

University students from eight Asian nations to learn about biodiversity through fieldwork

6th “Asian Students Environment Platform (ASEP)” to be held in Japan

The AEON Environmental Foundation (Takuya Okada, Chairman) will be holding the 6th “Asian Students Environment Platform (ASEP)” in Japan for six days from Tuesday, August 1st.

The Foundation works to develop human resources that are active with a global perspective in environmental fields, and considers this to be an important area of business activity. There is one additional university from one country joins the forum in every year, which started in 2012. This year, Chulalongkorn University in Thailand will join the forum, and 64 university students from eight universities representing eight countries will participate in fieldwork in disaster-affected areas in Tohoku under the theme of “Biodiversity and Regeneration.”

In Watari-cho, Miyagi Prefecture, where the Foundation has been conducting tree planting activities since last year to restore the protective coastal forests, participants will plant trees with high school and university students who were affected by the earthquake. In addition, they will learn about the preservation and restoration of historical materials and disaster management at the International Research Institute of Disaster Science at Tohoku University. Furthermore, participants will visit one of the next-generation ecologically-conscious “Smart AEON” stores” (AEON Mall Makuhari Shintoshin) involved in initiatives including energy and electricity conservation, disaster prevention efforts in collaboration with local communities, and biodiversity. During this period, the concept of “Biodiversity and Regeneration” will be advocated through fieldwork tackling the environmental and ecosystem-related issues in disaster-affected areas as well as furthering understanding of disaster prevention and post-disaster regeneration of these areas.

The Foundation continues to proactively undertake a variety of initiatives to deliver beautiful nature which is full of life for the next generation through environmental education and other environmental conservation initiatives.

Details

1. Dates: Tuesday, August 1 – Sunday, August 6
2. Location: Tokyo, Miyagi Prefecture, Chiba Prefecture
3. Organizer: AEON Environmental Foundation
4. With Assistance from: Waseda University and the Kanda University of International Studies
5. Participating Universities (In the alphabetical order for country): Royal University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Tsinghua University (China), University of Indonesia (Indonesia), Waseda University (Japan), Korea University (Korea), University of Malaya (Malaysia), Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), Vietnam National University, Hanoi (Vietnam)
6. Sponsors: Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan Committee for United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, International Research Institute of Disaster Science at Tohoku University, Research Institute of Environmental Science at Tohoku University
Mainichi Newspapers Co., Ltd., China Youth Daily,
The Chosun Ilbo, Tuoi Tre News

7. Participants (scheduled)

Opening Ceremony:

H.E. Chea Kimtha, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Japan
Kaoru Kamata, President, Waseda University
Takuya Okada, Chairman, AEON Environmental Foundation
Motoya Okada, President and Representative Executive Officer Director and Group CEO, AEON Co., Ltd.

Closing Ceremony:

Shuji Hashimoto, Vice President, Waseda University
Naoki Hayashi, Executive Director, AEON Environmental Foundation
Hiroshi Yokoo, Chairman of the Board, AEON Co., Ltd.

8. Main Program:

Tuesday, August 1	Visit to the next-generation ecostore "Smart AEON" (AEON Mall Makuhari Shintoshin)
Wednesday, August 2	Opening ceremony (Waseda University Okuma Auditorium)
Thursday, August 3	Oyster farm visit (Minamisanriku-cho), Morinogakko visit (Higashimatsuyama-shi)
Friday, August 4	Tree planting activities (Watari-cho), fieldwork with International Research Institute of Disaster Science at Tohoku University, lectures by specialists (Sendai-shi)
Saturday, August 5	Sessions on Japanese traditions and culture
Sunday, August 6	Presentation of results and closing ceremony (Kanda University of International Studies)

Reference

ASEP Activities from 2012 to 2016



ASEP 2012 (Japan)
Theme: "Changing the Environment through Culture"
60 participants from China, Japan, and South Korea



ASEP 2013 (South Korea)
Theme: "The Environment and Humans"
79 participants from China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam



ASEP 2014 (China)
Theme: "Water and Humans"
80 participants from China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Vietnam



ASEP 2015 (Vietnam)
Theme: "Biodiversity and Humans"
72 participants from Cambodia, China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Vietnam



ASEP 2016 (Japan)
Theme: "Biodiversity and Wisdom"
84 participants from Cambodia, China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia

<AEON's initiatives in the Tohoku region>

[AEON Environmental Foundation]

■ Tree planting

▪ Tree planting along Shimohama Beach, Akita Prefecture (2005-2009)

The pine forests in the Sea of Japan coastal areas in Akita Prefecture were affected by acid rain and pine-eating insects and the majority of them stood dying.

In order to restore trees that prevent beach and coastal erosion, we planted 42,250 trees with 4,300 volunteers over a period of five years. The tree planting session in 2007 was attended by Dr. Wangari Maathai, a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and the former Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in Kenya. She also spoke at the 15th anniversary ceremony of the Foundation.



