

## **Integrated Approach to Management of the Seto Inland Sea and Planning Guidelines**

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The Seto Inland Sea is the largest enclosed coastal sea in Japan. It is surrounded by three of the main islands of Japan, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, and dotted with more than 700 smaller islands. It extends approximately 450km from east to west and between 15 and 55 kilometers from north to south, with a shoreline that extends for a total length of 6,868km. It covers an area of 23,203km<sup>2</sup>, has an average depth of 38m and contains some 881.5 billion cubic meters of water. The Seto Inland Sea is a rich, natural environment with a warm climate and little rainfall, and people have enjoyed its bounties since ancient times.

However, the rapid economic growth and centralization of population that started from the early 1960s, coupled with its unique features as an enclosed coastal sea, resulted in rapid water pollution of the Seto Inland Sea beginning around 1967. This progressed to the point where the Seto Inland Sea was called a "dead sea."

In 1973, with a common recognition of the importance of protecting the natural environment of the Seto Inland Sea from destruction, the prefectural governors of Hyogo, Hiroshima and Kagawa called for the holding of what was to become the first conference of governors and mayors of 11 prefectures and cities, and three cities established by special ordinance, with the aim of bringing the Seto Inland Sea back to life. At the conference, the Seto Inland Sea Charter on Environmental Protections was adopted with the goal of making the Seto Inland Sea a zone for a new, creative way of life. The Charter affirmed that wide-ranging mutual cooperation would be promoted and vowed that no effort would be spared in the realization of this goal.

Currently, the Governors and Mayors' Conference on the Environmental Protection of the Seto Inland Sea is made up of the governors and mayors of 13 prefectures and 13 cities with ties to the Seto Inland Sea. The Conference promotes policies to preserve the environment of, and create a comfortable living environment in, the Seto Inland Sea. Its activities also include making proposals to the national government.

The Conference has produced many notable achievements, among which are the enactment of the Law on Temporary Measures for the Environmental Preservation of the Seto Inland Sea (1973) (now known as the Special Measures Law); the establishment of the Association for Environmental Conservation of the Seto Inland Sea (1976), which works to disseminate ideas, heighten the awareness of the importance of preserving the environment of the Seto Inland Sea, conduct surveys and so on; the holding of the first International Conference on the Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas (EMECS) (1990); and the establishment of the Institute for Research of the Seto Inland Sea (1992) that conducts research on the Seto Inland Sea and makes recommendations.