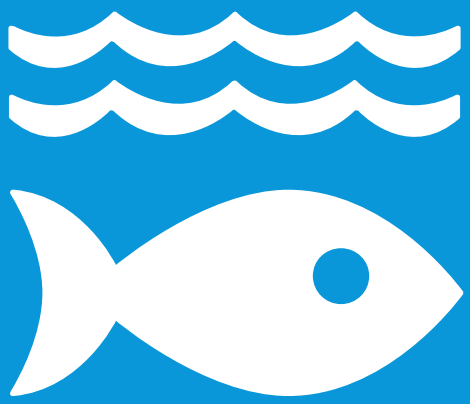
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

SDGs

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



EDUCATING COMMUNITIES TO PROTECT OUR WATERS

Healthy waters, from mountain streams to open seas, depend on people who understand them and are willing to protect them. SLU supports this through education and community outreach.



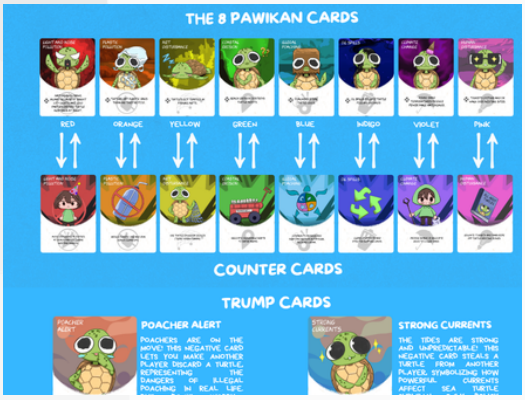
On October 12, 2025, members of the PIIE – SLU Student Chapter teamed up with the Rotary Club of Baguio for a rainwater harvesting activity in Barangay Happy Hollow, Baguio City. Residents were shown simple ways to collect and store rainwater, and why managing water at the household and neighborhood level matters for the freshwater ecosystem they all share.



For the students, it was a chance to use their engineering training where it counts. Ideas from the classroom were explained in plain terms that residents could try at home. The activity is one part of SLU's wider freshwater work, which aims to put the University's technical expertise in the hands of the people who depend on these water sources every day.

Marine ecosystems face a different set of problems. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and poaching harm sea life and the people in the Philippines who make their living from the sea. Catch limits are ignored, protected sanctuaries are entered, and food webs already under strain are damaged further. The laws exist, but awareness of them at the community level often falls short.





With that problem in mind, Horizon Keepers, a strategic card game, was developed. Players take on the role of turtle rescuers protecting the Pawikan, or sea turtles, of the Philippines. They gather resources, play action cards, and respond to the kinds of conservation challenges coastal communities actually face. Players learn by playing rather than by listening to a lecture.

The game needs few materials and its rules are comprehensible, so it fits many settings. Teachers in coastal schools can use it to get young students thinking about conservation early. Local government units and fisherfolk cooperatives can bring it into workshops to start conversations about community watch groups and marine protection laws.

A mountain barangay and a coastal town have different waters and different problems, but the approach is the same, 'people protect what they understand'. SLU's part is to make that understanding easier to reach, through a hands-on workshop in one place and a card game in another.

Through the SLU–CURMA Coastal Mission, Saint Louis University brings students, faculty, and communities to the shoreline to protect marine life through hands-on action.

On November 16, 2025, SLU student leaders joined a seashore clean-up drive with Project Coastal Underwater Resource Management Actions (CURMA), to ensure a safe nesting ground for sea turtles.

The effort reflects the CICM Advocacy on the Integrity of Creation, championed by University President Rev. Fr. Gilbert B. Sales, CICM, PhD, which calls for responsible stewardship of the environment. After the clean-up, participants distributed food and essential goods to more than 80 community members in need, with support from American Corner, SLU University Libraries, Diwa Learning Systems Inc., Phoenix Publishing House Inc., and Mercado Canteen.





As part of “Marine Stewardship and Climate Resilience: A SLU–CURMA Coastal Mission", SLU and CURMA released sea turtle hatchlings along the shores of San Juan, La Union on January 24, 2026. Students and faculty took part, seeing what conservation looks like on the ground and building their awareness of marine biodiversity.

Both activities aim to protect the ocean which is a shared responsibility that is best learned by doing. Through this partnership, SLU turns its mission of social responsibility and climate resilience into work that benefits both the sea and the people who live beside it.

Protecting Waterways Through Responsible Campus Practices

Because Saint Louis University (SLU) sits in the headwater region of Northern Luzon, what leaves the campus, whether it flows through a drain or is thrown away, travels downstream to the people, wildlife, and rivers below. SLU’s Environmental Policy, signed by the University President, commits the University to preventing pollution and meeting national standards, including the Philippine Clean Water Act (RA 9275) and the DENR Water Quality and Effluent Standards (DAO 2016-08). In practice, hazardous wastes from academic, laboratory, and medical units are carefully sorted, labeled, stored, and handled so they never reach campus drains. Wastewater is sent to DENR-regulated Sewage Treatment Plants, where biofiltration, sedimentation, and ozonation clean it to national limits before release, and SLU files quarterly monitoring reports with the DENR Environmental Management Bureau to keep its results open to review.







