

"Committee for Re-creating Healthy Forests in Japan" Second Proposal

Toward A Nation Living with Sustainable Forest and Renewable Energy

July 20th, 2011

"Committee for Re-creating Healthy Forests in Japan" started in July, 2008.

Our first proposal, "Do not rely on oil. Become a nation sustained by our forests and natural energy" was presented to the Japanese prime minister's cabinet on September 18, 2009, and influenced the Forestry Agency to create the "Forest and Forestry Revitalization Plan" ("Revitalization Plan") on December 30th of the same year.

Since then, we had been considering writing the next proposal which would have addressed missing views in the "Revitalization Plan" and also address some issues Japan will face in the next 30 years. These issues are "Population decline and aging society" and "Era of large diameter tree plantation". Then The Great East Japan Earthquake struck Japan on March 11. This event became a catalyst for us to take action to create a second proposal which includes a proposal for recovery and reconstruction from the earthquake and tsunami.

Members of the committee

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【 Introduction 】

In a mountainous district in one prefecture, there is a village of 2,000 people. The forest coverage of the village is 97 percent. It was formerly a village of 9,000 people and most worked in the forestry industry.

The village is now aged and under-populated. Majority of the medical expenses spent in this prefecture come from this small village. In 1975 and again in 1976, the village was hit by floods and the area was declared as a violently damaged area. As many as 30 construction companies came to restore the village and 10 billion yen was spent in four years. Two rivers were completely covered by concrete on both riverbanks and bottoms. Afterwards, six construction companies remained there.

At that time, many forestry workers left the village to earn a living or were employed by construction companies and many left the village permanently. Around this time was the beginning of high economic growth period. It was the end of the time of high pricing of lumber when lumbers could be sold at "seller's market price" and the price of lumber never went up again. The housing industry in Japan created a system to import cheaper foreign lumber. All the domestic forestry workers lost their jobs and forced to work in the construction industry.

This above mentioned experience (centered around forestry and construction) which this "*Satoyama*" (community forests in rural areas) went through was also experienced by Japan from the 1950's to around 1973 when Japanese high-growth period had said to be ended. The Japanese forestry experienced the extreme slump for about 40 years from the 1960's to around 2000. And the debt of the national forest of the Forestry Agency, that had once adopted an "Independent accounting system" during its profitable times, swelled to 2.8 trillion yen.

However, the percentage of forest in Japan remains as high as 67 percent partly due to the loss of the forest industry. The author of a book "Collapse", Jared Mason Diamond, has said in his book that "Japan had succeeded in the management of the forest." But have the Japanese really "Succeeded in the management" as he has stated?

"The reason for the deficit of the Japanese forestry is that at that time, forests were too early to cut down and to sell. We need to understand this well. Now that forests in Japan are fully developed, we should set up a "social system" that can bring down a large amount of lumber from the mountain by paving roads and engaging in periodic thinning of the forest." This was pointed out in 2003 by "Green Plan for the 21st

century” written by Japan Association of Corporate Executives (KEIZAI DOYUKAI). Around the same time, the Forestry Agency was granted the full amount of the budget for "New Wood Products Distribution and Processing Project" and "New Wood Production Project" from the Ministry of Finance.

"Hereafter, the Japanese forestry is not here to reclaim but rather to begin a new era of modern forestry in Japan for the first time." the author of the “Green Plan” said.

12 members (including the author of the “Green Plan”) of "Committee for Re-creating Healthy Forests in Japan" presented our first proposal, “Do not rely on oil. Become a nation sustained by our forests and natural energy”, to the new DPJ government on September 18, 2009, and influenced the Forestry Agency to create “Forest and Forestry Revitalization Plan” on December 30 of the same year. Five people from our committee became members of the “five committees” respectively organized to carry out the "Revitalization Plan”.

However, we do not completely agree with the agenda having been discussed in the "five committees" or the “Revitalization Plan” itself. Rather we are disappointed because what we had proposed, "Reviewing forestry policies from the beginning" was not realized at that time.

