

Applying SEPLS to OECMs: From Concept to Real-World Impact

**-Policies to promote OECMs toward 30by30 target
with the whole-of-society approach-**



**Ministry of the Environment
Government of Japan**



Hiroki FUJIMOTO
Biodiversity Strategy Office, Deputy Director

Outline

■ Overview of biodiversity in Japan

Satoyama (SEPLs) in Japan

■ Policies and initiatives related to OECMs

Cases of SEPLS as OECM

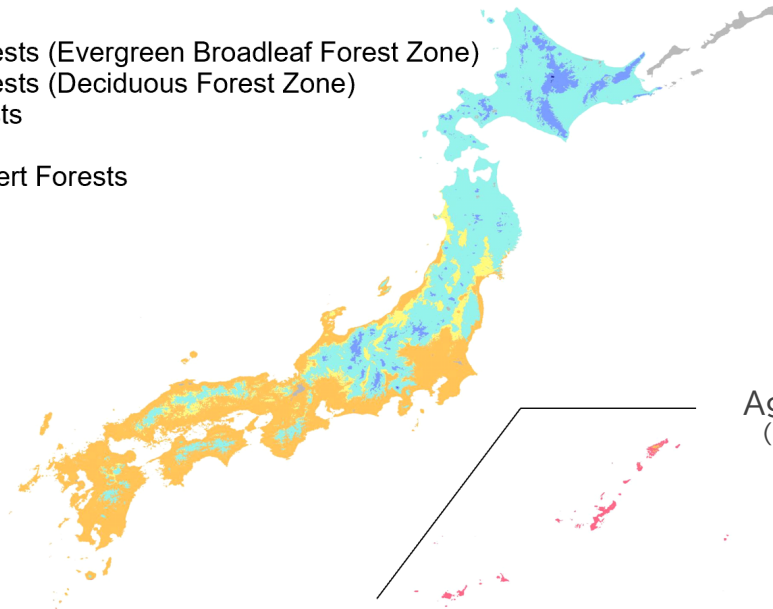


Overview of biodiversity in Japan

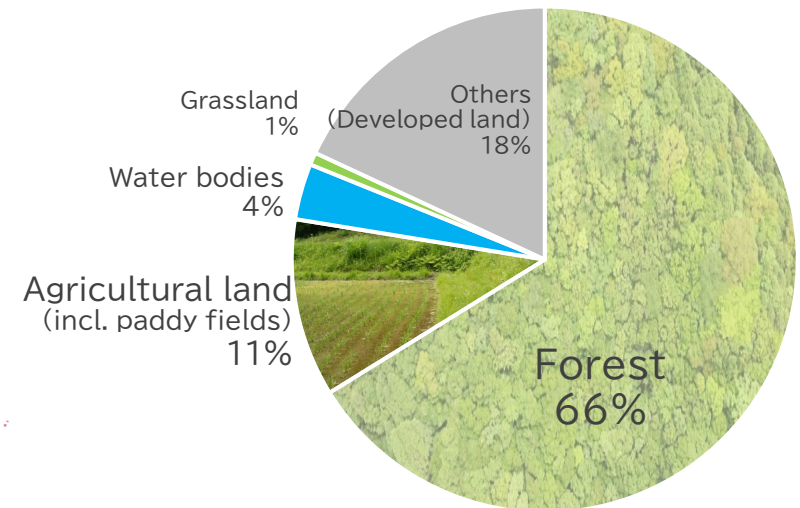
Overview of biodiversity in Japan

Vegetation Zones

- Subtropical Forests
- Warm Temperate Forests (Evergreen Broadleaf Forest Zone)
- Warm Temperate Forests (Deciduous Forest Zone)
- Cool Temperate Forests
- Boreal Forests
- Tundra and Polar Desert Forests



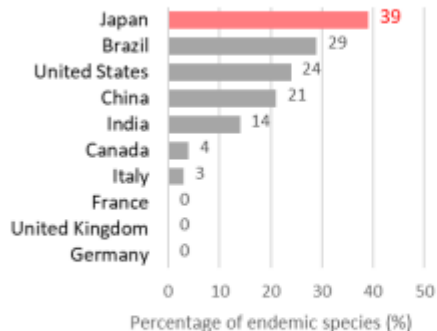
Area of National Land by Land Use Category [2023]



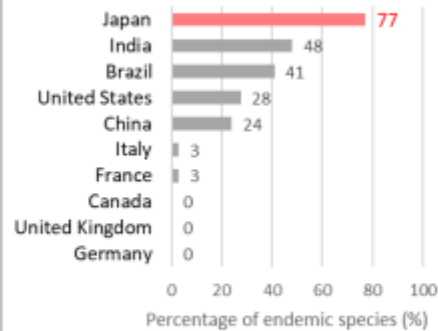
Source: Created by the Forestry Agency based on Kira's Warmth Index; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), National Land Data

Source: MLIT, Categories have been consolidated by the author.

