

## Six years of the Japan Geopark Committee

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Japanese earth scientists started to promote geopark activity in 2004. Through the symposiums and workshops held by scientists, strong movement to establish geoparks in Japan gradually activated from 2006 to 2007 by local people in several areas where they had been making an effort to conserve and promote geological heritage for years. Responding to the request of these people, Japan Geopark Committee (JGC) was established in 2008 to evaluate aspiring geoparks in Japan by academic societies. The GGN guideline is translated into Japanese by JGC to help people understand the concept of GGN.

The members of the JGC were composed of earth scientists, specialists of nature conservation and interpretation and science communicators from mass media. JGC decided first three candidate areas to apply for GGN from Japan in October 2008 and endorsed first seven national (domestic) geoparks including the above-mentioned three candidates for GGN in December 2008. JGC made its decision based on evaluation of dossiers and two-day field evaluation.

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, is becoming active in the last few years. Now evaluation of geoparks are conducted both JGC and JGN members. JGC and member geoparks of JGN have been playing an important role in conserving geodiversity, promoting geoheritage, dissemination of knowledge for disaster prevention, and also sustainable economic development through geotourism. Both top-down academic movement and bottom-up local movement now work together to establish sustainable local society.

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