

Communication with nature gives people peace of mind and delight. It also plays a significant role in promoting better understanding of nature and in fostering attitudes of environmental stewardship. The Ministry of the Environment develops many activities to promote communication with nature, and provide sites for people to experience diverse nature.



## 10.1 Establishment of Sites for the Promotion of Communication with Nature in Natural Parks

### (1) Natural Park Facility Development and Maintenance Program

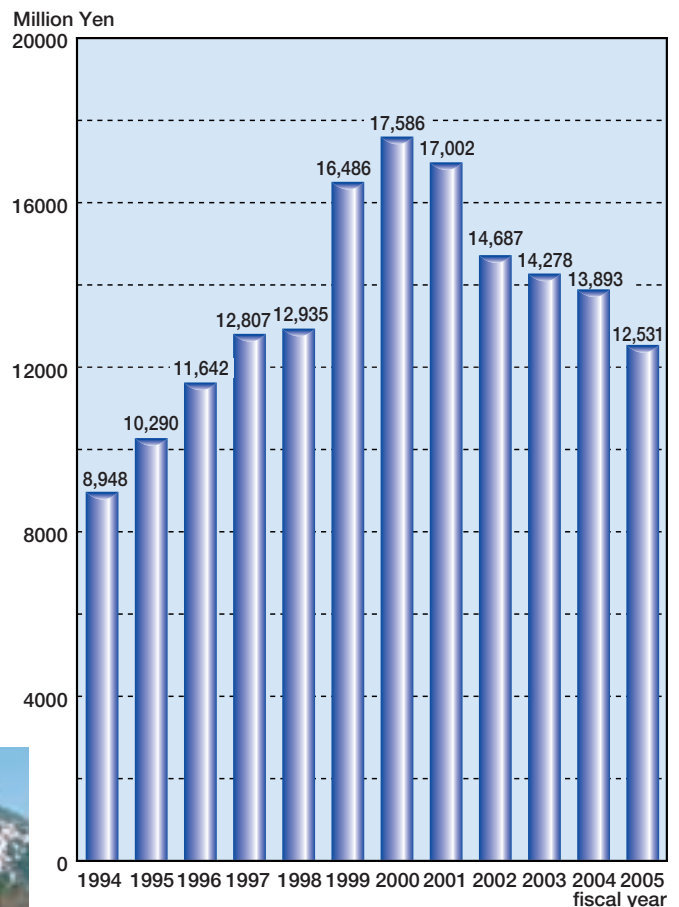
In a wide variety of locations, such as National Parks and Quasi-National Parks, the Ministry of the Environment has been working to provide people with opportunities to learn about and experience nature. The Ministry has also been working to establish facilities to conserve and restore the natural environment. The basic goals of these activities are to provide good communication with nature and to ensure coexistence with nature.

This program was initiated in 1994, introducing a new type of public works projects that are closely related to people's livelihoods, and the Ministry has worked hard to promote these projects.

The principles underlie all the projects of this program include: "promotion of communication with nature," "safe and pleasant use," "conservation and restoration of nature," and "multi-dimensional consideration" (people, nature, Earth-friendly, etc.).



● Changes in the budget for Natural Park Facility Development and Maintenance Program



## (2) Development and maintenance of National Park Facility

Development and maintenance of National Park facilities are implemented by either the national government or the local governments. However, the Ministry of the Environment set priority and directly manages the followings; ① projects in Special Protection Zones or Class I Special Zones that are the core areas of National Parks, ② projects in Facility Complexes that are bases for visitor use, and ③ specially required projects such as nature restoration project.



Towada-Hachimantai National Park  
yasumiya garden



Chubu Sangaku National Park  
Kamikochi Visitor Center



Yosino-kumano National Park  
The Surroundings line trail of Odaigahara

## (3) Development and maintenance of Quasi-National Park Facility

Development and maintenance of Quasi-National Park facilities are implemented by the local governments. The national government has supported the local government in facility development and maintenance projects by providing subsidy. In 2005, the national government established a new grant for supporting local governments, and now, the related projects are supported by this grant.

