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Experiencing Samani to the Full-Efforts to Promote Mt. Apoi Geopark

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Along with six other regions, Mt. Apoi Geopark was certified as one of Japan's first such areas in December 2008, and efforts to promote it are now gathering momentum.

The exposure of fresh peridotites in the ground surface of the area makes Mt. Apoi Geopark a global rarity, and plant communities on the surface have been designated as a special living monument by the government of Japan. The beautiful landscape of the park is truly enchanting. We began by redesigning scenic spots and tourist attractions to create a geo site experience in line with the concept of geoparks. These efforts included incorporating vegetation, local history and cultural aspects in addition to geological features, thereby positioning Mt. Apoi Geopark as an area that allows visitors to experience Samani to the full. A related guidebook and pamphlets have also been published, and information boards have been installed. In particular, the guidebook is a substantial resource containing a wealth of information on the region. Other priority projects include improvements to the website and park museum.

Along with this infrastructural progress, we are also in the process of developing educational programs for local residents. These are aimed at enhancing understanding of Mt. Apoi Geopark by highlighting it from various angles ? rather than in terms of its geographical features alone ? through initiatives such as tours to observe plants and sea animals as well as workshops for the study of Samani's history. We aim to continue these activities this year in order to produce first-rate tour guides.

Samani is a region of fisheries, and the area near Mt. Apoi is well known for its prime Hidaka kelp. We are planning to hold a Hidaka kelp forum in Sapporo this fall to publicize this local product; connecting the geopark initiative with local industry is seen as a goal worth pursuing.

Keywords: infrastructure, educational programs, first-rate tour guides