

Reconstruction of Forestry

Toward a Business Model that Embodies a “Town Where Life Circulates”



▲ The beautiful cedar forests of Minamisanriku, managed by local landowners

Photo courtesy of Minamisanriku Tourism Association

Minamisanriku is also known for its forestry, producing high-quality cedar. When the tsunami destroyed the local sawmill, the forestry industry fell into a critical state. However, the forests—which successive generations have protected—remained unchanged from before the disaster. Moved by the vigor of these woods, forestry stakeholders came together and rose to the challenge. Their determination, they say, was rooted in the idea that “we must do our best in forestry in order to preserve the richness of the sea.”

In Minamisanriku, whose borders roughly overlap with the local watershed divide, the ocean, human habitat, and mountains are all interconnected. Oysters and other farmed marine products in the bay are nourished by the nutrients in water flowing from the mountains, and the cedar trees benefit from the water and minerals carried by sea fog drifting inland. In 2015, forestry stakeholders in the town worked in unison to obtain Japan's 35th—and Miyagi Prefecture's first—FSC international certification. Today, out of roughly 12,000 hectares of forest in the town, about 2,470 hectares are internationally certified. It is not only a livelihood designed to generate income; by fostering a forest that can support diverse living organisms, they aim to enhance the overall cycle of life—including that of the ocean. This ambitious effort continues to evolve.

Minamisanriku Cedar is known for its rapid growth, excellent strength, and subtly pinkish hue. Working together with local businesses in areas such as sawmilling, construction, and product manufacturing, they obtained CoC (Chain of Custody) certification. A system is now in place to process the internationally certified Minamisanriku Cedar into a range of products and distribute them widely.

The newly rebuilt Minamisanriku Town Hall Main Government Building and the Utatsu Branch use 100% FSC-certified cedar as their primary construction material. These facilities became the first public buildings in Japan to achieve FSC® Whole Project Certification.