

Aiming for Harmony between Use and Conservation:
“Living in Harmony with Nature” is Becoming an International Standard^a

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The 11th of the 20 targets of the 2010-20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets set a numerical target of 17% (10% for marine areas) of nature reserves and "other effective community-based measures (OECMs)" (in total). The current target is 30% of protected areas and OECMs on land and sea, respectively, by 2030 (30 by 30), a term that emerged from the Aichi Targets. At that time the abbreviation “OECM” was not specifically mentioned in the Aichi Targets. There was another definition of "other effective means" separate from legal protected areas (International Union for Nature Conservation Union (IUCN) Guidelines for the Application of Protected Area Management Categories 2008^b). It is now defined as effective measures other than protected areas (CBD/COP14 2018^c). Namely, OECMs are not protected areas. The definition of a protected area is established in the IUCN Guidelines (2008) and includes areas for protection and sustainable use as well as strictly protected areas.



Fig. Image for OECM by the Ministry of the Environment, Japan^d

When Shiretoko was registered as a World Natural Heritage site in 2005, an issue arose

^a Translation from Matsuda (2022, in press), Published in Ronza, Asahi Shimbun (in Japanese)

^b <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/pag-021.pdf>

^c <https://www.env.go.jp/press/105646.html> (in Japanese)

^d <https://www.env.go.jp/content/000061234.pdf> (in Japanese)

because the waters off the coast of the peninsula were fishing grounds for set-net fishing and coastal fishing. Moreover, the government promised the local fishing cooperatives that it would not tighten legal restrictions because of the World Heritage registration. Nevertheless, the fisheries cooperative association was recognized for expanding the voluntary seasonal fishing-ban zone for walleye pollock, and the site was successfully inscribed. This can be said to be an understanding of the fishermen's efforts, other than legal regulations, to make fishing their main objective.

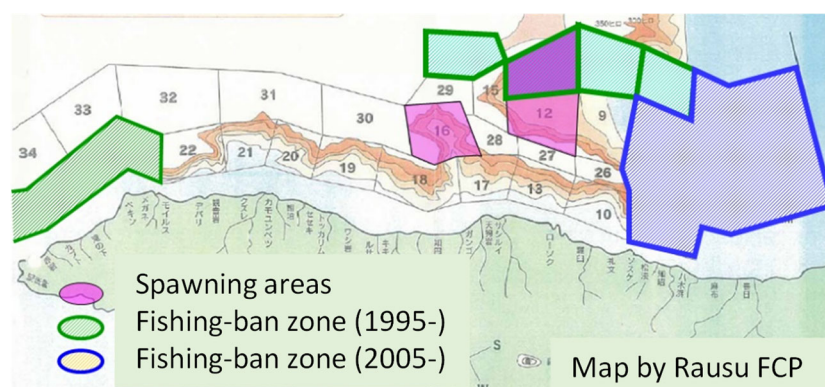


Fig. Map of fishing ground (cells with numbers), spawning areas, and seasonal fishing-ban zones for walleye pollock along Shiretoko Peninsula (Makino et al. 2009^e).

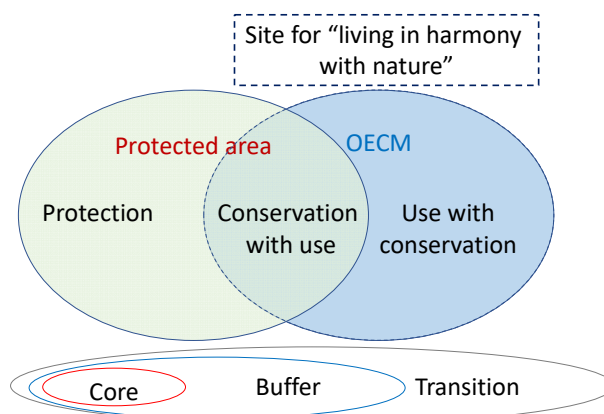


Fig. Idea on the relationship between protected area and OECM (Matsuda, unpublished)

