

Japanese Geopark activity: its history and role in sustainable development of local community.

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Promotion of geopark concept by Japanese scientists began in 2004. Through the symposiums and workshops held by them, strong movement to establish geoparks in Japan gradually activated from 2007 by local people in several areas where they had been making an effort to conserve and promote geological heritages for years. Responding the movement of these people, Japan Geopark Committee (JGC) was established in 2008 to evaluate aspiring geoparks in Japan.

JGC decided first three candidate areas to apply for Global Geoparks Network (GGN) from Japan in October 2008 and endorsed first seven national (domestic) geoparks including above mentioned three candidates for GGN in December 2008. The JGC played an crucial role to expand the concept of geopark that includes the idea of geoconservation and to launch geopark projects in Japan. It was top-down movement from the academic side. On the other hand the bottom-up network activity of the Japanese Geoparks Network (JGN), which was established in February 2009 by the seven first national geoparks in Japan, have been becoming active recent few years. Now evaluation of geoparks are conducted both JGC and JGN members. JGC and member geoparks of JGN have been playing an important role in conserving geodiversity, promoting geoheritages, dissemination of knowledge for disaster prevention, and also sustainable economic development through geotourism. Both top-down academic movement and bottom-up local movement now work together to establish sustainable local society.

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