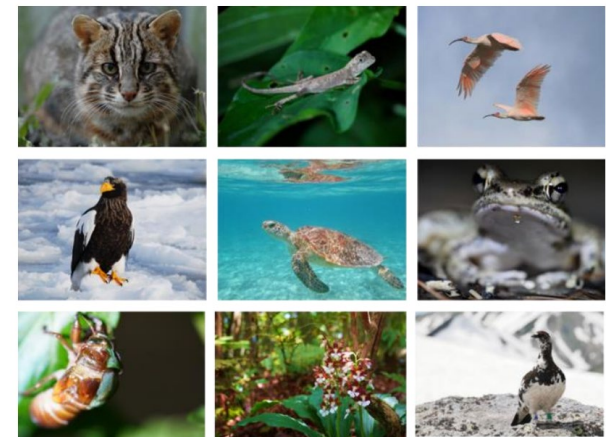
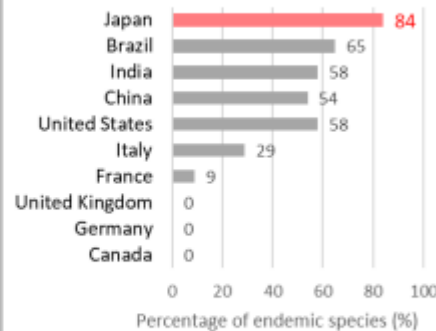
Terrestrial mammals



Reptiles



Amphibians



Endemism rates in the top 10 GDP countries

Created based on Biodiversity of Japan: A Harmonious Coexistence between Nature and Humankind by Biodiversity Center, Nature Conservation Bureau, the Ministry of the Environment and World Resources 2000-2001 edited by World Resources Institute (WRI) and others

Crises for biodiversity in Japan

■ **Biodiversity** has been **declining** over the past 50 years.

■ Among the **four major crises for biodiversity** in Japan

Crises #1-3 are still remain significant, while Crisis #4 has become visible in the form of global warming, etc.

■ Crisis #1 is caused by anthropogenic activities such as development, etc.



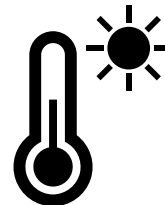
■ Crisis #2 is caused by reduced engagement with nature



■ Crisis #3 is caused by things introduced by humans



■ Crisis #4 is caused by changes in the global environment

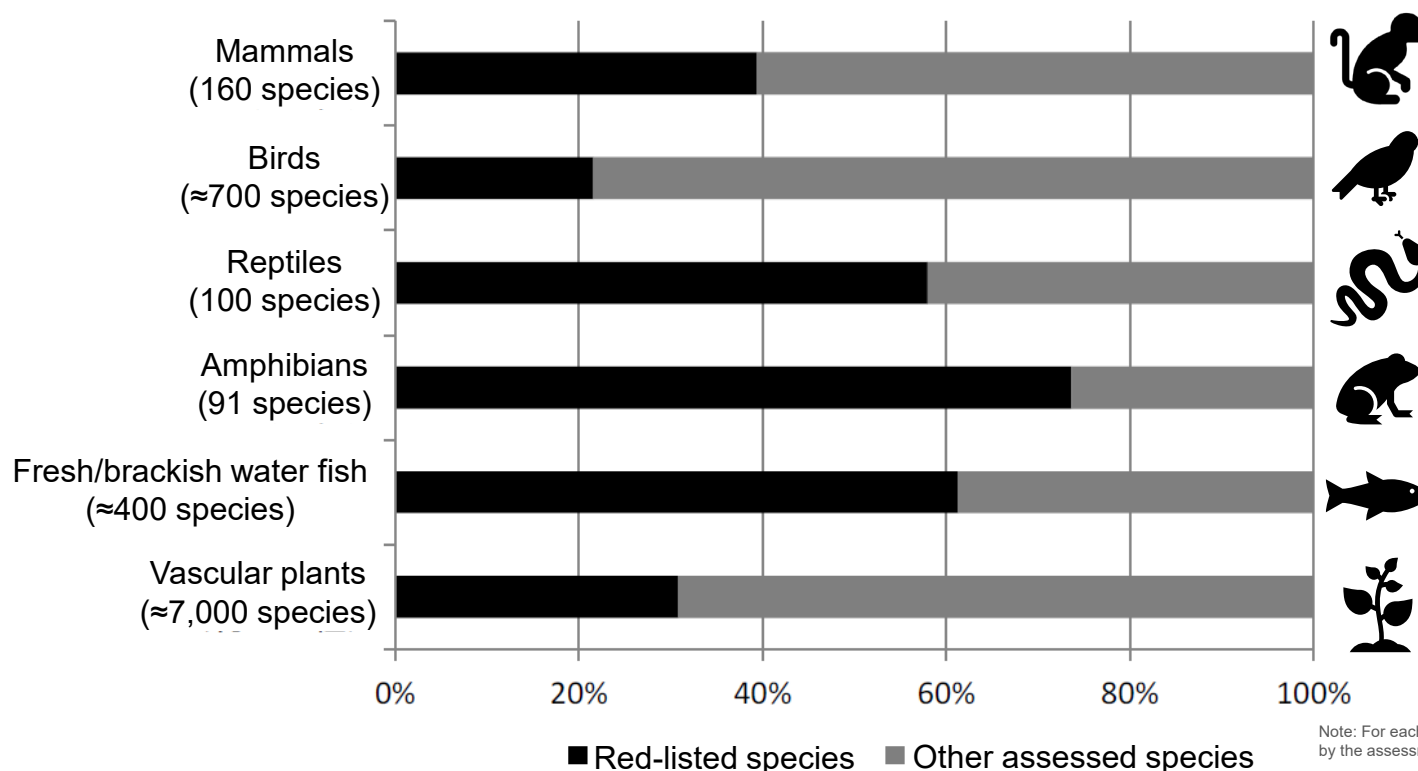


■ Although our efforts have contributed to slowing down biodiversity loss over the past 50 years, we have not **yet recovered** the biodiversity.

Current status of biodiversity in Japan (endangered species)

■ Among the **species assessed for the Red List** by the Ministry of the Environment, **39%** of mammals, **22%** of birds, **57%** of reptiles, **88%** of amphibians, **61%** of fresh/brackish water fish and **31%** of vascular plants are reported to be endangered in Japan.

