

Conservation and Interpretation of Natural Forests from Global Geopark Program

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Muroto Geopark became a Global Geoparks Network Member in 2011. This recognition actually paved the way to explore different aspects of nature through media coverage. Not only limited to geology these include natural aspects that were not adequately focused upon earlier. A notable case is the natural colony of giant Japanese Cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) trees located in Dannotaniyama. This colony was protected as a part of a national forest area but increased media coverage coupled with strong citizen advocacy led to the designation of 'protected forest' in October 2012 (by MAFF and Muroto City). In 2014, local residents formed a guiding group called DANSUGIKAI. This group is conducting various activities like educating people about the geological origin of Muroto cape, conservation of the mountains and of course, preservation of this natural forest. All of this actually became possible after Muroto became recognized as a geopark, so geopark activities became directly related to conservation in this case. Especially the 'Global' geopark recognition acted as a stimulant in local residents, who successfully sought expression in different types of nature related activities, such as this example of forest conservation.