In my personal view, I would like to organize these as (1) "protected areas that are not used," (2) "protected areas that seek to harmonize protection and use," and (3) "OECMs that seek to harmonize use and protection. In other words, it is easy to understand that (3) is regarded

^e DOI: [10.1016/j.marpol.2008.05.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2008.05.013)

as an area whose main purpose is utilization rather than protection (Jonas and Dudley 2017^f). The Ministry of the Environment is establishing a certification system^g for "Sites for Living in Harmony with Nature" (tentative name), including those falling under (2) and (3). The expression "Forestry Operations that Take Biodiversity into Consideration" has been used in the laws and regulations of other ministries and agencies. This could also be categorized as OECM. In the case of Shiretoko, the above-mentioned fishing-ban zones are outside of national parks and World Heritage site, and should be regarded as OECMs if the parties concerned apply for them within the scope of joint fishing rights.

However, if biodiversity considerations are not beneficial to the main objective of OECM, for example, in the case of agricultural land, if nature conservation considerations reduce agricultural productivity, then the spread of nature symbiosis sites will not be promoted. What kind of synergistic effects are possible? If there is a synergistic effect, then the government would have given consideration to biodiversity conservation in order to improve agricultural productivity without the policy guidance described above.

The Basic Act on Biodiversity clearly states that consideration for biodiversity should be encouraged in various human activities. Environmental considerations are now required in related legal systems.

However, various certifications and ratings are always accompanied by deceptions. In addition to whether they are genuine or fake, I would divide them into three categories. First, there are cases where (1) certification is obtained when there is no actual situation to obtain certification. Perhaps there is some benefit to the registrant itself, such as a company, by gaining a good reputation by obtaining certification. This is called greenwashing, which is so-called hypocrisy. This should be eliminated for the certification system. (2) There are cases where there is an actual certification, but it does not lead to a direct economic benefit for the registrant. This is welcome. It could be positioned as similar to other charitable activities for the registrant. Indirectly, it could benefit the registrant. So-called CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities belong to this category. (3) There is the case where there is a positive synergy between the main objective and environmental considerations, where the activity has a clear benefit to the registrant's main objective as well as the actual situation of obtaining certification. This can be referred to so-called "creating shared value (CSV)". In recent years, the term "co-creation" has also been used. The collection of a wide range of examples (3) will lead to the mainstreaming of biodiversity and other environmental considerations more

^f <https://www.iccaconsortium.org/index.php/2017/10/25/a-brief-introduction-to-other-effective-area-based-conservation-measures/>

^g <https://www.env.go.jp/press/111067.html> (in Japanese)

strongly than CSR.

For example, a shift from overexploitation of resources to sustainable use would benefit users in the long run. If it is a non-consumptive use, such as tourism resources or regulating services, where use does not reduce capital, it would be in the interest of the users to use the land permanently by using it carefully. Water source forests, which nurture natural water in the Minami Alps and other regions of Japan, are prime candidates for OECM^h. Protecting the nature of the source forests will ensure the long-lasting availability of high-quality mineral water, and registering the forests will add brand value to the water.



Fig. Rooftop green space of the MSIG building as a candidate of OECM.



Fig. Kokubunji Clifflineⁱ as a candidate of OECM

The driving force behind (3) is the selection of products or companies by consumers and investors. If consumers choose nature-friendly production, producers will change. Even if consumers themselves do not make the decision, their choice of products through certification programs will be a force for environmental friendliness. Investor choice is also a major factor: there is a system called ESG investment, in which environmental, social, and corporate governance considerations are evaluated and investors decide their investment actions based on these considerations.

^h <https://www.suntory.co.jp/company/csr/activity/environment/eco/forest/>

ⁱ <https://www.city.setagaya.lg.jp/mokuji/sumai/010/003/001/d00004905.html>

It is important to note that consideration of nature is not the only criterion. Environmental considerations are also part of a wide variety of evaluation criteria, including community relations, employee working environment and safety standards, quality control, and management systems. This is also consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, by establishing such goals, the way industrial and human activities should be conducted may shift from the pursuit of short-term, self-interested profits to the pursuit of long-term, social benefits.

