

Leaders in Nature Restoration interview

Nature restoration is an undertaking with participation and creativity by various community groups, including NPOs and local residents. New leaders who work on local restoration efforts are found across the country.

Aso

Safe food supply is our commitment



Naomi Kamakura

(Employee, Agricultural Cooperative Corporation Kario Ranch)

I chose cattle production as my career because I love cows and Aso. I everyday take care of cows and calves in the ranch on the northern rim of Mt. Aso. I'm happy to see calves are born and grow up. Healthy grasslands to raise healthy cows are essential for supplying safe foods to consumers. Grassland use and management are becoming difficult because of aging and declines of farming populations, so I consider the sustainable management leads to restoration of the grassland. I'd like to work on revitalizing livestock farming such that takes advantage of this extensive grassland.

Tatsukushi

I wanna be the ocean's 'Hanasaka Jiisan'



Shuzo Takeba

(President, Tatsukushi Tourist Boat Corporation)

I have lived with ocean life since my childhood. I could say what raised me was the sea of Tatsukushi with abundant corals and fish. Facing to the polluted ocean and damaged corals, I have worked on cleaning the ocean and removing crown-of-thorns starfish with divers of my friend. I believe my mission is to continue these activities for all my life to restore the once-beautiful ocean. Lately, I'm working with a local elementary school to introduce kids the joy and wonder of the Tatsukushi sea. I let the school kids, locally grown but who don't know about the ocean, to experience the underwater park using glass-bottom boats.

Yawata Wetlands

Kids grow by learning their natural environments

Katsunobu Shirakawa

(Staff, Geihoku Natural Museum)



We focus on environmental education as well as field survey and analyses. Children experience the natural wonder by learning about rare species and the history of wetlands and grasslands in the fields. Children are motivated further to work on plant and animal studies and related creative activities. Their parents surprise to see how much they can grow. From kids to adults, local people can recognize the importance of natural environment. We will extend restoration activities in collaboration with local schools and other community groups, expecting new leaders of the next generations to continue post-restoration management.

Eastern Kosado

Restore habitat for Japanese crested ibis by the whole local community efforts

Tsuyoshi Takano

(Chairperson, Council for Wild Japanese Crested Ibis Recovery Program)



I've continued activities for restoring wild ibis, taking over the will of my father, who continued feeding ibis. Now, many farmers, NPOs, grade schools and companies are working on habitat improvement such as biotope construction and low-chemical farming. Those days when ibis birds flew over in the wild were the happy period of spiritual richness for the local community. It is necessary to balance between agriculture and the natural environment to restore the life of those days. It will take time to involve the whole local society in the stewardship of the neighborhood environment, but I will extend the wild ibis restoration through my activities such as visiting lectures.

Kushiro Wetland

Establishing nature restoration in citizens' daily lives

Hisashi Shinsyo

(Chief, Kushiro International Wetland Center)



For restoration of the Kushiro Wetland, it is necessary to reduce negative impacts of the 250,000-ha watershed. To that end, citizens need to reconsider and change their lifestyles. As one step, it is vital to aware their daily life activities may be able to contribute to nature restoration. We stimulate to develop numerous restoration activities and are working on linking these individual activities, hoping them to grow into a larger social movement. My dream is that citizen groups will take a leadership in the project's promotion and management and that nature restoration becomes established in citizens' daily lives.

Strategy to Promote Nature Restoration Project

Point **1.**

(Establish a mechanism for coalition and collaboration)

The keys to advancing a restoration project are the participation of various local groups and individuals and cooperation among them. Each district working on a project has established a committee or other public forums consisting of various entities, to strengthen a common understanding in restoration goals and direction. Each project also has created opportunities to engage local residents, such as field survey, design meeting and other events. In this way, all projects seek to advance restoration as a local community effort.

Fushino River Tidal Flats

Using feasibility testing as an opportunity for cooperation among industrial, academic, governmental and private sectors

In the Fushino River Tidal Flat Project, a wide array of activities is underway in cooperation among local residents associated with forests, rivers and oceans in the watershed, NPOs, academic experts, and related agencies, with a common goal of improving the natural environment being degraded and human life. Feasibility testing on tidal flat restoration plays an important role in promoting public participation as well as in data accumulation.