The University also works to stop plastic at its source. SLU and SLU–Sacred Heart Medical Center have an institutional plan to reduce plastic waste across the campus and its healthcare facilities, and the medical center's "Water is Life: Nurturing and Flowing Sustainability Beyond Hospital Walls" program earned the Gold Award for Social and Environmental Responsibility at the 48th World Hospital Congress in Geneva. The City Government of Baguio also commended it through Resolution No. 826, Series of 2025. On campus, Administrative Memo No. 32, s. 2023 bans Styrofoam and single-use plastics in line with the Baguio Environment Code, and asks the SLU community, canteen concessionaires, and suppliers to use reusable flasks, meal boxes, and utensils instead. Together, these measures help protect Baguio City's sewer system and the Balili and Bued River basins, and, with them, the freshwater and public health of the wider region.

From the headwaters of Baguio to the rivers and coasts downstream, Saint Louis University plans, monitors, and works with its neighbors to keep shared waters healthy.

Guided by its Environmental Policy, SLU works on three fronts. To slow runoff and erosion, rooftop rainwater harvesting systems capture rain at the source. Students also care for trees and clear invasive plants in the Busol Watershed with CENRO Baguio, and SLU helps keep a creek along Verdepino Drive clear through an adopt-a-creek agreement with Barangay Camp 7. To keep chemicals out, wastewater is treated in DENR-regulated plants. Hazardous wastes undergo strict handling rules (GL-CMS-015) and is hauled off-site by accredited handlers under an agreement with Servo-Treat Philippines, Inc. Also, plastic and Styrofoam are banned on campus. To protect living systems, ozonation removes harmful pathogens from treated water, and SLU's Youth Council of Ecolodians (YCE) works with CURMA to protect sea turtles on the coast.

SLU faculty and students study the physicochemical properties and heavy metal concentrations of the Ambalanga River in a mining area in Itogon, Benguet. This gives Itogon's municipal and barangay officials local data to guide river zoning, small-scale mining regulation, and rehabilitation. It also supports the DENR's water quality monitoring under the Clean Water Act (RA 9275). Because the Ambalanga flows into larger systems such as the Agno River basin, watching it upstream helps protect aquatic life, farm irrigation, and public health far beyond the mountains.





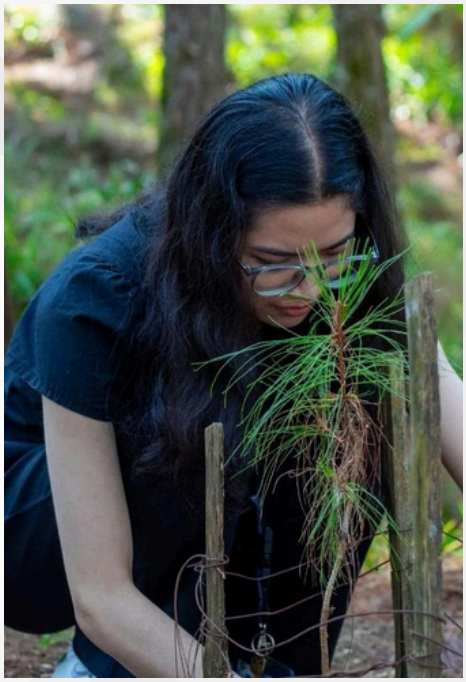
Upland habits shape coastal waters, and SLU backs student leaders who act on that link. Through its support for the Youth Council of Ecolodians (YCE), the University helps young people connect highland communities to the marine life downstream. YCE's partnership with Coastal Underwater Resource Management Actions (CURMA) in La Union, which includes community talks, coastal clean-ups, and protection of sea turtle nesting habitat, is one result.



SLU, through the Office of the University President, University Libraries, and American Corner Baguio, joined Barangay Camp 7 in an adopt-a-creek partnership for a creek along Verdepino Drive that feeds the Bued River. Representatives walked the waterway together to spot debris, pollution sources, and eroding banks, and set the groundwork for clean-ups and a long-term rehabilitation plan the barangay helps shape. To build trust, SLU also invited Camp 7 officials to tour its Sewage Treatment Plant and see how it manages its own wastewater.

SLU manages water from campus to forest to river. On campus, rainwater harvesting and wastewater treatment reduce the demand for groundwater and the pollution sent downstream. In the Busol Watershed, Baguio's main forest reserve, student groups work with CENRO Baguio on the TANAW program, which involves tree care and clearing invasive plants and debris. On February 28, 2026, BAGGS–SLU launched TANAW: One Scholar, One Tree, which brought together student organizations from across the University for a half-day of tree maintenance. On November 16, 2025, the Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers and its student chapters held a similar tree-nurturing day at the BWD Watershed in Military Cutoff. In the community, the FlowCheck project maps water quality in barangays such as Happy Hollow, and SLU continues its creek adoption along Verdepino Drive.







Biology and environmental science students collaborate with the Watershed and Water Resources Research, Development, and Extension Center (WWRRDEC) at Camp John Hay, and SLU's biodiversity assessments in the Lower Agno Watershed Forest Reserve involved local governments and indigenous communities, recording how aquatic and riparian life differs between the Bued and Balog Rivers. Beyond fieldwork, YCE's Tinig at Tindig forum on November 15–16, 2025 gave young people a place to discuss eco-governance, climate justice, and accountability.