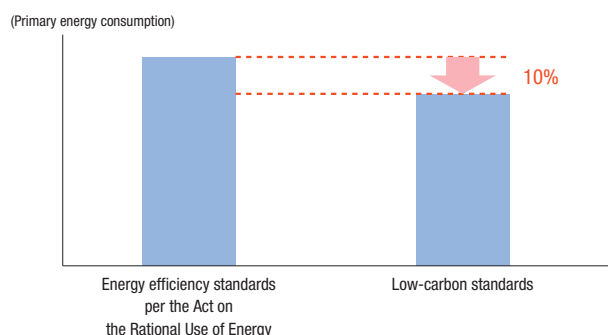


energy consumption must be at least 10% below the energy efficiency standard set forth in the Act on the Rational Use of Energy. Certification of a building results in eligibility to receive income tax exemptions and lower-interest loans. By establishing standards that motivate the construction of buildings with smaller carbon footprints, Japan intends to increase the popularity of very low-carbon homes and buildings.

Relationship between energy efficiency and low-carbon building certification standards



Source: Ministry of the Environment

A truly enriched society utilizing natural ecosystems

Introduction

Achieving a truly enriched society that enables us to continue reaping the blessings of nature is one of the prerequisites for the creation of a sustainable society.

Progress on achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets

Under the National Biodiversity Strategy of Japan 2012-2020, five basic strategies and 13 national targets for the purpose of achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets were adopted at CBD COP10—the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Since the agenda for COP12 includes interim assessment of the level of achievement of the Aichi Targets, it will be an opportunity to review the progress made in achieving Japan's national targets.*

In addition to the efforts of relevant branches of government to mainstream biodiversity in daily life, other organizations such as the Japan Committee for the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (UNDB-J), which was established in September 2011 with the participation of various parties, are implementing educational and other biodiversity mainstreaming activities. The Japan Business and

Biodiversity Partnership is a program voluntarily established in 2010 by the business community and others. Providing the program and sharing information has resulted in greater awareness by businesses, and activities by businesses have increased. Regarding the national target to “appropriately conserve and manage at least 17% of inland areas and inland water areas, and at least 10% of coastal areas and ocean areas”, about 20.3% of the terrestrial areas and inland water areas are already being conserved and managed as protected areas under applicable laws and regulations.

Global activities

There is growing interest worldwide in ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, such as wetland and forest ecosystems, the economic benefits of tourism, the value of protected areas to scientific research, and the many other ways in which biodiversity and ecosystem services can contribute to the creation of a sustainable society. The Japanese people have traditionally coexisted with nature and have built up an extensive body of knowledge and culture grounded in the natural environment. It is important to recognize the value of this legacy and share it with the world.

*For the results of the review, please refer to the CBD website (<http://www.cbd.int/reports/>).

The 1st Asia Parks Congress

The value of protected areas is being reappraised in the light of their ability to provide ecosystem services such as disaster risk reduction. In November 2013, the 1st Asia Parks Congress was held in the city of Sendai in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. Organized by Japan's Ministry of the Environment and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Nature Resources (IUCN) as the first ever opportunity for personnel involved in protected areas throughout Asia to gather under one roof, the event attracted about 800 representatives of 40 countries and territories, mainly in Asia. Participants gave over 300 presentations divided under the following six themes: (1) natural disasters and protected areas; (2) tourism and environmental education in protected areas; (3) culture/tradition, and protected areas; (4) collaborative management of protected areas; (5) international cooperation for protected areas; (6) biodiversity and protected areas. Participants visited the Sanriku Fukko National Park to deepen their understanding of the contribution that protected areas can make to the recovery of areas struck by natural disasters. As an outcome of the Congress, the Asia Protected Areas Charter (Sendai Charter), a document that sets forth basic principles regarding protected areas in Asia, was drawn up and approved by participants.

At the 6th World Parks Congress to be held in November 2014, Japan will lead discussion on the role that protected areas can play in post-disaster reconstruction and disaster mitigation. Building on this discussion, Japan will continue to share information on the functions performed by ecosystems in reducing disaster risks at other forums, including the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Sendai in March 2015.

The Ramsar Convention and wise use of wetlands

A range of activities addressing wetland issues are conducted in line with the Ramsar Convention's concept of wise use. These include the promotion of wet-paddy rice agriculture contributing to the conservation of the environment, tours led by local farmers to introduce such activities, and the reappraisal of traditional techniques for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Utilization of paddy fields for environmental conservation (winter-flooded paddy fields surrounding Watarase-yusuichi)



Photo: Oyama City

Promoting the Satoyama Initiative

In Japan, human activities such as farming and other practices over the years have formulated and maintained *Satochi-Satoyama* (socio-ecological production landscapes). Similar landscapes of human-influenced nature exist throughout the world. However, many such areas are increasingly at risk in recent years due to causes such as population growth, depopulation of the countryside, urbanization, poverty, and the disappearance of traditional knowledge and management systems. Under these circumstances, in order to globally promote society in harmony with nature while ensuring the integration of science and technology, and relevant traditional knowledge and customs, we have accordingly been working with the United Nations University for this objective. In September 2013, the Fourth Global Conference of the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI), inaugurated at COP10, was held in Fukui City, and the Satoyama Initiative Promotion Network was established as an organization for the promotion of the Satoyama Initiative all around Japan.

