

Geopark Activity in Japan

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Topics of today

- * History of development of Geopark in Japan
- * Framework for promotion of Geopark in Japan
 - * JGC and JGN
- * Outcome of geopark activity in Japan
- * Current problems and future perspective

JGN Members

- Global Geoparks 8
- Japanese Geoparks 35
- ▲ Aspiring Regions 15 +x

Toya Caldera and
Utsunomiya Volcano Geopark

Itoigawa Geopark

Oki Geopark

San'in Kaigan
Geopark

Unzen Volcanic Area
Geopark

Aso Geopark

Muroto Geopark



**Increasing rapidly
over 10 years**

History of Geopark promotion

- * Activity to promote geopark started in academic society in Japan
- * 2005: Geopark Promotion Committee under Geological Society of Japan
 - * I was a secretary of the committee
- * 2006: Four geologists of GSJ participated in 2nd GGN Conference in Belfast



In 2007

- * Japanese NatCom was negative to Geopark
 - * Japan was against geopark in General conference of UNESCO in 1998
- * Ministry of Environment likes Geopark concept, but they say “We can not be governing ministry”
- * Ministry of Economy, Trading and Industry likes Geopark concept and say “Do it with other ministries”
- * DG of Geological Survey of Japan supported me with some (very small) budget and no other staffs.

Therefore...

- * Decided to do with local government and professors in NGO style
- * Due to the social situation in rural areas in Japan, local governments reacted surprisingly quickly

Social Background: Geohazard

- Living in the islands of frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions...
- People do not have enough knowledge on Japanese tectonic settings
- Less than 10% of high school students study geoscience
- Sharing of geo-information between citizens and scientists is necessary



1995 Kobe Earthquake



1991 Eruption of Unzen Volc.

Social Background: Economy

- * Economic gap between urban and rural areas is increasing in recent decade
- * Young people move to urban areas from rural areas
- * Vitality and pride in rural areas are being lost
- * Rural areas are losing their traditional life style and culture, which roots in geology and ecology in the area.



Background: National Parks and Museums

- * 29 national parks most of which include geological landscape
- * 221 natural monuments related to geoscience
- * Geoheritages in the natural parks had been conserved but not well utilized
- * More than 40 museums which have curators relating geoscience



How we started

- * JGC, established in 2008, was just NGO
 - * Relevant ministries did not say “NO” to establish it but no ministry officially supported it
 - * NatCom agreed that they recognize JGC as a specialists group to evaluate candidate to GGN
 - * Behind the scenes, the Chief for geology in Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry negotiated with relevant officers in other ministries.
- * JGN, established in 2009, has been also NGO supported by municipalities
- * Both had not been “official” body thus almost no financial support from the government till 2015