In the tidal flat tillage experiment in fall 2006, about 100 volunteers worked on plowing. They then experienced field observation with expert instructions and were served with clam dishes by fisheries cooperative women's groups. Thus, various enti-

ties have participated through what they can do, strengthening their alliance and collaboration.



Plowing by volunteers



Field observation in the tidal flat

Aso Moving toward the preservation of rangeland environments by local agricultural industries

Community-based assessment and planning

Most of the Aso grassland is community-owned, used and managed by local villages and livestock farming unions. Sustainable use and management by these local agricultural groups are evitable for restoration of the historical grassland. MOE is supporting them to develop "Implementation Plan for Preservation of the Rangeland Environment". The Plan is a guideline for local agricultural groups to take the initiative in managing their rangeland while identifying the needs of support by volunteers and the governments. So far, planning is taken place in four pasture districts. Promoting planning activity in more districts in Aso will build a system of coalition and corporation between local communities and the governments.

Union members themselves conduct field survey on the ecological and management status and discuss about the future direction of pastureland use and management. This affords a good opportunity to rediscover the importance of rich pasture environments and their current situations.



Field survey by the members of farmers unions



Planning with a pasture map.

Distribution of farm products labeled with 'grassland restoration'

Farm products using grassland resources such as grass compost are labeled with 'grassland restoration' and distributed in the market. This effort connects between the Aso Grassland and consumers to engage a wide array of individuals into grassland restoration.

Agricultural products labeled with 'grassland restoration'



Promoting restoration of the Aso Grassland at a sales event

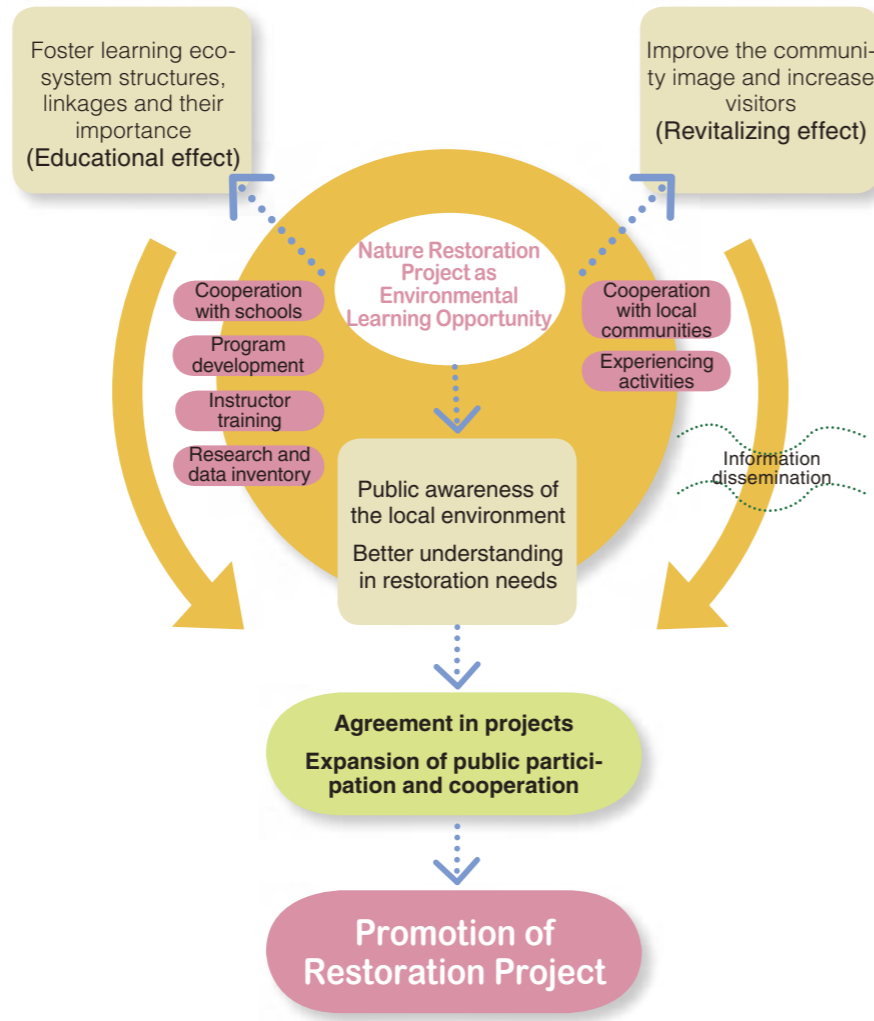
Strategy to Promote Nature Restoration Project