Percentages of listed species and non-listed species of those covered by MOEJ's assessment for the Red List by category



*Compiled from the Ministry of the Environment in its 2020 Press Release "About the publication of MoEJ Red List 2020" and the Table of the Number of Species on the Red List

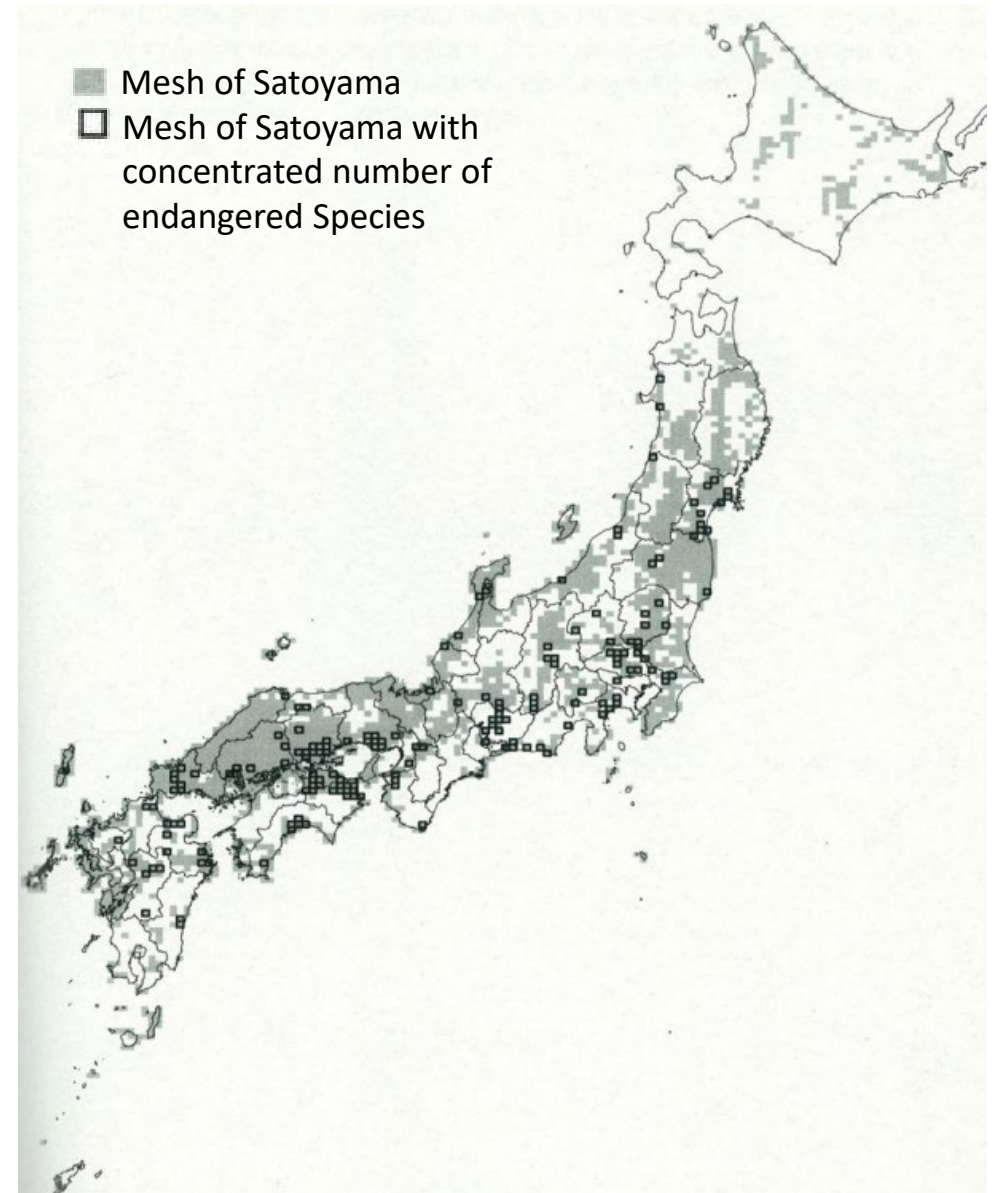
Source: Japan Biodiversity Outlook 3 (JBO3), 2021

Satoyama Landscapes and endangered Species

■ Satoyama, which includes sustainably managed agricultural land, provides **important habitat for endangered species** in Japan.

■ Approx. **50% of endangered species hotspots** in Japan were located **within Satoyama landscapes**.

■ This shows the **importance of conserving Satoyama landscapes** for endangered species.



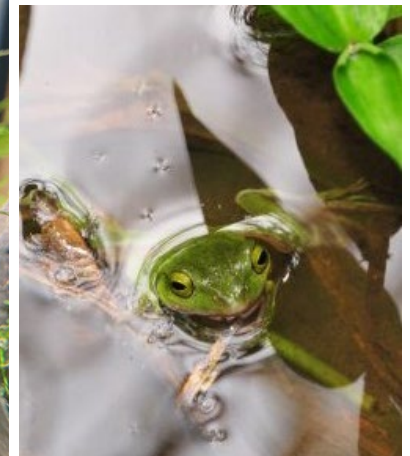
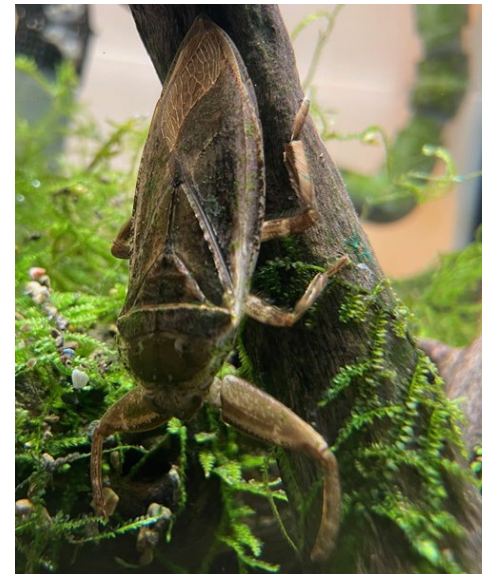
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Species Relying on Agricultural Land

■ Some species have **adapted to agricultural land as their habitat**, reflecting this long history.

■ Example: Tagame (*Lethocerus deyrolli*) depends on paddy fields and surrounding Satoyama for its entire lifecycle and is listed as VU on Japan's Red List.

■ Agricultural land is part of Japan's ecosystem, but **abandonment** and other pressures are causing these species to decline rapidly.



What if Agricultural Land is abandoned?

- Studies show that once environmentally friendly agricultural land is abandoned, **many species that depend on it disappear.**
- **Abandoned land has lower** overall biodiversity value than environmentally friendly agricultural land.



Background of Crisis #2: Changes in Human–Nature Relationships

- **Changing lifestyles driven by globalization and urbanization**

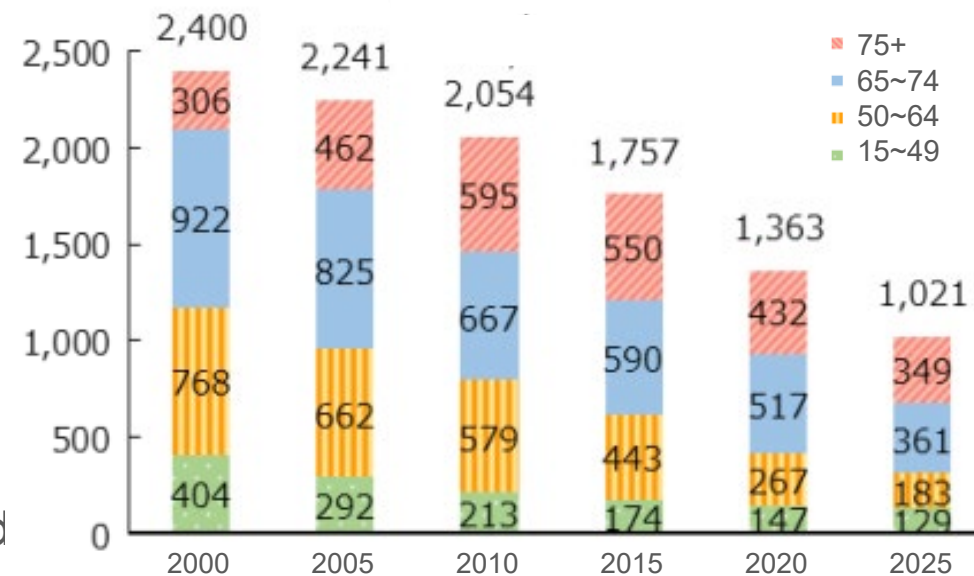
➡ the shift in energy sources and growing reliance on imported food and resources

- **Population decline and aging in rural communities**

➡ Declining numbers of farmers especially in hilly and mountainous regions

➡ degraded and abandoned agricultural land

Numbers of principal farmers by age group



Source: MAFF (2026)

Biodiversity loss here is driven not by overuse but by **'underuse'**
— reduced human–nature interaction

Agricultural Land as Habitat for Species

- Studies show that **environmentally friendly agricultural land** provides habitat for **many species that cannot survive without it**, while also delivering a range of other ecosystem services.
- Such agricultural land supports a **unique ecosystem** and **important biodiversity values** —making its conservation outcomes just as significant.



Policies and initiatives related to OECMs

Status of Japan for achieving **30by30** target



Japan has covered

- **21.0%** of terrestrial and inland water areas
- **13.3%** of marine and coastal areas

as part of its progress toward the 30by30 target

as of August 3, 2026

National 30by30 Roadmap



A national action plan that outlines necessary actions to achieve the 30by30 target in Japan.

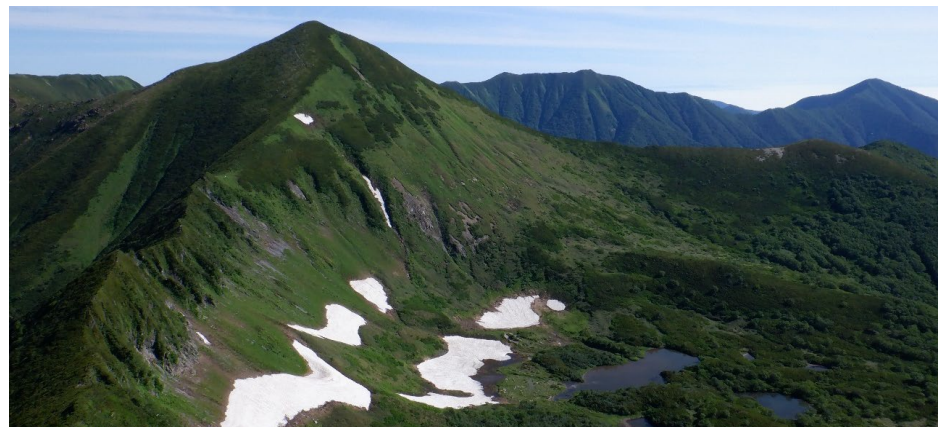
Ministry of the Environment Japan (MOEJ) with relevant ministries established **a roadmap in 2022** to outline necessary actions to domestically achieve the 30by30 target.



