



GOV. COMM. 24-126  
(HOUSE)

David M. Apatang  
Governor

Dennis James C. Mendiola  
Lieutenant Governor

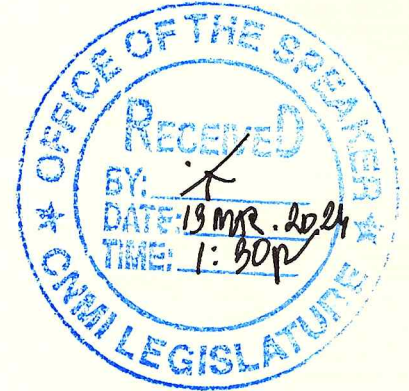
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

GOV 2026-158

March 12, 2026

The Honorable Donald M. Manglona  
Chairman  
Rota Legislative Delegation  
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez  
Speaker  
House of Representatives  
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950



3/13/26



Dear Mr. Chairman and Mr. Speaker:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law **House Local Bill No. 24-42**, entitled “To amend the Wedding Cake Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area, to authorize the Mayor of Rota to plan, construct, and maintain a pedestrian pathway at Wedding Cake Mountain and access to the Grotto, and to initiate actions necessary to qualify for federal grants, and for other purposes.”, which was passed by the Rota Legislative Delegation of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Rota Local Law No. 24-09**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

  
**DAVID M. APATANG**  
Governor

RECEIVED BY   
DATE 3/13/26 TIME 2:29  
  
03/13/2026  
@1:03 pm

- cc: Lieutenant Governor; Senate President; Attorney General;  
Commonwealth Law Revision Commission; Public Auditor; Mayor of Rota;  
Department of Lands and Natural Resources; Division of Fish and Wildlife;  
Bureau of Environmental Coastal Quality; Special Assistant for Administration;  
Programs and Legislative Review



**ROTA LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION  
FIRST SENATORIAL DISTRICT  
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE  
THIRD REGULAR SESSION, 2026**

**HOUSE LOCAL BILL NO. 24-42**

---

---

**A LOCAL BILL FOR AN ACT  
FOR THE FIRST SENATORIAL DISTRICT**

To amend the Wedding Cake Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area, to authorize the Mayor of Rota to plan, construct, and maintain a pedestrian pathway at Wedding Cake Mountain and access to the Grotto, and to initiate actions necessary to qualify for federal grants, and for other purposes.

---

---

**OFFERED BY**

Representative Julie Marie A. Ogo

**Introduced on January 16, 2026**

---

---

**HOUSE ACTION**

Transmitted to the Rota Legislative Delegation for action on

**February 27, 2026**

---

---

**DELEGATION ACTION**

<b>Referred to:</b>	None
<b>Comments Solicited:</b>	2/27/26: Mayor of Rota [Del. Matters 24-57] & 20 <sup>th</sup> Rota Municipal Council [Del. Matters 24-58]
<b>Comments Received:</b>	3/3/26 Mayors Comm. 24-08
<b>Standing Committee Report:</b>	None
<b>Passed Final Reading:</b>	March 4, 2026

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "F. Kaipat".

---

**Frances Joan P. Kaipat  
Delegation Clerk**



**ROTA LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION  
FIRST SENATORIAL DISTRICT  
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE**

**THIRD REGULAR SESSION, 2026**

**H. L. B. NO. 24-42**

---

**A LOCAL BILL FOR AN ACT  
FOR THE FIRST SENATORIAL DISTRICT**

To amend the Wedding Cake Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area, to authorize the Mayor of Rota to plan, construct, and maintain a pedestrian pathway at Wedding Cake Mountain and access to the Grotto, and to initiate actions necessary to qualify for federal grants, and for other purposes.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE FIRST SENATORIAL DISTRICT DELEGATION PURSUANT TO  
CHAPTER 4, DIVISION 1, TITLE 1 OF THE COMMONWEALTH CODE:**

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

2       The Rota Legislative Delegation finds that Rota Local Law 9-3 established the Wedding  
3 Cake Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area to protect wildlife, plant life, soils, and the scenic  
4 coastal environment of the Taipingot Peninsula on Rota. Over the years, public use of the Wedding  
5 Cake area and nearby natural attractions, including the Grotto, has increased. Unmanaged foot  
6 traffic has the potential to damage fragile habitat, accelerate erosion, and increase risks to visitor  
7 safety.

8       A properly planned and constructed pathway system, including steps, railings, and related  
9 safety and interpretive improvements, will help channel visitors to designated areas, reduce

1 uncontrolled trampling of vegetation, protect wildlife, and improve overall public safety while  
2 enhancing the visitor experience.

3 The Mayor of Rota is the appropriate local executive authority to coordinate, plan, and  
4 implement pathway and access improvements within the conservation area in partnership with  
5 relevant Commonwealth and federal agencies. Federal grants and cooperative agreements may be  
6 available to assist with planning, environmental compliance, construction, and maintenance of  
7 such improvements, and it is in the public interest to clearly authorize the Mayor of Rota to  
8 undertake all necessary steps to qualify or pre-qualify for such funding.