The new grant supports not only the facility development projects in Quasi-National Park but also nature restoration projects in National Wildlife Protection Areas (outside National Parks or Quasi-National Parks) and Long-Distance Nature Trail Projects (outside National Parks or Quasi-National Parks).



Genkai Quasi-National Park  
Hado Misaki garden



Kongo-Ikoma-Kisen Quasi-National Park  
Kisen Nature School



Biwako Quasi-National Park  
The Ibuki mountaintop public toilet

## ● Grant for supporting local governments

This grant is a subsidy to support implementation of the projects based on the facility development and maintenance plan prepared by the prefectural governments. This grant is provided to the prefectural governments in a lump sum, and each prefectural government decides its allocation at their own discretion. Compared to the previous subsidy, this system promotes the local initiative and autonomy.

○Target projects:

- Development and maintenance of Quasi-National Park Facility
- Nature Restoration Projects in National Wildlife Protection Areas (outside National Parks or Quasi-National Parks)
- Long-Distance Nature Trail Projects (outside National Parks or Quasi-National Parks)

○Recipient: Prefectural governments

○Implementing body: Prefectural governments, municipal governments

○Amount: 45% of the project cost

## ● Long-Distance Nature Trail Projects

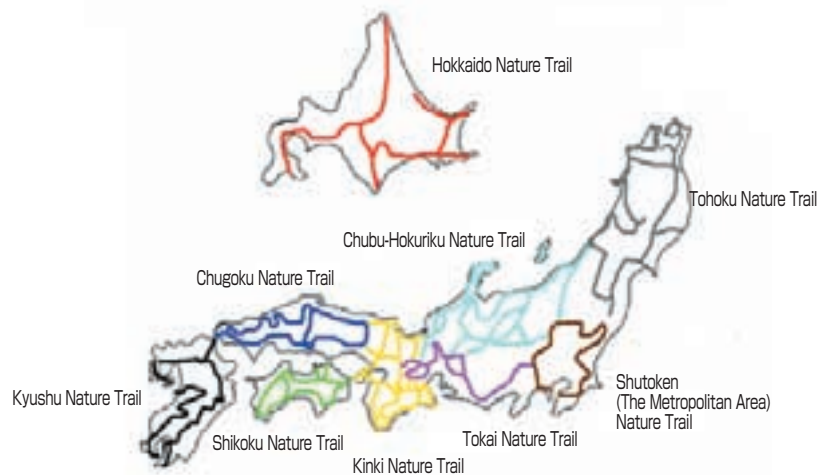
Long-Distance Nature Trails have been developed since 1970 with the aim to offer people opportunities to familiarize with local nature and culture through walking.



Easy-to-understand signs, Shiga



Urabandai Site Station Center, Tohoku Nature Trail, Fukushima



Map of Long-Distance Nature Trail Network

## Long-Distance Nature Trail and related prefectures

Hokkaido Nature Trail	Hokkaido
Tohoku Nature Trail	Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi, Akita, Yamagata, Fukushima
Chubu-Hokuriku Nature Trail	Gunma, Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, Nagano, Gifu, Shiga
Shutoken (The Metropolitan Area) Nature Trail	Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo, Kanagawa
Tokai Nature Trail	Tokyo, Kanagawa, Yamanashi, Shizuoka, Gifu, Aichi, Mie, Shiga, Kyoto, Nara, Osaka
Kinki Nature Trail	Fukui, Mie, Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, Nara, Wakayama, Tottori
Chugoku Nature Trail	Tottori, Shimane, Okayama, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi
Shikoku Nature Trail	Tokushima, Kagawa, Ehime, Kochi
Kyushu Nature Trail	Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Kumamoto, Oita, Miyazaki, Kagoshima



Sounkyo Visitor Center, Daisetsuzan National Park, Hokkaido



Establishment of sites for communication with nature (Chubu Sangaku National Park Kamikochi (Nagano))



Unzen Suwanoike Visitor Center, Unzen-Amakusa National Park, Nagasaki



Hiruzen Camping Site, Daisen-Oki National Park, Okayama

Facility development and maintenance program targets visitor centers as starting point for people's communication with nature, and trails, for safe and pleasant nature education.