How do we achieve 30by30?

① Expansion of PAs

- Expanding Protected Areas such as National Parks and improving their management quality.



② Promotion of OECMs

- Promoting OECMs* by creating opportunities for engagement by a broader range of stakeholders

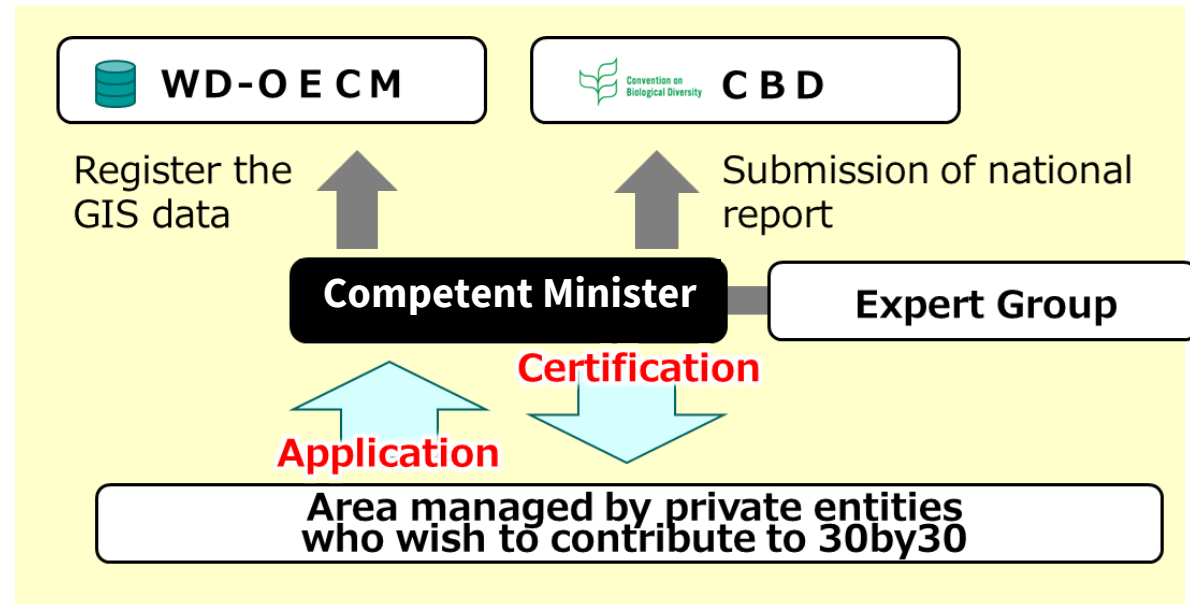


*Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures

"Kyosei Sites" Certification

- Since 2023, Japan has launched a **national certification scheme** to certify areas with important ecosystems that are conserved by various actors.
- The certified areas are called "**Nationally Certified Sustainably Managed Natural Sites**", or in short "**Kyosei Sites**".
* "Kyosei" = 「共生」 = harmony and Coexistence
- Certified areas **outside protected areas** are reported to the World Database on OECM (WD-OECM) by MOEJ, and registered.

- **610 sites** have been certified as of Aug 2026.



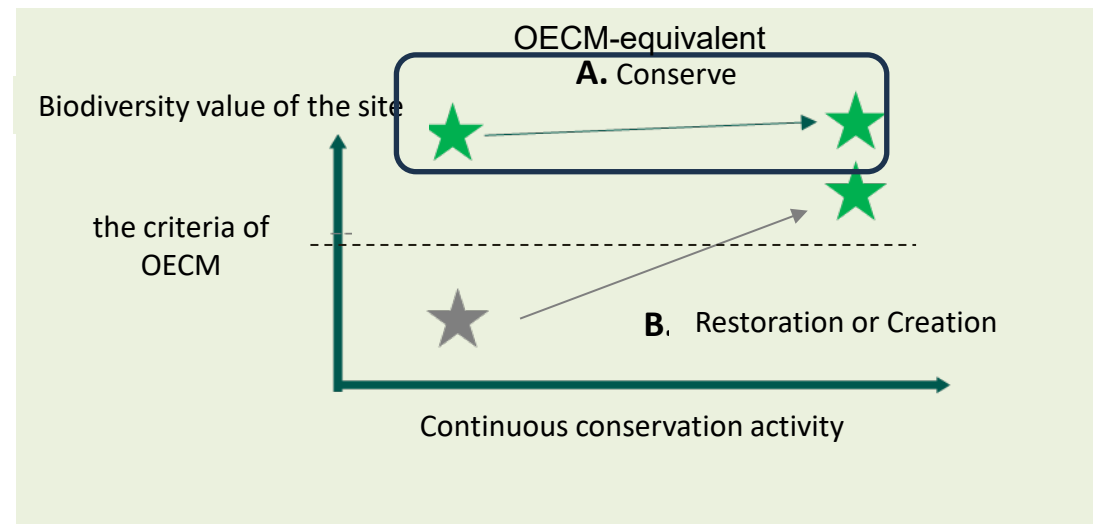
Policy and new legislation for OECMs : Certification as “*Kyosei Sites*”



- A new law “the Act on Promoting Activities to Enhance Regional Biodiversity” entered into force in **April 2025** to further promote conservation activities by non-governmental actors by legally certifying such activities.
- To realize nature-positive outcomes, measures to halt biodiversity loss while promoting recovery are essential. Accordingly, activities aimed at the restoration and creation of biodiversity in degraded land areas are also included.

