

Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

CBRM Database

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Case Study Name:	Towards Sustainable Management of National Parks in Japan: Securing Local Community and Stakeholder Participation		
Author:	Hiwasaki, L.		
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Region:	Central and Eastern Asia		
Country:	Japan		
Ecosystem Type:	Temperate Grasslands		
Social Characteristics:	Other (Local Communities)		
Scale of Study:	National		
Resource Type:	Protected Area		
Type of Initiative:	Community Network		
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Summary:

Japan's national park system constitutes a potentially viable mechanism for securing local community participation and building stakeholder consensus for sustainable park management, although the potential of this system is yet to be fully maximized. This article gives an overview of the system of protecting natural resources in Japan, focusing on the national park system. Parks are managed by zoning and regulation, which is unique in that land is not “set aside” for nature conservation, but designated as national park wherever the need to preserve “scenic beauty” has been recognized, regardless of land ownership or land use. Although resource conservation under this system has been problematic, it has advantages, especially in terms of community participation. This article demonstrates that in order to reach the system's potential, the park authority must act as coordinator of stakeholders and facilitator of bottom-up approaches to decision-making. In order to do this, steps that must be taken include the following: identifying the various stakeholders in park management and defining the “local community”; clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder; and supporting consensus-building among stakeholders regarding the objectives and long-term vision of each park. By taking these steps, it would be possible to build a park management system that overrides government boundaries and involves local communities. This will enable the park authority to address the challenges facing Japan's complex system of conserving natural resources, and move towards sustainable