Tree planting in Watari-cho, Miyagi Prefecture in 2016

▪ Tree planting in Nanyo-shi, Yamagata Prefecture (2010-2012)

Tree planting sessions were held for three years from 2010 to restore the forests that were affected by pine-eating insects and other pests. We planted 5,100 trees with 1,000 volunteers.

▪ Tree planting in Ishinomaki-shi, Miyagi Prefecture (2012)

We planted trees with 1,600 volunteers at Kamikama Fureai Park, which was affected by the tsunami in the Great East Japan Earthquake. We planted 15,000 seedlings of trees native to the area.

▪ Tree planting in Watari-cho, Miyagi Prefecture (2016)

We are supporting the Minna no Morizukuri: Miyagi Coastal Forest Restoration Project, which is being promoted by Miyagi Prefecture for the restoration of protective coastal forests that were washed away by the tsunami in the Great East Japan Earthquake, and have implemented a 3-year plan. Tree planting was held for the first time last year, and 1,100 volunteers planted 13,000 trees and wild cherry trees harvested and grown in the same town since the disaster.

■ Recognition and awards

▪ The Japan Awards for Biodiversity (domestic)

The Japan Awards for Biodiversity were established in 2009 to “promote the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.” Outstanding efforts in Japan are recognized and honored every other year.

<<Award recipients in Miyagi Prefecture>>

- Japanese Association for Wild Geese Protection (2011 Grand Prix)
- Kumagai Master Thatchers Co., Ltd. (2011 Award for Excellence)
- NPO Tanbo (2013 Grand Prix)
- Society for Nature Technology (2013 Award for Excellence)
- Kesenuma City Ohya Junior High School (2015 Award for Excellence)



Kesenuma City Ohya Junior High School

■ Environmental Activities Grants

The Foundation provides grants to organizations working to promote the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

* Period of grants are stated in brackets

<<Organizations in Tohoku region receiving our grants>>

- Japanese Association for Wild Geese Protection (1997-1998)
- School without school buildings (1998)
- The Japanese Society for Odonatology Committee for Protection of Nature, *Sympetrum maculatum* Section (2001)
- Izunuma and Uchinuma Loach and Catfish Research Group (2005-2016)
- Kitakata Firefly Dream Creation Group (2006-2007)
- Kuranosata Kitakata Nakefu Group (2006-2007)
- Mt. Hakaseyama Beech Forest Protection Group (2008)
- NPO Grove of the Village Shrine Project (2012-2016)
- NPO Environmental Restoration and Conservation Agency (2013-2015)
- NPO Association for Environmental Improvement (2013-2015)
- NPO IGES-Japanese Center for International Studies in Ecology (2014-2016)
- NPO Watari Green Belt Project (2015)
- NPO Moribito Project Committee (2016-2016)
- NPO Kokoronomori (2016)
- NPO Riasunomori Support Group (2016)
- NPO Prefecture Resident Committee on Sparkling Lake Inawashiro (2016)

[AEON Environmental Foundation One-Percent Club]

■ Afan Woodland Disaster Recovery Project

We supported building a school that includes an environmental learning facility within the forest next to the school in Higashimatsushima-shi in collaboration with the C.W. Nicol Afan Woodland Trust.

■ Support for “Creation of Grove of the Village Shrine” on shrine grounds and company-owned land

We supported restoration of the “groves of the village shrine” on shrine grounds and company-owned land as disaster-prevention forests to protect nearby residents from disasters until FY2015. In Tohoku, 986 local people participated in planting a total of 16,433 trees at nine locations.



2013 Planting trees in Kensennuma Ikkejima Shrine in Miyagi Prefecture

[AEON Group Companies]

■ AEON's work on the restoration of Tohoku

Since March 2012, one year after the earthquake, AEON has been working to continuously support recovery and vitalization of agriculture, fishing, and farming in Tohoku with the slogan, "Making our wishes for recovery from the 3.11 disaster come true." In cooperation with producers in Tohoku, we have been working to increase the sale of products from the Tohoku region through product development using raw materials from Tohoku as well as holding Tohoku Fairs at Group stores in Japan and overseas. Since 2016, five years after the earthquake, the Group has been working on regional (hometown) revitalization under a new motto, "Nigiwai Tohoku - Join Hands and Foster the Power of Hometowns." In FY2016, we rolled out approximately 1,000 items including AEON brand "TOPVALU" products and products in conjunction with suppliers, and sales have reached 50 billion yen. We are aiming to achieve 2,000 products and 100 billion yen in sales by FY2018. AEON will continue to introduce attractive products from Tohoku, and the Tohoku region itself, and will continue to work together for the rebirth of Tohoku.

■ AEON - Joining Minds Project

AEON and Group staff members are working together as one on environmental and social activities in Tohoku in a wide variety of ways. Since 2012, both employees and management have been involved in the AEON Joining Minds Project that promotes volunteer activities to support the recovery. We aim to plant 300,000 trees along the affected coastal areas within ten years, and by the end of June 2017, we have planted 217,665 trees through initiatives such as the "AEON Tohoku Reconstruction Hometown Forest Program."



2017 1st Takadamatsubara Tree Planting Festival



2017 Tree planting festival for new green space for disaster prevention