Therefore, we thought that it was necessary to gather public opinion to think seriously about the Japanese forestry in order to prepare for the time of "Population decrease and aging society" as well as "Era of large diameter tree plantation" coming in 30 years at the latest.

On March 11, 2011, an unprecedented massive earthquake of magnitude 9 and subsequently the strong tsunami hit the Sanriku area. Our committee was at a loss for words for a while.

However, people all over the world encouraged us by praising the Japanese “virtue” of getting together and support each other. In the wake of the accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, Germany and Italy made plans to shut down their nuclear power plants.

We titled the first proposal, “Do not rely on Oil. Become a nation sustained by our forests and natural energy.”

Japanese people’s stance on nuclear power plants was reflected in this title. While we pointed out the over-reliance on oil which is partly produced by the countries with political instability, we did not really question the overreliance on nuclear energy. It is our self-compromise. Originally, nuclear power plant was developed by modern people to replace oil. Relying on nuclear power while knowing its risks seems almost unethical. It

also seems wrong if we do not do our best in lowering the cost of renewable natural energy and in spreading it out. We hope that the people of Japan will share in reflecting on views of our committee.

Let us think for a moment. Japan was the first country in the world to be attacked by an atomic bomb, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki saddened the entire nation. Just as in Hiroshima, the destruction from the tsunami was instantaneous. Moreover, updates of two puncture damages in the nuclear power plant in Fukushima have been broadcasted daily to people all over the world.

Many may be asking, "Why would a country with many volcanoes and is often called the "land of earthquakes" possess such large numbers of nuclear power plants?" Up till now, Japanese citizen had been taught that nuclear power plants are safe and that the cost of natural energy is high. We almost gave up on seeking natural energies as an alternative. However, after the accident, we learned that what we had been taught were lies that should not be overlooked.

Forest in Japan is our natural resource held by us. The coverage rate is the third in the world. We should make the best use of 10 million hectares of fully developed replanted forest in Japan and to make efforts to become a "Natural energy country". Jared Diamond wrote that "Japan had succeeded in the management of the forest" but we disagree with it because we think that it was not success, but just luck."

Let us think how best to use forests. And give roles to planted forests in the entire forests, including forests (natural forest and naturally regenerated forest) other than the planted forest, which accounts for 60 percent of the area of all forests.

Another issue is the problem of "Forests" and "Workers", symbolized in the story of the village of 2000 people mentioned before. Currently, the prefecture is planning to construct a soil-saving dam directly above the center of the village. Residents are frightened when they think of a possibility of flooding because of this dam. The village is known as a rainy area in the prefecture. Why does such a plan move ahead regardless of concerns from the residents? It is because of the fact that if this plan is not implemented, all village residents who are employed by construction companies will lose their jobs. Last year, there were no construction work in the village and workers had to resort to cleaning roadside ditches and removing weeds along the rivers.

Three years ago, one construction company in this village tried to engage in a forestry business such as creating work roads in the mountain by getting cooperation of small forest owners. But the company gave up before long.

At the same time, a timber company in the same village started to engage building work roads and bringing down timber from the mountains as its new business. During its recruitment process, the company was surprised that unexpectedly so many college graduates from all over Japan showed their interest and applied to the jobs. The business is doing all right now. If you put your mind to do something, you can do it.

This timber company is asking a lumber company and five construction companies in the same river valley to work together to cut trees and make our production from lumbers to fight against major companies which only exploit our forest by taking trees away from the forest. At the beginning we will help to organize small forest owners and to build work roads.

Japan should "recreate social structure" by starting in the forestry industry all over the country.

Our "Committee for Re-creating Healthy Forests in Japan" created a second proposal, "How Japan can become a nation being sustained by our forest and natural resources."

A seismologist who is a member of our committee has already pointed out that "Japan's entry into 500 years of active fault activity period" for several years. The chairman of our committee also showed his concerns. He suspects that after Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, Japanese might have lost their minds and finally rushed into war. And he worries of the same kind of effect of the great earthquake which was as large as the Great Kanto Earthquake on the present society where there are already so many people with the depression." And he proposed to promote "Present Age Recite (the system of alternate attendance by a daimyo in Edo)". The purpose is to give people in urban area chances to obtain healthy body and mind by taking physical exercise in the countryside as well as places to escape at the time of disaster.

