

## Issues Facing Muroto Geopark after Gaining Global Status

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### 1. Introduction

The theme of Muroto Geopark is 'Where the ocean and the land meet - the forefront for the birth of new habitable land'. Muroto Geopark includes the entire area of the city of Muroto. Here, visitors can enjoy distinctive geological heritage and topography such as turbidite layers. Muroto Geopark also shows its visitors how the local people created a local history, culture, and industry in harmony with nature in this area.

Muroto Geopark was designated as a Global Geopark at the 10th European Geoparks Conference on September 18, 2011. After global status had been granted, Muroto Geopark has raised its profile in general, and continues to do so.

At the same time, however, the grant of global status revealed the problems that Muroto Geopark faces in a clearer way than before. This presentation will mainly talk about a report on such problems the Geopark faces after gaining global status.

### 2. Changes after Gaining the Global Status

Since Muroto Geopark was accredited as a Global Geopark, we have conducted several public relations activities such as media coverage and giving lectures at local schools, universities, and local communities. Those PR activities attracted many people and the number of those who enjoyed guided tours given by volunteer guides dramatically increased. For example, from September to December, the number of guided tours at Cape Muroto increased by 472 percent over the same period of the previous year. Also, local people started to engage in the establishment of a new volunteer guide organization and in the investigation of new geopoints (interesting points in the geosites) among the geosites. In this way, Muroto Geopark seems, however gradually, to be developing with the support of both local people and visitors after becoming a Global Geopark.

### 3. Problems Emerging after Gaining Global Status

Muroto Geopark faces three main problems after having been accredited as a Global Geopark. 1) The volunteer guide system: as mentioned above, the number of guided tours has increased dramatically. However, the number of guides has remained the same. 2) Inadequacy in investigation of new Geopark tours: most of visitors tend to visit the Cape Muroto Site and the Gyodo-Kuromi Coast Site because guided tours are available at these sites or because they have promenades. Therefore, most visitors still believe that Muroto Geopark is essentially only a place in which to view rocks and geological layers along the coastline of Muroto. 3) Environmental conservation: the Mt. Dannnotani Site, one of geosites, has natural-growth cedar trees as one of its chief features. Because many people now visit the site, there is concern that the ecosystem of the mountain will change.

### 4. Activities to be Taken in Order to Address the Problems

Muroto Geopark is now working on the following three activities in order to address the above problems: 1) Holding volunteer guide training seminars, 2) Planning new Geopark tours, and 3) Hosting discussions on the environmental conservation of the Mt. Dannnotani Site. Details of those activities are discussed in the presentation.

### 5. Conclusion

In order to consider the issue of inadequacy of Geopark tours, it is not enough to strengthen the guide system and investigate new means to encourage visitors to travel over the full extent of the Geopark. It is also important to introduce new geopoints (must-see sights in the Geopark) into the Geopark story when we produce Geopark traveling courses. Therefore, it is important to work together with Muroto Geopark Promotion Committee, local people, and concerned organizations.

Also, the Geopark network plays can play an effective role in helping to solve the problems mentioned above. The Geopark project has never been carried out in solitude or isolation. Cooperation is always the key to develop all Geoparks.

Keywords: Muroto Geopark, after gaining global status