

## Title "Citizens' Timed Assessment' of the Isahaya Reclamation Project "

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The Ariake Sea is the richest sea area in biological productivity in Japan, and especially the muddy tidal flat in Isahaya Bay had once been one of the most important ecosystems with its rich biodiversity. However, in April 1997, one third of Isahaya Bay was cut off from the sea by a huge sea dike to reclaim 3,550 ha of tidal flat and shallow sea under the government's Isahaya-Bay Sea Reclamation Project, which resulted in extinction of numerous organisms including many endangered/epidemic species.

The Isahaya Bay Reclamation Project is said to have two objectives, which are to:  
(1) produce highly productive farmland; and to  
(2) prevent disaster in the area.

A number of scientists and conservation organizations have been worried that it might cause a serious bad effect not only to Isahaya Bay but to the whole Ariake Sea ecosystem. Actually just as the project was advanced, a large "red tide" often occurred and has caused a serious decline in fisheries. It has been four years since the closure of the dike, and fishermen and local citizens increasingly claim to review the project.

The purveyor of the project, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) is to perform a re-evaluation, called a "timed assessment" in fiscal 2001. In anticipation of the Ministry's project re-evaluation, we completed our own independent re-evaluation from the point of view of citizens in cooperation with the experts in various fields.

Recently great progress has been made in the study of economic value estimation of tidal flats, which we adopted in this re-evaluation and thus estimated the loss of Isahaya Bay tidal flat at 260 billion JPY (=2.2 billion USD). It considers only the water purification function of tidal flat among its various ecological functions, though. The estimated amount exceeds the total budget of the reclamation project and the cost-benefit ratio turns to be as low as 0.30. Consequently we concluded that the project should be halted and restoration of the lost tidal flat ecosystem should be carried out.

In Japan, public participation and information release are quite insufficient in the political decision making and its review. We hope and believe that our project contributes a lot in this regard as well.