The disaster happened much earlier than the committee expected. Now we really regret for that our recommendation was not in time for the crisis.

Now seems to be the chance for the Japanese people to think about a grand design of the forest, energy, and of the entire nation.

Our hope is that this proposal will be useful to the Japanese and also for the people around the world who are also seeking "Natural energy".

【Proposal】

"How Japan can become a nation being sustained by forest and natural resources."

I. The year 2011 -- the UN "International Year of Forests" let us start to create " integrated forest plan" in Japan, We propose to set up a Prime Minister's advisory panel on renewable energy and forest.

Japan can be called 'green islands' whose 67% land is covered with forests. The coverage rate is the third in the world. But Japan could not have utilized this advantage fully because the policies taken by the Forest Agency were not appropriate after the World War II.

In recent years, it is pointed out that replanted trees have grown up enough to cut and the Agency itself was on the way of developing the policies on forests. There was the change of the government and the new government made the Forest and Forestry Revitalization Plan.

But since the "Revitalization Plan" was created in a hurry, thorough review of forest policies did not taken place.

However in about 30 years, Japan will become an aging society with less population and the time when replanted trees will grow big enough. Because of the disastrous earthquake on March 11th and the accident at the nuclear power plant, the Japanese are given an opportunity to think ways of obtaining energy from forests and managing forests in Japan.

Therefore, we propose once again to set up an "Advisory panel" under the prime minister to think about the issues of forests in Japan. This can be realized without a new budget or structure. It is just to re-arrange the group which was created in February, 2007, "the National promotion conference for creating beautiful forest" (134 sponsor persons, affiliated bodies and 99 corporate groups). And out of this group, we can create small number of working groups comprised of specialists.

More specialists on forestry, administration, forest association, forestry business body, timber processing, construction, and forest owner should be in the conference to make its structure stronger. Working groups should be comprised of a small number of specialists who have been involved in the reform of the Forestry Agency in recent years.

We would like to recommend the Prime Minister to create this mechanism as soon as possible to take up the recommended issues in this proposal more seriously and to pave the concerns of the world away.

II. Japanese citizens must be attentive regarding forestry in Japan.

Although there were some missing aspects, the new Plan played an important role in fulfilling our responsibilities in making the best use of the natural resource and in continuing the policy of expanding replanted forest areas after the war. But the plan aimed only to produce timber production from replanted trees.

However, in order to demonstrate multiple functions of forests, it is important to discuss the role of planted forests as a whole including other forests (natural forest and naturally regenerated forest) which accounts for 60 percent of the Japanese forest.

In a draft of "Forest and Forestry Basis Plan" which responds to the "Forest and Forestry Revitalization Plan", a "Zoning of the forest" is presented. But we are concerned that in the plan, the need of artificial care is too much emphasized.

Until 50 years ago, Japan was populous and there was a lumber shortage. But the population is expected to shrink to a half in the next 50 years and the percentage of elderly is expected to double. Therefore, arrangement of forests, management and operations should be done with the utmost efficiency and cost consciousness.

Thus, appropriate arrangement of the forests is very important, 1. natural forests that do not need to be touched, 2. planted forests where concentrated operation should be done, 3. naturally regenerated forests in between. We should change the current method of the Forestry Agency having the sole decision power as soon as possible.

III. The management of the national forest should be drastically changed. In order to carry out deficit reduction, the forestry should immediately switch to "General accounting system". Also, the policy in which the Forestry Agency has the sole decision making power in the management and operation should be stopped.

Our national forests cover 7.6 million hectares which account for about 30 percent of the entire forest areas on the Japanese islands. They exist in all prefectures and in almost half of municipalities in Japan. In other words, the national forest is the largest forest owner and has an extremely important influence on the privately owned forests. In particular, national forests occupy all upstream parts of river valleys nationwide. Therefore, coordination with municipality is essential in order to pursue a vision of "Forest-making" in any valley.