9 The purpose of this Act is, therefore, to amend Rota Local Law 9-3, as codified, to  
10 expressly authorize the Mayor of Rota to plan, construct, and maintain a pathway at Wedding Cake  
11 Mountain and access to the Grotto, in a manner consistent with the conservation purposes of the  
12 area, and to authorize actions needed to qualify for federal grants and assistance.

13 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Title 10, Division 1, Chapter 8, Article 2 of the  
14 Commonwealth Code (Wedding Cake Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area), is amended by  
15 adding a new § 1823 to read as follows:

16 “§ 1823. Pathway and Access Improvements; Mayor of Rota.

17 (a) Authority. Subject to compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations,  
18 the Mayor of Rota is hereby authorized to plan, design, construct, improve, and maintain

1 pedestrian pathways and related improvements within the Wedding Cake Mountain  
2 Wildlife Conservation Area, including, but not limited to:

3 (1) A pedestrian pathway, steps, railings, viewing platforms, and similar  
4 improvements within the Wedding Cake Mountain area; and

5 (2) Safe pedestrian access and pathway improvements to and from the  
6 Grotto and any designated viewing or staging areas associated with the Wedding  
7 Cake Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area.

8 (b) Conservation Standards. All pathways and improvements authorized under this  
9 section shall:

10 (1) Be planned, designed, and implemented in consultation with the  
11 Department of Lands and Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, and  
12 the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, and any other relevant agencies;

13 (2) Be sited and constructed to minimize disturbance to wildlife, plant life,  
14 soils, cultural resources, and the scenic coastal environment;

15 (3) Be consistent with any applicable management plans or regulations  
16 adopted for the Wedding Cake Mountain Wildlife Conservation Area; and

17 (4) Incorporate, to the greatest extent practicable, erosion control, safety,  
18 and resource-protection measures.

19 (c) Federal Grants and Other Assistance. The Mayor of Rota is hereby authorized  
20 to:

HOUSE LOCAL BILL NO. 24-42

---

---

1                   (1) Apply for, receive, and expend federal grants, cooperative agreements,  
2                   and other external funding for the planning, environmental review, design,  
3                   construction, and maintenance of the pathways and improvements authorized in  
4                   this section;

5                   (2) Enter into agreements or memoranda of understanding with  
6                   Commonwealth, federal, or private entities as may be necessary to implement such  
7                   projects; and

8                   (3) Provide or coordinate any required local match or in-kind contributions,  
9                   subject to applicable procurement and fiscal laws.

10                  (d) Pre-Qualification Activities. The Mayor of Rota shall be fully authorized to  
11                  undertake all planning, feasibility studies, environmental compliance activities,  
12                  engineering, and other preparatory actions necessary for the project to qualify or pre-  
13                  qualify for federal grants, cooperative agreements, or other assistance; provided that all  
14                  such activities shall be conducted in compliance with applicable Commonwealth and  
15                  federal laws and regulations.

16                  (e) Relation to Existing Prohibitions. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

17                         (1) Repeal or weaken the prohibitions outlined in 10 CMC § 1821, except  
18                         to the limited extent necessary to carry out the construction and maintenance of

1 pathways and improvements expressly authorized herein in a manner consistent  
2 with conservation purposes; or

3 (2) Exempt any person or agency from compliance with applicable  
4 Commonwealth or federal environmental, cultural, or historic preservation  
5 requirements.

6 (f) Rules and Regulations. The Mayor of Rota, in consultation with the Department  
7 of Lands and Natural Resources and the Division of Fish and Wildlife, may promulgate  
8 rules and regulations, consistent with this Article, to implement the authority granted under  
9 this section.”

10 **SECTION 3. SEVERABILITY.**

11 If any provision of this Act or the application of any such provision to any person or  
12 circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act  
13 or the application of its provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held  
14 invalid shall not be affected thereby.

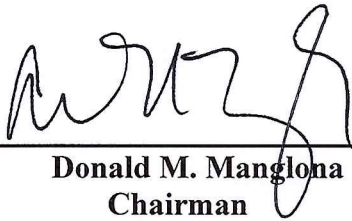
15 **SECTION 4. SAVINGS CLAUSE.**

16 This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as affecting any existing  
17 right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation or  
18 order adopted under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding  
19 instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of  
20 terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in  
21 existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

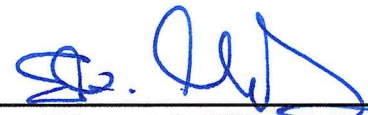
1 **SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

2           This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor or it becoming law without  
3 such approval.

**CERTIFIED BY:**



**Donald M. Manglona**  
**Chairman**  
**Rota Legislative Delegation**



**Edmund S. Villagomez**  
**Speaker**  
**24<sup>th</sup> House of Representatives**

*Approved* this *12<sup>th</sup>* day of *March*, 2026.



**David M. Apatang**  
**Governor**  
**Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands**