

Guidelines for Conservation and Development of the Seto Inland Sea Environment

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1. Why is the scenery around the Seto Inland Sea receiving so much attention now ?

(1) Deterioration of the environment throughout Japan

Scenery throughout Japan has drastically changed since the country began its high rate of economic growth. The loss of natural scenery and a change in the cultural and historical environment are particularly prominent. Under such circumstances, the Seto Inland Sea, exceptionally rich in scenic resources, is also affected. Deterioration of the scenery not only shakes the foundations of Japanese culture, but it also undermines love for and pride in the area where one is living and the desire to live there for an extended period.

(2) Characteristics of Seto Inland Sea scenery

The Seto Inland Sea has a bright, calm and pleasant atmosphere in which abundant natural beauty, the people's lifestyle and cultural roots are all beautifully harmonized. It is a national asset, designated in 1935 as Japan's first national park.

Following are some of the diversified characteristics of the Seto Inland Sea.

(Natural Aspects) :

- It is Japan's only inland sea, with hundreds of islands dotted along its length.
- It has bright and peaceful scenery, many sunny days and a harmonized ecology. It is "typical" Japanese scenery that always brings to the Japanese people a feeling of nostalgia.

(Historical Aspects) :

- Thanks to our ancestors' efforts, the land has been thoroughly and meticulously utilized. The natural environment and people's lives have harmoniously integrated. It is an environment of great significance.

- A delicate looking terrain, mild climate, tides, land used for diversified purposes and the people's lifestyle all contribute to its unique charm.

(Cultural Aspects) :

- Since ancient times the region has been a main avenue for civilization and culture. Therefore, the significance of the history and culture of the region is very high when compared with other parts of the country, adding dignity to the scenery.

The characteristics mentioned above demonstrate that the Seto Inland Sea contains every element of "representative" Japanese scenery.

(3) The threat to the Seto Inland Sea environment

The above mentioned characteristics are, on the other hand, underlying causes for the fragility of the environment. For instance, a large, calm inland sea provides easy access to large vessels, and coastal waters are easily land filled. A warm, mild climate creates an environment conducive to

various activities. Further more, construction of major bridges and various resort plans make the area prone to further development.

In addition, there are pressing problems, such as the disappearance of long cultivated orchards and terraced fields, which may even lead eventually to the destruction of scenery around the Seto Inland Sea.

(4) The necessity of well planned environmental preservation

Our ancestors have left us the beautiful and pleasant Seto Inland Sea environment. It is our mission to hand it down as part of our cultural heritage to future generations. As such, it is essential for all people living along the coasts of the Seto Inland Sea to cooperate and develop guidelines to be implemented in all areas in an effort to deliberately preserve, restore, and cultivate the natural environment.

2. How to proceed with environmental preservation

(1) Scope of examination of the Seto Inland Sea

The area of the Seto Inland Sea currently under examination covers approximately 17,000 square kilometers of sea and island areas, encompassing the 4 straits of Kitan, Naruto, Hoyo, and Kanmon, together with coastal areas of Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu.

(2) Preservation and cultivation of scenery around the Seto Inland Sea (basic principles)

In principle, focus must be placed first on scenery created by the natural climate and the people's lifestyle. We shall then;

- 1) preserve the sea, forests and natural beaches, which are essential components of the natural scenery.
- 2) conserve and restore time-honored terraced fields, port towns, temples, shrines and legend-oriented areas, all of which are important cultural elements of the environment.
- 3) attend to the life-oriented environment, and make efforts to improve it, followed by cultivation of regional scenery to attract more visitors.
- 4) clarify goals in order to deliberately conserve, restore and cultivate the environment.
- 5) utilize or develop ordinances, regulations, and plans as measures to realize these goals. It is necessary to also educate people living in the relevant areas and prepare an appropriate environment so that they will readily cooperate in working toward the outlined objectives.

3. Well planned guidelines for environmental conservation and cultivation

(1) Concept of environmental preservation

Following are proposals to deliberately conserve, restore and cultivate the scenery of the Seto Inland Sea.

- 1) To view Seto Inland Sea scenery from two different perspectives: "Regional Scenery" space-oriented and "Panoramic Scenery" sight-oriented.
- 2) To establish goals on "the way scenery should be" for the two above perspectives and implement measures for conservation, restoration and cultivation.

In these concepts, it is necessary to view neighboring areas as having a common atmosphere or as being one integrated space by designating them as "Regional Scenery" areas. At the same time, it is essential to view entire regions as a large scale, harmonized unity by designating them as "Panoramic Scenery" areas. Some areas may be designated as both and consequently require two types of approaches to preserve the environment as well as very careful consideration for further development.

(Regional scenery)

In the Seto Inland Sea different areas have their own unique scenery and atmosphere. These overlap some neighboring areas, however, which enables the designation of "Regional Scenery Zones" that will eventually serve as future goals (See Reference 1.).