The scope of the act is:

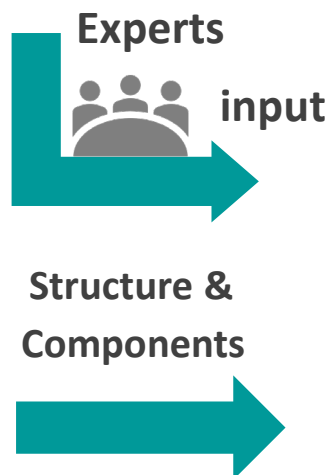
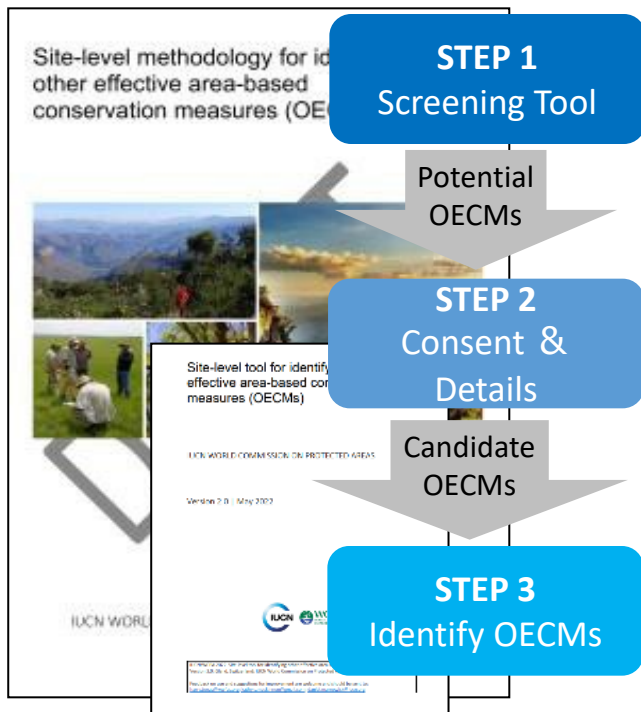
- A. Activities to *conserve* high value of biodiversity that meet the criteria of OECM.**
- B. *Restoration or creation* activities in degraded ecosystems or previously developed sites**



Criteria of “Kyosei Sites” aligns with IUCN guidance

Japan developed the criteria for “Kyosei Sites” based on IUCN methodology.

IUCN Methodology



Criteria for “Kyosei Sites”

1. Geographically defined

- Area is clearly defined and appropriate

Criteria 3

2. Properly governed and managed

- Certainty and continuity of activity implementation is ensured
- No risk of creating doubts about the equity of the activities.

Criteria 5

Criteria 8

3. Valuable for biodiversity conservation

- Biodiversity values are necessary for activity plans to be certified as “maintain” activity.

Criteria 2

4. Contributing to in-situ conservation

- Specific, appropriate, and feasible goals and appropriate timeframe are set based on the status and issues
- Activities substantially contribute to the maintenance, restoration, or creation of biodiversity
- Collaborate with relevant parties in the implementation of activities

Criteria 4

Criteria 6

Criteria 7

- Criteria 1: The site is not a Protected Area
- Criteria 2: The site contains biodiversity values
- Criteria 3: The site is geographically defined
- Criteria 4: Biodiversity values are maintained or likely to be maintained
- Criteria 5: The site is governed and managed
- Criteria 6: The site contributes to in-situ conservation of biodiversity
- Criteria 7: Conservation outcomes are long-term
- Criteria 8: Governance and management consider equity