Domestic activities

In Japan's rich natural environment, people have lived side by side in harmony with nature and maintained a variety of ecosystem services through sustainable use.

Local community-based protection of national park scenery/Contributing to tourism and local development

National Parks occupy about 5.6% of Japan's land area, and are visited by over 300 million people every year. 2014 marked the 80th anniversary of the birth of Japan's first national park. In March 2014, Keramashoto National Park was designated as Japan's 31st national park. Since 80 years ago, Japan's national parks have served as outstanding natural environments that are cherished by local communities for the way they have remained intimately connected with the livelihoods and industries of local inhabitants. Many different parties are involved in initiatives to further boost the appeal of national parks in a way that both preserves their rich nature as world-class scenery and underpins the everyday life, agriculture and other industries of their respective regions.

Japan's national parks offer a kaleidoscope of stunning scenery.

Keramashoto National Park



Iriomote-Ishigaki National Park



Daisetsuzan National Park



Photos: Ministry of the Environment

World Natural Heritage sites and biosphere reserves

In Japan, Yakushima, Shirakami-Sanchi, Shiretoko, and the Ogasawara Islands are World Natural Heritage sites. The national Government, local communities, academics, and experts cooperated to implement appropriate measures for protection and management of these sites. With regard to Amami-Ryukyu, a candidate site, the Government held a Scientific Council meeting which identified specific areas to be nominated as natural heritage.

Japan is also home to five locations that have been designated by UNESCO as biosphere reserves—Shiga Highland, Mt. Hakusan, Mt. Odaigahara/Mt. Omine, Yakushima Island, and Aya. In the Aya Biosphere Reserve, which was designated in 2012, one of Japan's largest virgin lucidophyllous forests remains, and the forests are strictly protected. The relevant ministries and agency, conservation organizations and local communities are working in collaboration to restore former areas of lucidophyllous forest, and to develop the region through promoting measures such as ecotourism and organic agriculture while ensuring the coexistence of nature and human society.

Yakushima



Photo: Ministry of the Environment

Promoting the protection and management of Satochi-Satoyama areas

There are growing concerns about decline in human activities in Satochi-Satoyama areas, including management of forests and farmlands, due to depopulation and aging. This results in serious issues such as degradation of biodiversity and landscapes, decreased disaster-prevention function, and destructive wildlife. The Ministry of the Environment has been undertaking various measures to ensure management of such areas; offering workplaces, introducing experts, sharing good practices and formulating practical handbooks for local governments in order to boost the participation of volunteers from cities.

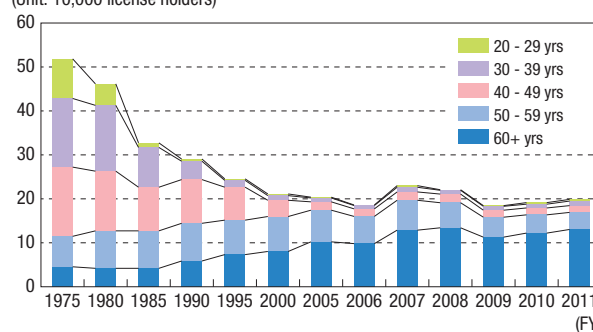
Driving the growth of primary industries and taking measures against wildlife damage is a prerequisite for coexistence with nature

Explosive growth in the numbers of certain wild species and concomitant expansion of their territories in recent years is having a major impact on regional economies. Damage to agriculture and forestry caused by sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) and other species is extensive, with crop damage amounting to an annual 20 billion yen. This damage is all the more serious for secondary impacts such as its effect on the motivation of farmers to cultivate their fields. Wildlife damage is also impacting ecosystems and everyday life.

Stronger measures are needed for curbing sika deer and other species that are expected to continue to increase in number and distribution, but Japan's hunter population has both shrunk and aged steeply, and nurturing a new generation of hunters is a major challenge. To this end, the government is holding forums with the aim of developing and testing effective new wildlife control methods, creating systems for community-based wildlife management, encouraging hunting license acquisition by younger generations, and educating the general public on the importance of wildlife management to society.

Number of hunting license holders in Japan from 1975 to 2011, showing age groups

(Unit: 10,000 license holders)



Source: Ministry of the Environment