However in reality, there is a huge rift between the national forest and privately

owned forest and also between the national forest and valley residents. The gap seems to be getting worse every year.

Business contraction in national forest, Forest Administration Bureau's reorganization and a drastic decrease in the numbers of field engineers are some "unethical practices" that have been going on without being questioned up till now. And these are only aimed for financial gains.

National forest and the privately owned forest should work together regarding forest arrangements. And national forest should value more of the public interest and put more weight in the protection and the maintenance of the natural forest.

An incentive program in which the privately owned forest with the intension to preserve natural forest for environmental preservation should be put in place. It is sure to be thought of as one of "the cleverest use of tax money". This has a vision of an ideal society.

Now is the time to stop procrastinating and set up a venue to gather wisdom to tackle the "National forest problem".

IV. Let's establish as soon as possible techniques for allowing us to use "Energy from forest"

After the accident at the nuclear power plant due to the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Japanese have been given an opportunity and a mission to reconsider dependence on dangerous nuclear power plants and limited fossil fuel.

Whether Japan can choose a "wise usage" now is attracting world attention. And the committee which wrote the first proposal, "Do not rely on oil. Become a nation sustained by forests and natural energy" feel we have a responsibility to voice our recommendations.

Mr. Hiroshi Kubota, the author of "Biomass energy of the fantasy" has stated in his book as follows:

"Even lumber which is thought to exist abundantly as natural resource, its capacity to be utilized as energy resource is too little, compared to the fossil fuel that supports our present civilization life. This is true not only in this country but also for the entire earth.

Wood log is supporting human life on the earth. Industrial materials use half the total production of the wood log with the fuel material (energy utilization). It is presumed that people in the developing countries, which occupy 1/4 of the world population, rely mainly on biomass as the energy resource and it does not appear on the statistics. In the future as the demands of woods for industrial use in those

developing countries increase, the supply of woods for their daily use could be shortened.

Although it is called "renewable", the use of forestry biomass should be "local production for local consumption" in principle, since the production for each unit area is extremely small compared with that of the fossil fuel.

There is no other country except Japan, where 80 percent of its consumption is from imported wood and payment is done in foreign currency, while having forests where the whole quantity of the lumber demand can be covered.

On the other hand, in the forest where lumber is not produced, "Round-down thinning" is done with the excuse to maintain the role of regional environmental preservation of the forest (water soil maintenance), or to improve the effect of absorption of CO2 for the purpose of global warming prevention. Our tax is thrown away to the woods.

Under the above-mentioned circumstances, thinking about the import of wood as energy resource in addition to timber should be nothing but lack of common sense. But in reality, wood for the fuel is imported in order to be mixed with coal for business electric power, while aiming at "Low carbon society".

Why do these ridiculous things happen?

It is because forestry in Japan, which originally accomplished "Lumber production", has abandoned its role.

We want to propose as follows, with the advice of 83-year-old Kubota-san deep in our minds.

1. Let's have "Guidelines" for "Supply of energy that won't break the forest".

In Japan, we have plenty source of "Natural energies" including forest, solar, water, wind, geothermal, and tidal.

The accident at the nuclear power plant was an opportunity for Japanese to think of the best way to "use them wisely".

However, a lot of intellects all over the world have uneasiness to let Japanese to use "Forest" as an energy source.

In fact, there are two recent incidents which might justify those concerns. The first incident happened when the "New Wood Production Project" was introduced. The system was introduced to advance periodic thinning but one major house builder did clear-cutting on a certain area. The second incident was that after renewable energy's feed in tariff system was introduced in Japan, electric power companies started buying wood pellets from foreign countries as source of fuel.

In order to stop these thoughtless behaviors, we think more about the "Forest" to seek enriched lives by co-living with it. Therefore, we need to set up a new guideline to use forest as a source of energy.

Guideline (1) Let's decide to use energy in the system of "Planted forest thinning".

Because the unit price of biomass material is low, if we may merely try to extract the biomass energy from wood then it would abandon the environmental preservation and durability by committing "Clear-cutting in large area".