Process of the Scheme

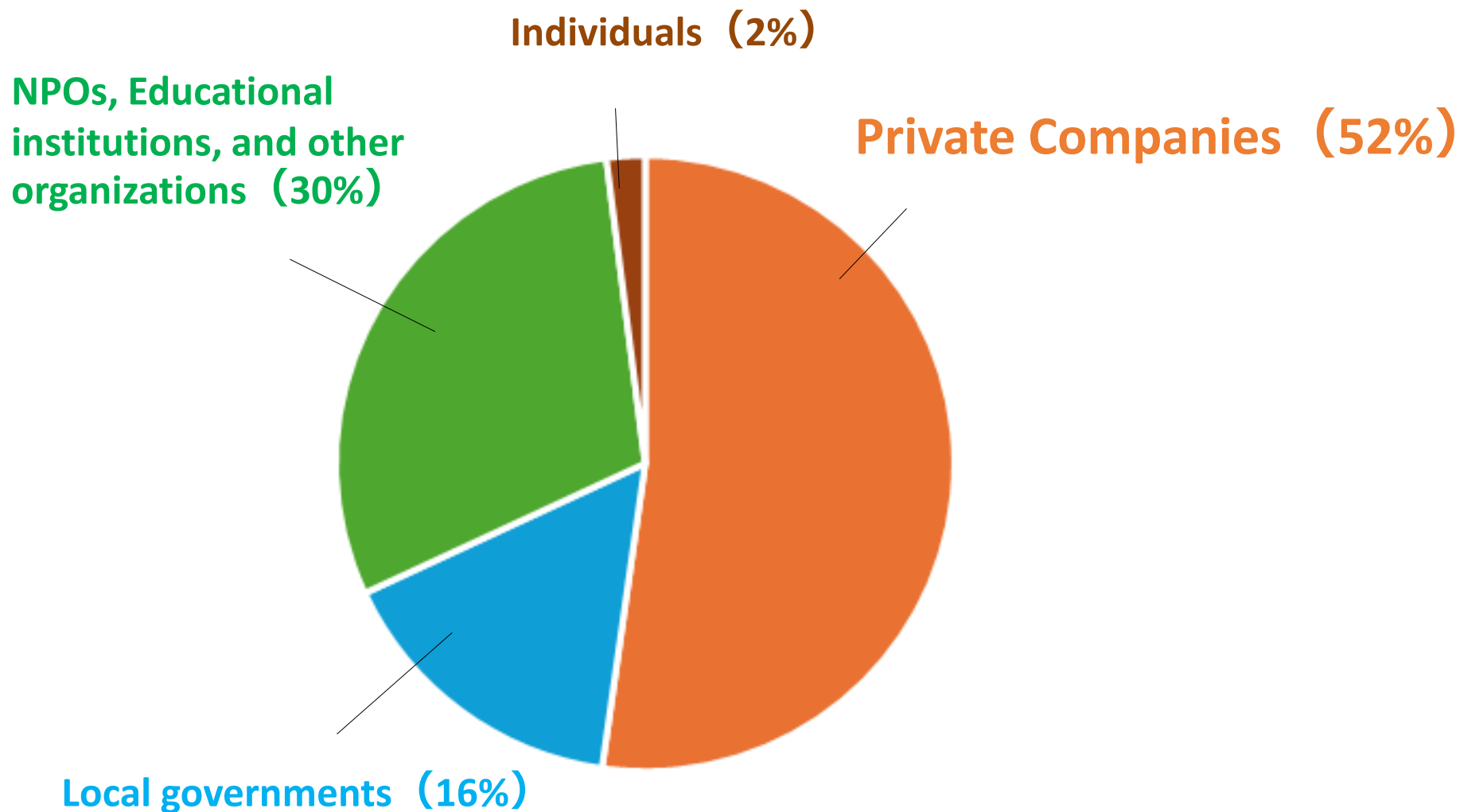


1. Optional **prior consultation** with the agency*₁ or the regional of Ministry of the Environment (MOE)
2. **Application** by the authority of the conservation activity
3. **Preliminary screening review** conducted by the agency.
4. (If necessary, a site survey will be conducted.)
5. **Expert review by a group of experts** in various fields related to biodiversity
6. **Final confirmation** by the Competent Ministers *₂
7. **Certification by the Competent Ministers**
8. **Renewal procedure** is envisaged approximately **5 years** after certification to guarantee nature conservation. And the results **of biodiversity monitoring** will be submitted **approximately every 5 years** after certification.

*1. The Environmental Restoration and Conservation Agency conducts a part of the certification-related work and provides information, etc

*2. Minister of the Environment; Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism

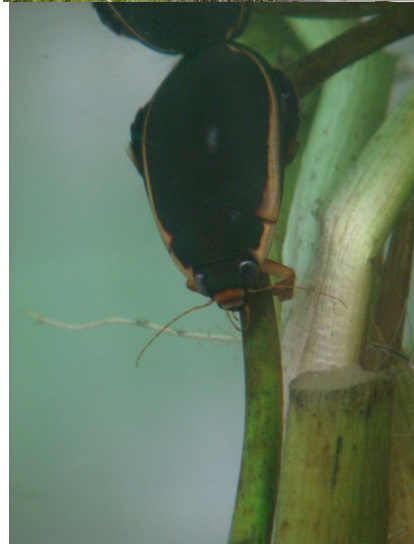
Who are the applicants certified?



Examples of "*Kyosei Sites*"



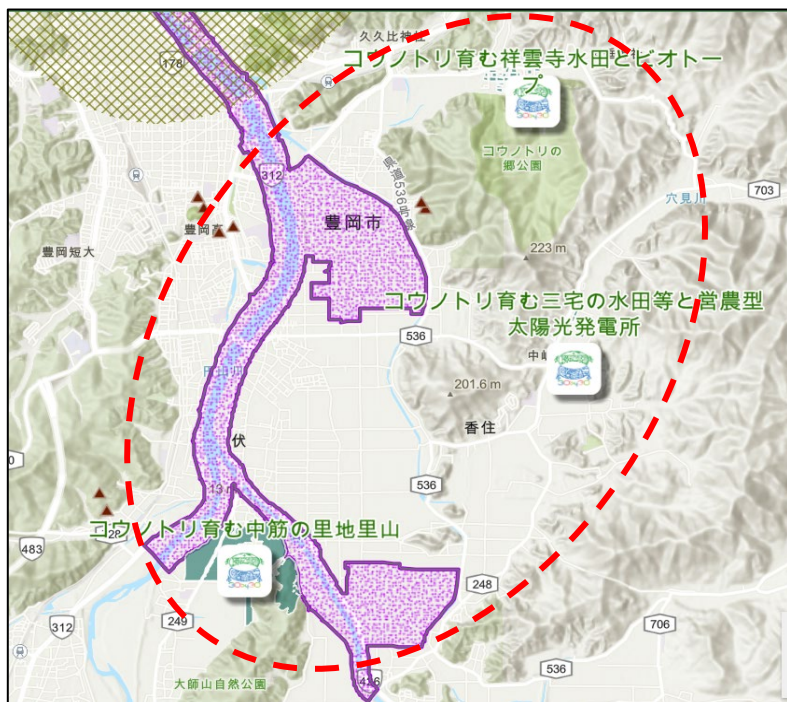
Examples of “*Kyosei Sites*”



Case 1: Kyosei site in a production landscape

Contribution of Kyosei Sites in Agricultural Landscapes to Connecting Protected Areas