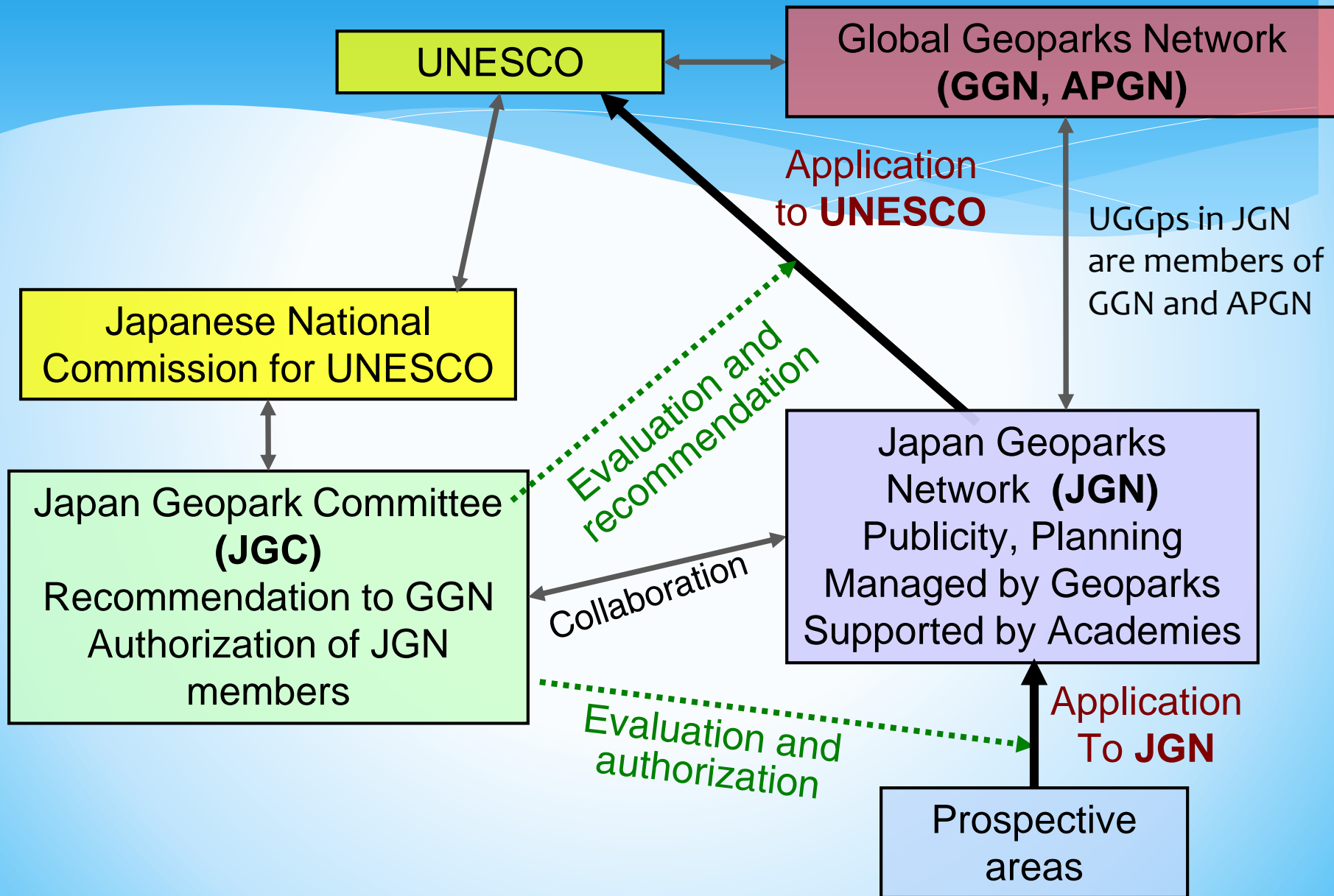
In 2015

- * JGC was endorsed as the official committee to promote Geopark
- * Ministry of Education and Science decided to give subsidy to JGN to run JGC

Framework of Japanese Geoparks

- * Most of the geoparks in Japan are managed by local government (villages, towns, cities, prefectures)
- * Japanese Geoparks Network (JGN) is a network of Global and national Geoparks
 - * NGO
- * Geopark does not have legal status in Japan
 - * The “National” geopark in Japan does not have legal status and has different status from the National Park or National Monument:

JGN and JGC



How we learned to evaluate geopark

- * Through discussion with evaluators to aspiring geoparks in Japan, JGC member learned up-to-date concept of geopark
- * At the beginning Japanese “geoparks” had been rather geological park than geopark



Criteria

- * Follows UNESCO Global Geopark guideline
- * Localized checklist
 - * Made by evaluators based on the discussion in working group for evaluation of JGN
 - * More localized and applicable check items: considering Japanese law, administration system, custom, tradition etc.



Difference between UGG and national geoparks in Japan

- * National geoparks do not always
 - * have geoheritage of international significance
 - * prepare for foreign visitors
 - * have english or other foreign language speaking staffs
- * National geoparks must
 - * have proper management body
 - * conserve geoheritages properly
 - * have good educational program
 - * conduct attractive geotourism

Japanese Geoparks Network

- * Established in 2009
 - * Networking started in 2007 between the local governments and scientists who were planning to establish geopark
- * NGO
 - * Office in Tokyo
 - * Run by contribution from geoparks in Japan
 - * Secretary general from Itoigawa City

Merit and demerit of national geopark system

- * Number is power: help establish strong national network
- * Easy to prepare for UGGp application
- * Enhance conservation of geoheritages
- * May diminish brand value of UGGp
- * May damage motivation to international networking
- * Create more and more job of National Committee for Geopark
- * National geopark system seem to work well in densely populated areas like China, Japan etc.