Therefore, the basis of biomass production should be done by reasonable sorting from wood cut in the process of periodic thinning while the entire operation of the forest is aiming chiefly for the production of large diameter woods in the planted forests.

It should be included in the cost management in the "Consolidating operation system" that road network in forest will be properly maintained.

Guideline (2) Let's use it as energy while discovering the merit of "*Satoyama*" (community forests in rural areas).

Another way of the biomass production is for the daily use of fuel material of people who live in the region. This is family owned and will not require strict cost control.

The Guideline can be something like searching for a vision of an ideal new life in their mountainous village while focusing on reproduction of coppice forest of "*Satoyama*". It can also be standing firm against clear-cutting in large areas by rouge outside capitalists.

The fuel material of "*Satoyama*" should be secondary material of broad leave trees of naturally regenerated forest. We should keep in mind that clear-cutting of those trees will cause the collapse of regional communities.

2. Proposal of "Regional heat supply system" is to be used to revive Tohoku

In the Tohoku region, groups of factories that were producing 30 percent of the plywood of our country were struck by the tsunami.

These factories had been using wood biomass energy sufficiently even before the disaster struck and even the steam was used as an energy resource. Replacing these factories will require more energy and materials, exceeding that which is needed just to manufacture plywood.

After the accident at the nuclear power plant, plan to makes this area "Wood

biomass town" arose mainly by the Forestry Agency. It is good that the budget for this research has been attained. But there are some aspects which should be noted.

- It is necessary to consider that if we design a system based on the existence of debris of the stricken area, there is a risk of becoming economically unsustainable when debris is all used up.

- Let's consider establishing a "Regional heat supply company" with concerted effort of the fishery cooperative, agricultural cooperative, and the forestry business body to reconstruct plywood factory in the disaster stricken area. The company can hire and help out fishermen who have lost their ships.

To be specific, we should begin with putting work roads in national forests as soon as possible in order to bring down more materials from the mountain than the plywood company needs. Then we will change the warming system of farmer's green house by using wood chip boilers. And in the future, air conditioning for factories and homes and ice machines for fishery companies will be powered by "Wood energy" (creating freezing temperature is not possible yet). Distributing "Thermal energy (cold air is included)" in itself can be a business.

There are many precedents in Europe.

Tohoku forest Administration Bureau has management area of 1.65 million hectares which is the second largest area among national forests. If the model of using "Energy of the forest" is established here as a rebound from the earthquake, people in the world will feel more comfortable in observing Japan's use of "Wood".

We want to request the Forestry Agency to be open-minded and not be afraid to listen to some not-so-friendly opinions of "strongly opinionated people".

V. Let's create standards by answering "What kind of forest is an ideal forest?" and share these with the people of Japan so that various educational system can be established to help create ideal forests in Japan.

1. One cycle of a forest ecosystem is 800 to 1,000 years. From the standpoint of a forest, safety of a forest and "*Satoyama*" should be maintained so that it will be able to endure natural disasters which could occur once 1,000 to 2,000 years. But forests in Japan, especially many of planted forests, are very unhealthy due to insufficient implementation of density management. One of the factors responsible for this problem is that we have not had a technical guideline for creating healthy planted forests in Japan.

The model of a healthy cryptomeria and Japanese cypress forest exists in the natural forest of cryptomeria and Japanese cypress. They are mixed forest where

broad leaved trees live with conifers. Some of them are multi-storied forests where the upper layer of conifer lives together with the middle and lower layers of broad leaved trees. Changing Japanese forests by following an example above will be needed in order to have healthy planted forests.

This improvement has already been implemented in the Japanese cypress planted divine forest which the Ise Jingu Shrine manages. Systematizing this method as a technology and for the nation to put this into use can lead to a shortcut to making healthy planted forests. Therefore, in the planted forest on its way to maturity, expanding mechanisms such as selective cutting or thinning to avoid clear-cutting as much as possible are necessary to make healthy planted forests.

Good quality wood production regions such as Yoshino forestry (the oldest planted forest in the world and has its own original technique) have already established 'planted forest management techniques'. Other regions should also start management of planted forests in which timber production function and environmental preservation function coexist in order to create healthy planted forest soon.

