

## Activity of Japanese geoparks -progress and challenge-

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Promotion of concept of geopark in Japan began in 2005. Scientist took the initiative at the beginning. In 2007, in several municipalities where local people had been making an effort to conserve and promote geological heritages for years, movement to establish geopark started. Mayors and local leaders of those municipalities established a council to promote geopark activity in 2007, which later developed into the Japanese Geoparks Network. The scientists of several academic societies established Japan Geopark Committee (JGC) in 2008 to evaluate aspiring geoparks in Japan. JGC played a crucial role to expand the concept of geopark 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 national geoparks, has been becoming active recent several years. Now evaluation of geoparks are conducted both JGC members and experts from JGN members. Those evaluators have a workshop every year to discuss how to evaluate geoparks based on the UGGp guideline. JGN and JGC will continue to cooperate each other for the governance of Japanese geopark activities.

Today there are 35 national geoparks and 8 UNESCO global geoparks in Japan. The activities have become much more diverse compared to the initial stage, various stakeholders participate the geopark activity, geotourism activity attract visitors, and quality of the educational programs in geoparks are getting better. However, several issues such as conservation of geological heritage and planning for sustainable development still should be improved. Case study of good practices and challenges in Japanese geoparks will be shown in the presentation.

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