With the aid of the "regional scenery zone" designation, a direction will become clear as to how the scenery of the region should be preserved on an ongoing basis.

(Panoramic scenery)

The Seto Inland Sea has unique panoramic scenery in addition to the unique scenery of each region. Typical views include that of the sea with many dotted islands or that of channels. To visitors these seem to be the fixed traditional images of the Seto Inland Sea. There is a plan to designate major vista points, navigation routes, roads and railway lines which are most suitable for taking in the panoramic views of the area as "scenery monitoring points." The quality of scenery from those points shall be kept higher than the established level for other areas. Guidelines for preservation based on types of panoramic scenery (See Reference 2.) will be clarified.

(2) The necessity of guiding principles for Seto Inland Sea environmental conservation

When specific guiding principles are established for both "regional scenery zones" and "types of panoramic scenery" and are implemented by local governments, well balanced conservation of the entire Seto Inland Sea environment can proceed.

It is vital for prefectural governments located along its coasts to share common goals and common guiding principles for environmental conservation, which surpass any one political administrative capacity. It will certainly develop into a large driving force to continue to keep the entire region beautiful over the years to come.

4 . Plans to promote environmental conservation

(1) Utilization of the Natural Parks Law

— Utilization of the existing Natural Parks Law will secure legal support for conservation. By reviewing the law, an attempt will be made to designate small islands and capes as special places, and prevent undisciplined development.

— Small islands and capes may only cover a small area, but they make a large contribution to the overall scenic beauty. Protecting them from undisciplined development will greatly contribute to the overall conservation effort.

(2) Instruction with the aid of regulations and principles

— To flexibly guide and cope with development activities promoted by private tourism companies.

- To designate areas as “model areas” possessing typical scenery which necessitate preservation.
- Preserving scenery is in the interests of the public. Rules are needed, but they may sometimes restrict the rights of private entities and individuals.

(3) Reinforcement of the regional economy

- To develop a regional economic system in which time-honored production activities such as fishing, cultivation and orcharding can be incorporated into modern society through the promotion of various exchanges between regional economics and large cities.

(4) Establishment of an administrative structure

- To establish a dedicated public service division and assign its personnel duties in order to preserve the scenery as a whole. Assigned personnel will be from other relevant divisions so that their different expertise and experiences can be applied in their duties.

(5) Education of local residents and the enlistment of their involvement

- To heighten the local people’s pride in their region’s scenery by advertising the significance of the Seto Inland Sea and by setting up awards to encourage their voluntary involvement and strengthen their awareness of the importance of preserving the environment.
- Scenic preservation and cultivation should be promoted in the first instance by the local people’s love for their region.

(6) Establishment of an environmental committee

- It is important to establish an “environmental committee” comprising people from relevant government offices and local areas to set up the “regional scenery zones” and to discuss specific conservation measures.
- Coordination beyond administrative and political boundaries is particularly indispensable where scenery around prefectural borders is concerned. It is also necessary to provide opportunities to discuss the scenery of the entire Seto Inland Sea with people representing the national and related prefectural governments as well local areas.

Conclusions :

It is extremely difficult to conserve and cultivate scenery by just adhering to traditional values and social systems. The Seto Inland Sea makes it even more difficult since it covers a number of prefectures, and there is significant pressure for future development in the area.

In recent years, however, people have begun to become more concerned with higher spiritual values than merely material values, and the Japanese economy now has an adequate capacity to cope with these new demands.

It is now that the central government, local governments and local people should get together to cooperate in an effort to conserve and cultivate the Seto Inland Sea scenery for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Reference 1 :

Regional scenery zone :

(Conservation oriented)

A. Nature and history based zone

< Conservation of traditional images >

A 1. Rural communities

A 2. Temples and shrines

B. Nature and agriculture based zone

< Cultivation of agricultural land in harmony with nature >

C. Natural scenery preservation zone

< To leave nature the way it is >

C 1. White beaches and pine tree areas

C 2. Reefs, islets and tidelands

(Conservation and cultivation oriented)

D. Natural Recreation harmony zone

< Harmonization of recreational facilities with nature, including creation and cultivation of beaches >

D 1. Relaxation and travel-related facilities

D 2. Tourist attractions

D 3. Marine recreation areas

(Restoration and cultivation oriented)

E. City scenery zones

F. Coastal industrial complex restoration zones

G. Long suspension bridge scenery zones

< Harmonization of the bridge with the surrounding nature and buildings. >

(Zone G may reduplicate Zones A through F.)

Reference 2 :

Panoramic scenery type :

a. Archipelago scenery

< Islets are relatively small and do not obstruct vision. >

b. Channel scenery

< Due to large islands the sea looks like a river or a lake. >

b 1. Nature and channel scenery type

b 2. Towns and channel scenery type