transport, trade, or sell cave formations and other natural features found within the cave ecosystem. Likewise, any disturbance, hunting, gathering, collection, possession, transport, trading, or selling of wildlife and wildlife resources shall be strictly prohibited. The dumping or disposal of any form of waste, unauthorized entry, unregulated tourism activities, vandalism, graffiti, and any other act that may cause pollution, habitat destruction, environmental degradation, or damage to the ecological integrity of the conservation area shall likewise be prohibited.

SECTION 10. REGULATED ACTIVITIES

The following activities within the Bakwitan Cave Local Conservation Area shall be allowed only upon the issuance of appropriate permits and subject to existing environmental laws, rules, and conservation guidelines: research and scientific studies, educational and learning tours, controlled and community-based ecotourism activities, cultural practices that are consistent with environmental protection and conservation objectives, and the regulated collection of guano. All permitted activities shall be conducted in a manner that minimizes environmental impact and ensures the protection, sustainability, and ecological integrity of the cave ecosystem and its surrounding areas.

SECTION 11. USER FEES AND REVENUE SHARING

The Tuboran Women's Association shall manage the day-to-day ecotourism activities of Bakwitan Cave. In recognition of its roles and responsibilities, a larger share of the revenues generated may be allocated to the People's Organization (PO), subject to a fair and transparent revenue-sharing agreement with the landowner and the Municipality of Cortes. All collected funds shall be used for conservation, maintenance, environmental management, and sustainable livelihood programs.

SECTION 12. DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND SAFETY

All activities shall integrate safety protocols, hazard mapping, and emergency response measures in coordination with MDRRMO.

SECTION 13. ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of this Ordinance and the protection of the Bakwitan Cave Local Conservation Area shall be undertaken jointly by the Philippine National Police (PNP), Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO), Barangay Officials, Barangay Tanods, and duly deputized Cave Protection Enforcement Officers (CPEO), in coordination with concerned government agencies and community stakeholders, to ensure compliance with environmental laws, conservation measures, and protection policies.

SECTION 14. APPROPRIATION

Funds for the implementation and management of the Bakwitan Cave Local Conservation Area shall be sourced from the 20% Development Fund, Environmental Management Fund, environment and tourism-related allocations, community-based enterprise funds, grants, and other external funding sources, subject to existing accounting and auditing rules and regulations.

SECTION 15. IEC AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The Municipality of Cortes shall conduct continuous Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns to promote environmental awareness, cave conservation, and responsible ecotourism practices. It shall likewise ensure the active participation and collaboration of local communities, people's organizations, schools, stakeholders, and partner agencies in the protection, management, and sustainable conservation of the Bakwitan Cave Local Conservation Area.

SECTION 16. PENALTIES

Any person found guilty of violating any provision of this Ordinance shall, upon conviction by a court of competent jurisdiction, be subject to the following penalties:

1st Offense: ₱ 1,000.00 or community service

2nd Offense: ₱ 1,500 or up to 30 days imprisonment

3rd Offense: ₱ 2,500 or up to 60 days imprisonment

SECTION 17. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE. In the event that any part or portion of this ordinance is pronounced or declared invalid or unconstitutional, all other provisions hereof not affected by such pronouncement shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 18. APPLICABILITY CLAUSE. All other related matters not specifically provided in this ordinance shall be governed by pertinent existing laws or ordinances.

SECTION 19. REPEALING CLAUSE. All ordinances and other previous local enactments, resolutions, memoranda and other issuances inconsistent with this ordinance are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 20. EFFECTIVITY. This ordinance shall take effect upon approval and after compliance with all publication and posting requirements prescribed by the Local Government Code of 1991 and other applicable laws.

ENACTED by the 19th Sangguniang Bayan of Cortes, Surigao del Sur on its 51st Regular Session on August 4, 2026 at Cortes, Surigao del Sur.

ATTESTED:



CYKEE C. DOTE

Local Legislative Staff Officer II
Acting Secretary to the Sangguniang Bayan

**CERTIFIED CORRECT
TO BE DULY ADOPTED:**



CHERRY B. DARAMAN

Municipal Vice Mayor
Regular Presiding Officer

APPROVED:



FREDERICK P. YU
Municipal Mayor

Date: **AUG 06 2026**

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Surigao del Sur
Municipality of Cortes

Office of the Sangguniang Bayan
(Office of the Municipal Council)

CERTIFICATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that **Municipal Ordinance No. 17** of this municipality dated August 4, 2026, viz;

- 1. Municipal Ordinance No. 17 series of 2026 entitled "AN ORDINANCE DECLARING BAKWITAN CAVE LOCATED IN BARANGAY TUBORAN, MUNICIPALITY OF CORTES, SURIGAO DEL SUR, AS A LOCAL CONSERVATION AREA, PROVIDING FOR ITS PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT, REGULATION, AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR"**

was posted in the bulletin board at the entrance of the Municipal Hall and in 2 other conspicuous places of this municipality.

This **Certification** is issued in compliance with Section 59 of the Local Government Code of 1991 otherwise known as RA 7160.

Done this 6th day of August, 2026 at Cortes, Surigao del Sur.


CYKEE C. DOTE

Local Legislative Staff Officer II
Acting Secretary to the Sangguniang Bayan



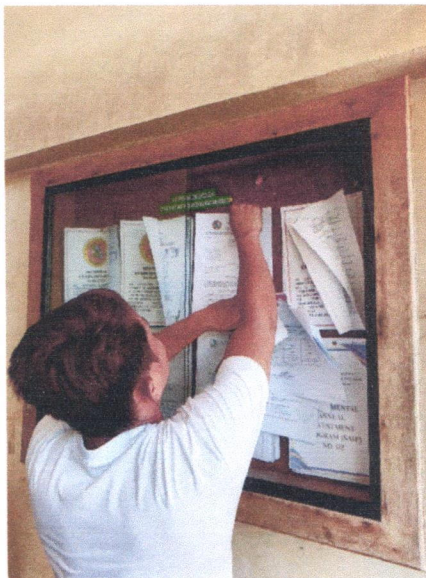
Republika ng Pilipinas
Lalawigan ng Surigao del Sur
BAYAN NG CORTES

Tanggapan ng Sangguniang Bayan
(Office of the Municipal Council)

In front of the Municipal Building



Entrance of the Municipal Gymnasium



Cortes Terminal