## Four Viewpoints of Facility Development

### Communication with nature

#### Vegetation Restoration

In alpine areas, where climatic conditions are harsh, it takes a long time for vegetation to recover, if at all, once original vegetation is lost. Hikers trample vegetation along some hiking trails and heavy foot traffic can cause erosion where slopes are steep. Restoring vegetation in alpine areas is a high priority. For this reason, the Ministry of the Environment conducts the minimal infrastructure improvements necessary to protect sensitive vegetation and restore degraded areas.



Boardwalk to protect vegetation from being trampled (Numahara Garden, Nikko National Park, Tochigi)



Protection and restoration of alpine vegetation (Daisen Summit Vegetation Restoration Facility, Daisen-Oki National Park, Tottori)



### Restoration of nature

Facility development and maintenance program is intended to restore degraded mountain trails and surrounding vegetation, and to protect vegetation from herbivores, such as sika deer.

#### Impact of over-abundant herbivores

Wildlife populations can increase when the natural balance in ecosystems is disturbed. Such wildlife can exert serious pressures on vegetation. Various measures are being attempted to prevent damage from herbivores.



Deer barrier (showing the gate) (Odayohara Vegetation Restoration Facility, Nikko National Park, Tochigi)



Deer eating the bark of a tree

### Refurbishment of camping sites

Old or outdated camping sites are refurbished to meet the contemporary needs. Traditionally, groups and mountaineers have used camping sites. Visitation pattern has been diversified due to recent increase in family use. The functions and facilities needed for camping sites have thus diversified greatly. Sanitary buildings equipped with toilets and showers and camping sites with car-parking spaces are being developed, taking into account impacts on nature and users' trends.



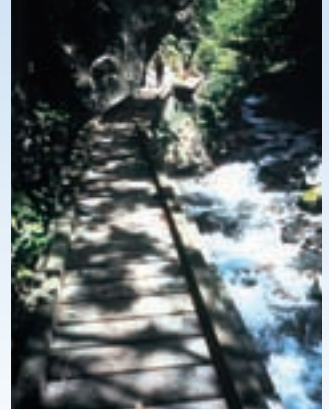
Refurbished sanitary building (Nyuto-sanroku Hot Springs Camping site, Towada-Hachimantai National Park, Akita)



Clean and easy-to-use kitchen (Ohara Dam Camping site, Suzuka Quasi-National Park, Shiga)



Refurbished restrooms (Chazonobara, Daisen-Oki National Park, Tottori)



Refurbished hiking trail (Chubu Sangaku National Park, Nagano)

## and Maintenance Programs

The Ministry of the Environment is working to provide more pleasant environments for visitors by improving the quality of visitor facilities, such as toilets and walking trails, and through refurbishment of Facility Complexes in Natural Parks

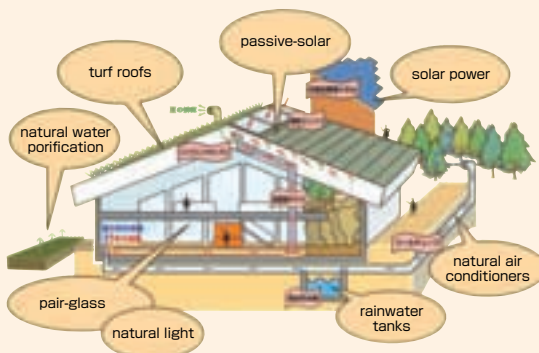
## Pleasant use

### Multi-dimensional consideration

Facility development takes into consideration multiple issues, such as nature, the global environment, and users.

### Taking advantage of natural energy

In the construction of buildings, various technologies are integrated to utilize natural energy



Turf and solar panels on the roof of a cottage (Tanukiko Country Nature School, Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, Shizuoka)



Wheelchair-accessible boardwalk (Rengenuma, Bandai-Asahi National Park, Fukushima)



Timber-paved parking lot (Tanukiko Country Nature School, Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, Shizuoka).