Planted forests in which timber production and environmental preservation functions coexist may have stronger resistance to damages from the wind, snow and drought. They may also have more flexibility in the cutting cycle and can produce cryptomeria and Japanese cypress in accordance with the demand. Needless to say, "Erosion control and flood control" of the "*Satoyama*" can be guaranteed by this.

After World War II, the main purpose of the Japanese forestry was to supply wood materials for the reconstruction. Therefore the industry pushed forth in cutting for lumber and planting trees. Now we need to build up the forest industry economically sustained by growing trees and taking care of forest to develop healthy forest in Japan for the reconstruction of social structure from now on. It is necessary to consider direct payments for the maintenance, conservation, conservation of biodiversity, and scenic preservation of woodland ecosystems in order to manage forests over many years. This stance of direct payment will sure contribute to promoting private forestry.

2. Establishment of educational system

In order to face our nation's "Population decline and aging society" and "Era of large diameter tree plantation", the following need to be incorporated into our educational system.

(1) Reviewing the current "Forrester" and "Planner" educations. Creation of

- various technical schools such as a school for "forest road building"
- (2) Formation of forestry and conservation university
 - (3) Compulsory education of forestry from an early age
 - (4) Emphasis on ecology in the compulsory science education and emphasis on primary industry in the compulsory social studies education

VI. Based on the experience of the recent earthquake, let us think about what forests can do as part of the country's disaster prevention plan.

"Forest making" will create jobs as part of the reconstruction plan for the "Nation of Forest". Let's generate employment for the fishermen in Tohoku.

Now is the time to initiate "Afforestation activity by sea fishermen" (same activity was started in the 1980's from fishermen in Hokkaido.) as public works for the fishermen in this country.

- (1) The Forestry Agency should have a "Coastal reforestation plan". By using the concept of "Protective forest (which also encourages delicate coastal ecosystems for fisheries.)", let woods used for coastal scenery be a protection against the tide while maintaining the natural beauty of the coast.
- (2) Establish disaster prevention forests (maritime forest) that exceed one kilometer in the coastal areas.
- (3) "Coast reforestation plan" can be succeeded to "*Satoyama*", and "Corridor in the forest" connected from the sea to the hometown and to the forest in line.

VII. Let's think about exporting

The "Revitalization Plan" lacks vision of forests in the future (i.e., target for how much and what kind of planted forest we should grow), and have no "Exit strategy" (i.e., program targeting market shares both domestically and abroad).

Regarding the markets inside the country, "Committee to think about forest regeneration by looking at 'wooden house making'" has been created in the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. The Forestry Agency is ready to join in on the discussion.

We, the committee, would like to recommend them to think about "Export" as well.

For instance, what about aiming China? Governments of Canada and British Columbia began promoting sale and awareness of Canadian materials in 2003. Since then, they have actively been going to housing related trade shows, exhibitions and participating in symposiums. Due to their efforts, as much as 4.6

million cubic meters of Canadian wood products have been exported to China.

Japan should immediately acquire the thinking of “Export Japanese housing construction method overseas”.

VIII. Let’s consider the following points as look towards “the next 30 years”. And let's assume these are themes which the committee under the prime minister will discuss.

- Declaration to create a "Nation of Forest" in preparation for a society that is facing depopulation. A "Nation of Forest" declaration should be described clearly as a preamble to the "Forest Act" and "Basic law of forestry".
- Cross-thinking of "Energy policy" and "Forest resource policy".
- To think the forest policy, based on the reforest plans taking account of the risks such as the impossibilities of growing up of replanted trees because of the climate change and to make a forestry plans expecting of the influence of the climate change, which can be admired by developing countries. The policies should not only reflect the European policies whose forests spread only on the cold temperate zones, but also consider the fact that the Japanese forest is spreading to the cold, warm and subtropical areas.
- To consider a revival of coastal marine ecology through the effects and benefits of reforestation.
- To consider conformity in efforts to reduce the output of carbon dioxide and global climate change together with the abandoning of nuclear power and dismantling nuclear power plants.
- To think about promotion of converting into "Hydrogen society"