Beyond CSR activities, increasing the number of initiatives with clear synergies between use and conservation is likely to be important for mainstreaming biodiversity in the future. To this end, it is necessary to know not only the contribution of OECMs to nature conservation, but also whether they provide tangible benefits to the main objectives of the registrants. Certification and ESG investment rating systems are powerful CSV promotion systems, but reliance on their criteria makes it difficult to create new innovations. It is also important to take new approaches that deviate from those certification standards.

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks can also be candidates for "Sites of Living in Harmony with Nature" or OECMs. Conversely, an area considered an OECM could be the basis for registration as a biosphere reserve or geopark.

Biosphere reserves are designated under UNESCO's "Man and the Biosphere" programme, which aims to achieve both nature conservation and a sustainable society. They consist of a core area, which is a strictly protected area with legal basis, a buffer area around the core area, and a transition area for sustainable use. By definition, core area is a protected area with legal basis. Buffer areas are sometimes included in protected areas, but may be understood in some places as OECMs. Transition areas are possibly candidates for protected areas or OECMs, *i.e.* "Site of Living in Harmony with Nature" under the Ministry of the Environment.

Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks, along with Natural World Heritage sites, are designated by UNESCO. However, Biosphere reserves and geoparks are not necessarily protected areas in their entirety. Biosphere reserves and geoparks are not mere certification systems, but rather emphasize networking and mutual learning among designated sites. In other words, they encourage ingenuity in new nature conservation and sustainable development. It is not worth it just to be designated. There is value in sharing the value of our efforts through the network and spreading it to other areas. Biosphere reserves are not an institution for the protection of core areas, but for the sustainable communities brought about by transition areas. A Past UNESCO Director General Bokova said, "World Heritage sites are institutions that preserve values; biosphere reserves are institutions that create values."

It can be said that climate change has been further mainstreamed by the emphasis on adaptation measures in addition to mitigation measures. While mitigation measures involve a

relatively limited number of stakeholders, adaptation measures put all parties adversely affected by climate change in the lead role.

Similarly, I believe that biodiversity can be mainstreamed by broadly including areas where protection is not the main objective. Taking biodiversity into account is a clue to new sustainable uses. To this end, it is necessary to identify not only the contribution of the OECM to conservation, but also the synergies between the main objectives of the OECM sites and conservation.

In my opinion, biodiversity initiatives will not be mainstreamed if they are aimed at nature conservation, and will remain the exclusive preserve of environmental organizations and their supporters; if OECMs are perceived as equivalent to protected areas, nature reserve initiatives will not spread. Shared value creation for sustainable development is the key to mainstreaming biodiversity. When promoting nature-friendly sites, we should be careful to distinguish between CSR and the equivalent of CSV in companies. Both are welcome, but should not be confused.

The term "living in harmony with nature" has been widely used with the term "SATOYAMA" since the 2010 Nagoya Meeting of the Conference of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD/COP10). The original Japanese term is "symbiosis/mutualism with nature", which differs from the English expression "Living in Harmony with Nature". I think this Japanese term is undesirable because it turns away from the fact that humans are placing a burden on nature. People utilize or exploit natural resources, are not symbionts, and we are aiming for "sustainable parasitism/exploitation". However, I have no objection to the term in English. And Westerners, who have until now viewed nature as something that rather excludes humans, are also beginning to use it more and more. For example, "The Economics of Biodiversity" (Dasgupta Report, 2021^j) states that "Each of these senses [values of natural capitals] is enriched when we recognise that we are embedded in Nature. To detach Nature from economic reasoning is to imply that we consider ourselves to be external to Nature." UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme has included humans in the biosphere since its inception in 1971, but until now it has not been a common perception. In other words, the OECM movement is accompanied by a shift from a fundamentally Christian view of nature for Westerners. This is also true of the distance between humans and wildlife. We are becoming a society that cannot be based solely on the idea of endangering wildlife or protecting them from it.

[Translated with DeepL](#) with modification

^j <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>