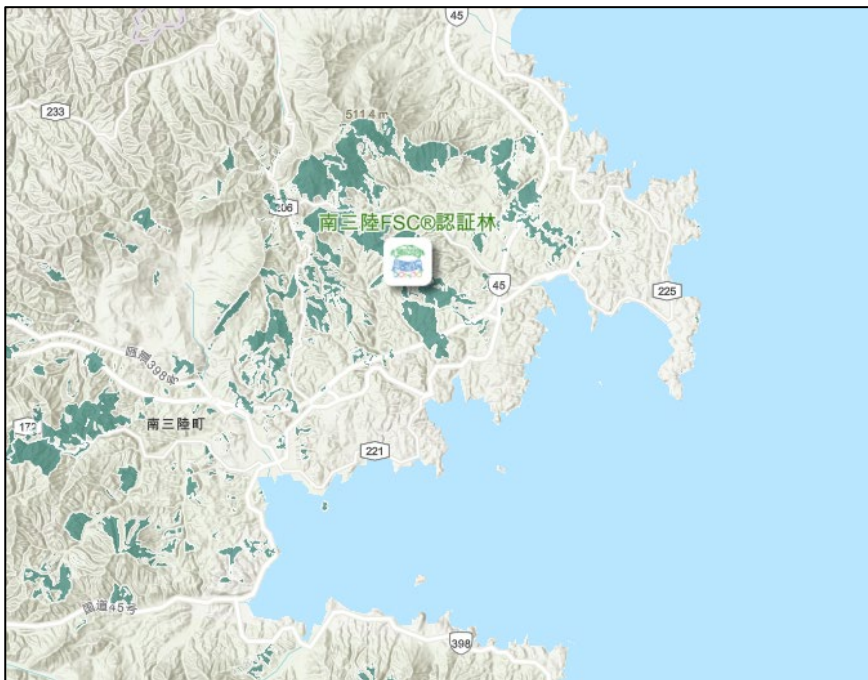
- Three Kyosei Sites managed by different stakeholders collaborate **to conserve the Oriental Stork, a threatened species dependent on Satoyama rice paddy landscapes.**
- The initiative complements a nearby Ramsar Wetland, **strengthens connectivity with protected areas**, and helps make priority areas for biodiversity conservation more visible.
- **The initiative is also reflected in the city's biodiversity strategy**, linking site-level conservation actions with broader landscape-scale biodiversity planning.



Case 2: Kyosei site in a production landscape

Sustainable Forest Management Supporting Biodiversity Conservation

- Approximately 12,600 hectares of forest, including both national and privately owned forests, cover about 77% of Minamisanriku Town. Of this area, **approximately 2,500 hectares of FSC®-certified forest have been recognized as a Kyosei Site.**
- **Under the town's vision of a "self-reliant and decentralized sustainable community," forest owners, forestry operators, and the local government established a council to advance environmentally and socially responsible forestry.**
- Known for its long history of cedar production, **the area is managed under sustainable forestry practices that allow light to reach the forest floor, supporting diverse understory vegetation and creating habitat for threatened species such as the Golden Eagle.**



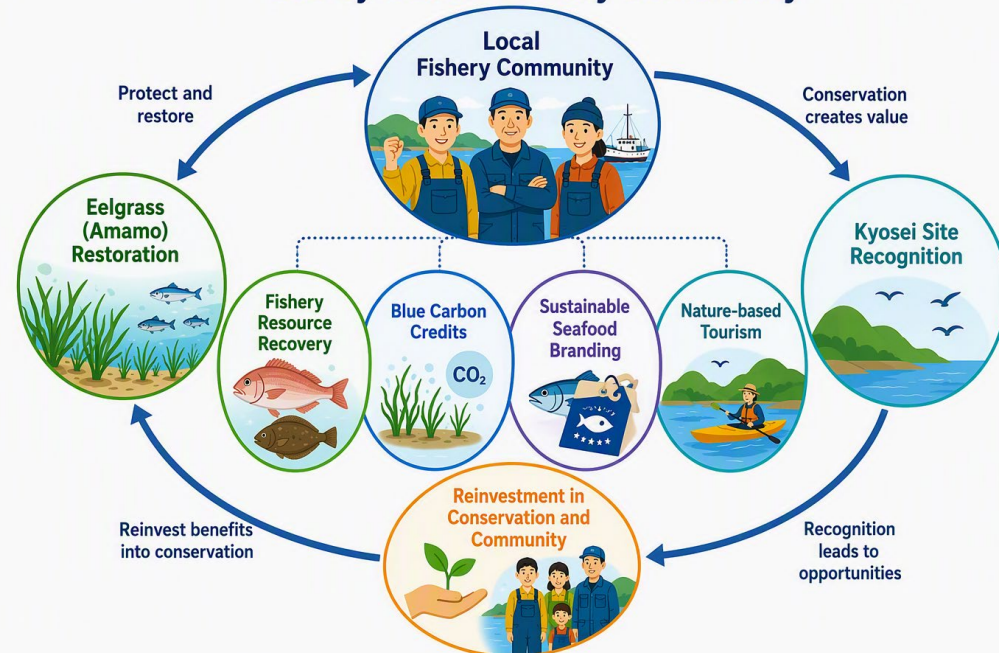
Case 3: Kyosei site in a production seascape

Sustaining Fishery Resources through Eelgrass Bed Restoration

- A local fishing community, concerned about declining fish catches, took the lead in restoring eelgrass beds to support the recovery of fishery resources in an area identified as part of an EBSA.
- After being recognized as a Kyosei Site, the initiative has promoted the branding of local fishery products and nature-based tourism, while exploring ways to reinvest benefits generated from nature back into conservation.
- The project generates voluntary carbon credits from the CO₂ absorbed by restored eelgrass beds, creating additional incentives and support for conservation activities.



A Positive Cycle of Sustainable Use and Conservation Led by a Local Fishery Community





Thank you for your attention

Pls see full explanation of
Japan's OECM and related policy and **Japan's 30by30 Roadmap !**

