

Feature 2

From Forest Conservation and Development to Co-habitation with Forests

The JT Forest initiative for forest preservation has expanded to nine locations across Japan and has diversified its scope of activity since it launched in 2005.

■ Diversified Forest Conservation Adapted to Local Characteristics

The JT Group has engaged in the JT Forest initiative for forest conservation as an indication of its appreciation of the blessings of Mother Nature that sustains its business and its wish to preserve the natural environment. In this initiative, JT borrows forestland across the country for a certain period of time, draws up forest development plans according to the local needs and provides support necessary for forest development while exchanging opinions with experts and local governments.

In Nakahechi, Wakayama Prefecture, where the initiative was first launched in 2005, we are trying to revive a forest in a vast area deforested by logging. Rugged mountain surfaces are steadily regaining green cover as a result of forest development activities such as the planting of around 180,000 trees and weeding. In 2006, we expanded the initiative to Kosuge, Yamanashi Prefecture, to create a water source forest by mixing broad leaf trees in a coniferous forest zone and to Nahari, Kochi Prefecture, to preserve coral in the river mouth by developing a bountiful forest through thinning. In 2007, we extended the initiative to Chizu, Tottori Prefecture, where strip roads are also being developed to enable sustainable forest conservation. In addition to planting, we are conducting various forest maintenance activities, such as thinning, weeding, strip road development and animal damage control as well as support for the use of experimental forest development techniques in accordance with the circumstances of each forest.



JT Forest Nakahechi Before preservation, 2005



Present, 2012

The number of areas where we are implementing the JT Forest initiative has increased

to nine in Japan, including leased forests and a company-owned one. To create bountiful forests desired by local residents, we are striving to develop sound forests that can be maintained and used in a sustainable way in cooperation with local forestry cooperatives, which have extensive knowledge concerning the history of the forests and the types of trees there. In addition, we have designated the "Forestry Program Day," when JT employees, local residents and local government officials work together in forest preservation activity, creating a valuable opportunity for local community exchanges.



■ Future-Oriented Forest Development

Seven years after its start, the JT Forest initiative has expanded to include new activities and has evolved in various ways.

In Shigetomi, Kagoshima Prefecture, we conducted a field survey over a one-year period from July 2010 to examine the ecology of animals and plants. The survey was conducted in cooperation with the local forestry cooperative to which we entrust forest maintenance and an environment-educational non-governmental organization which is utilizing the JT Forest Shigetomi for a nature experience program. We have drawn up the Biodiversity Preservation Plan in light of the survey results based on the idea that the environment having a rich diversity of plant and animal life is essential to the creation of a bountiful forest. We will continue monitoring plant and animal life in cooperation with local communities. We will also use forests as a source of knowledge concerning the formation of geological structures due to volcanic activity and the history of local industries that used to be sustained by forests.

In December 2010, we started activity under the JT Forest initiative in Shakotan, a fishing town in Hokkaido, with a view to

creating a water source forest that sustains marine life. The development of the forest in Shakotan has been stalled for many years due to a lack of necessary workers and access problems. In the coastal area, marine plants have decreased in recent years, raising concern over possible effects not only on the forest but also on the entire ecology of the river basin area. In addition to forest development, we conducted an ecological survey and monitoring and launched a 10-year activity aiming to create a water source forest that brings the blessings of nature to the river basin area and the sea. We will contribute to fostering local personnel who can undertake the task of forest development by using this activity as an opportunity to acquire know-how on forest development. To make it possible to develop and preserve sound forests into the future, we will devote efforts to forest development in cooperation with local communities and relevant organizations.



A field survey

Aiming for Forest Development that Respects the River and Sea Environment

There are eight fishing ports on the coastal area of Shakotan while forests cover 80% of the town. Fishing is an important industry for Shakotan, which used to thrive on abundant hauls of herring.

In recent years, the "isoyake" (sea desertification) phenomenon, which refers to an excessive decline in marine algae, has become worse. As a result, organisms feeding on marine algae and breeding grounds have decreased, raising concern over possible effects on fishery resources and reminding us of the importance of the relation between forests and rivers. Awareness of the need to preserve forests is growing among local residents, not to mention local fishermen. We are conducting forest preservation activity to

restore our forests and seas to a sound condition while also giving consideration to river and marine life as well as plant and animal life on land.

In a situation like this, we are grateful for the forest development being achieved through collaborative activity under the JT Forest initiative. We expect that this will help to create jobs and foster personnel who can undertake future preservation activity.

An exchange between JT employees, their family members and local residents provides an opportunity to raise awareness about the blessings of forests. We hope that an activity like this will spread to various fields, including industry, welfare, education and culture.



Hajime Nishikawa
Chief, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Division Shakotan Town

JT Forest (Japanese)
URL www.jti.co.jp/csr/forest