Networking in Japan

- * Networking is somewhat challenge in Japanese Society
 - * Authoritarian and formal society
 - * Network is a relationship between people without hierarchy
 - * Mental barrier for traditional feeling of Japanese
- * Networking makes geopark staffs and also local people happier
 - * Core value of Geopark activity
 - * By understanding the value of networking national level, Japanese geopark staffs now are actively involved in international networking



Executive committee member, Leaders of
Working groups



International Cooperation

JGN held a workshop in Satun UGGp in Thailand supported by the NatCom of Japan



Outcome of geoparks in Japan

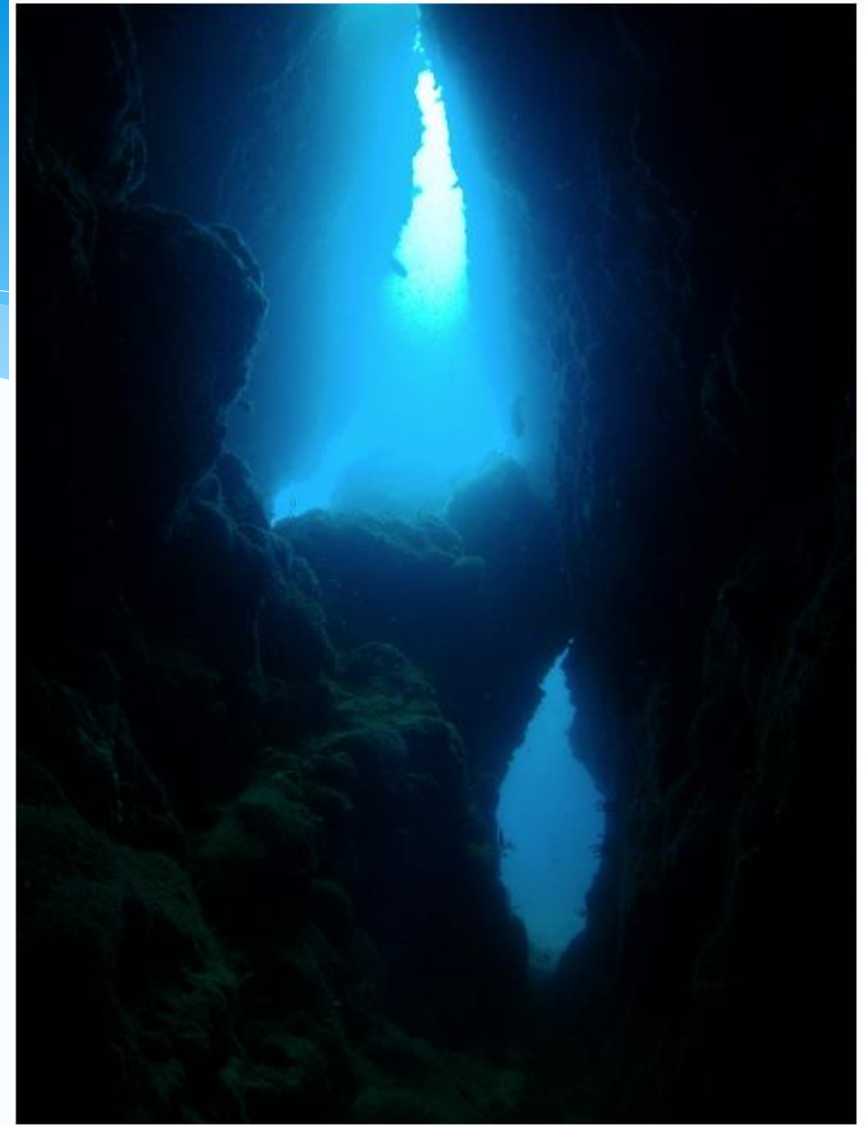
San'in Kaigan UGGp
Muroto UGGp

San'in Kaigan Global Geopark



Geo-diving

- Since 2010, a young local man has started a new diving service business in San'in Kaigan Geopark.
- * **For high quality service:** They don't need so many visitors because their capacity is limited and want to provide high quality service to each of them.
- * **The fee** for absolute beginners is ¥13,000 (€100) .