Point **2.**

Use a restoration project as an opportunity of environmental learning

To expand restoration activities, the restoration needs must be understood and agreed by local and non-local people. Using restoration sites for environmental education is effective in increasing public awareness. Disseminating such educational activities further facilitates better understanding and engages a broad range of individuals and groups.

Being appropriate for learning ecosystem structures, linkages and their importance, restoration projects have been used as part of school education. Moreover, projects are expected to revitalize local communities, by providing opportunities for exchange among local and non-local people.



Encouraging public participation, with primary efforts on environmental learning

—Kushiro Wetland

Kushiro Wetland Ecosystem Restoration Committee invited citizen-based wetland restoration activities, to stimulate public participation and environmental education in accordance with "Action Plan for Promotion of Nature Restoration" (formulated in June 2005). The Committee is supporting the applicant groups by disseminating the group's event schedule and activities on the web site and community magazines to call for citizen participation to the applicant activities. The Committee also permits the groups to use the Project's logo. A wide array of restoration activities, from environmental learning, research to music concerts, has been registered as the citizen-based activities, expanding the wave of wetland restoration.

Left: a brochure of "Action Plan for Promotion of Nature Restoration" Right: a flyer of inviting restoration activities

Citizen-based activities that have been approved by the Committee include a local high school research on water quality improvement using wetland plants, public forums for environmental education, and NPOs field observation tours. The Committee disseminate information about their activities as 'Wonder-green-da Projects'



High-school students have contributed to water quality improvement



Wetland field observation organized by NPOs

Learning about the grassland condition through assistance in maintenance work

—Aso



Aso Grassland Project has offered an environmental learning program for students and the general public. Participants can learn the wonder of the Grassland that has been sustained by the community living, and its current status and issues by working with pastureland unions for maintenance work such as field burning and firebreak construction. This program has been operated in collaboration with local educational organizations.



Giving a hand for grass harvest



Sogen Shinbun for Kids

Preparing materials for teaching about the Grassland

To promote environmental learning, calendars, texts and newsletter for kids, 'Sogen Shinbun', by which local children can learn about the grassland environment, are distributed mainly to local grade schools.



Grassland calendar

Implementing a year-round learning program in cooperation with local people

—Tatsukushi

The Tatsukushi Project has implemented a year-round learning program, 'Get to know about your hometown ocean', for fifth-grade students as a school curriculum. The course is designed in partnerships with parents, local residents and experts, who also take part as instructors. A variety of lectures and outdoor experiences, such as underwater observation from glass-bottom boats and learning about corals, have been carried out.



Observing the Tatsukushi Sea from a glass-bottom boat



'Talking about corals' in a class

Encouraging public participation, with primary efforts on environmental learning

—Kushiro Wetland

Thinking about the community's future in 'Kid's Workshop'

—Sarobetsu

To engage the next generations - children and young people- to the restoration activities, 'Kid's Workshop' has been hosted. After exchanging opinions with local farmers and conservation and tourist groups and experiencing field observation, children think of what the natural environment, farming, tourist and life will look like ten years later.



Wetland survey



Organizing survey data

Training local teachers for the education program

—Sekisei Lagoon

An environmental education program, named 'Junior Park Ranger Project', has been implemented as a school curriculum since 2002. In this program children attend coral survey and workshops. The Sekisei Lagoon Project therefore sponsors study groups for local teachers to develop instructors for the program.



Snorkeling for coral survey



A study group for teachers