

A REVIEW OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL EFFORTS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SETO INLAND SEA: EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

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The Seto Inland Sea is an area of scenic beauty that is unrivaled anywhere in the world. And its many coastal areas are used as places for relaxation and enjoyment. Furthermore, the heavy and petrochemical industries were located along these coasts during the period of rapid economic growth, thus making the Inland Sea a leading pillar in the country's economy. However, as multifunctional and high-density use of the Seto Inland Sea as a base for daily living, maritime transportation, and industry progressed, its water quality began to show extraordinary deterioration beginning in the 1960s. The phenomenon known as "red tide", which is caused by an oversupply of nutrients in the water, had a devastating impact on fisheries, and many natural coastlines and shallow areas were lost by coastal reclamation. Consequently, there were fewer areas where the public could enjoy the sea. As the environmental conditions of the Seto Inland Sea rapidly worsened, it became clear that the establishment of special regulations toward preservation of the sea's environment was imperative. Thus, in 1973, the government enacted the Law Concerning Special Measures for the Conservation of the Environment of the Seto Inland Sea (the "Seto Inland Sea Law"). Based on the Seto Inland Sea Law, the national government, local governments, private enterprises, and local residents joined together to implement a variety of measures intended to conserve the coastal environment. This resulted in a lowering of COD pollution load to 37% of the level recorded at the time when the Seto Inland Sea Law was enacted, and nearly complete achievement of environmental standards of total nitrogen and phosphorus (with the exception of Osaka Bay). Furthermore, there was a reduction of 29% in occurrences of red tide compared to the most frequent time as well as a major reduction in the area of reclaimed land.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the enactment of the Law Concerning Special Measures for the Conservation of the Environment of the Seto Inland Sea. With this in mind, the paper presents the various measures that have been implemented by concerned interests over the past 30 years to conserve and restore the natural and water environments of the Seto Inland Sea. It will also outline the results of these measures.