Picture of amazing undersea world
in San'in Kaigan Geopark

Geo-canoe

The number of visitors of the Geo-canoe in the Takeno coast Geosite



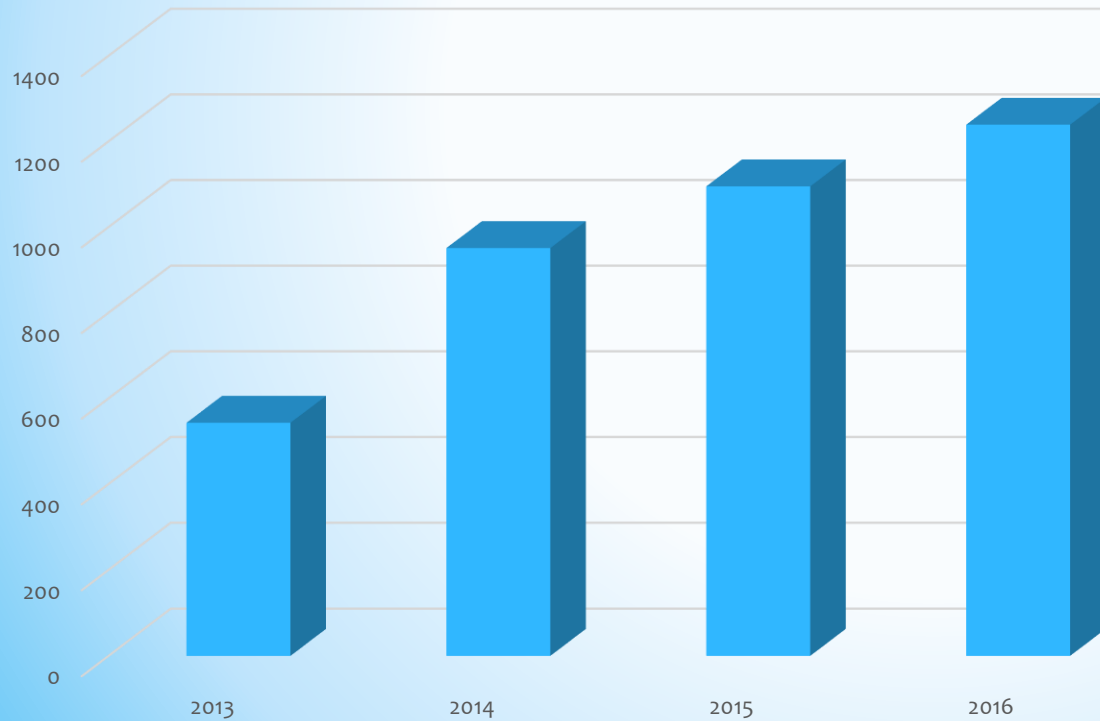
Provide new employment for younger people

Small bout tours



Activity programs in the Kannabe volcano (Lava trekking, Snow shoe trekking, nature camping)

A young family moved to the geopark and started the business



Muroto UGGp



Muroto Guide Associaton

- * Established in 2009 after Muroto was designated as one of national geoparks
- * House wives and retired man
- * Started as volunteer group
- * Conduct guided tour at the Muroto Cape, the most famous tourist attraction and important geosite in the geopark
 - * The muroto cape was the place where many people come and take some pictures and go staying just five to ten minutes



Café on the rock



Community based tourism

- * Muroto Guide association received “Ecotourism special prize” from Ministry of environment this year as a good practice of community based tourism
- * Younger local people are participating in the association recently
- * Local people stimulated by the activity of the association established a travel agency to conduct nature tour

For the future

- * Educational program is strong point in many Japanese geopark
- * Involvement local people is quite active
- * Many geoparks are struggling with creating new business by utilizing Geopark
 - * Many stakeholders in geopark area still dream of revenue from mass tourism
- * New types of tourism is beginning in some areas through the cooperation of people stimulated by geopark project

For the future

- * Conservation in geoparks is still largely rely on National parks and National monuments, though conservation activity by local people is activating
 - * More involvement of municipality in the conservation is expected
- * Quality control of national geoparks
 - * Some of the older national geoparks still do not work well: First red card to national geopark last year