

Restoration of Sumida River

Postwar Sumida River waterfront was occupied by factories and warehouses, was deteriorated like a ditch, and was shunned by people. At the same time, industrial and logistical structure changes sap the area's vitality as a production base. But increasing interest in environment headed for the semi-ruined city waterfront and a possibility of its restoration emerged and city-and-river development started, thus attractive urban area was gradually created. In Asian nations with worsening river environments, Sumida River, improving after experiencing 50-year deterioration is a leading example in Asia.

◆ Key to Restoration

- Water quality improvement
- Waterfront space restoration and waterfront development (river-walk)

◆ Overview of the River

Sumida River branches from Ara River at Iwabuchi, Kita Ward. It unites with many streams such as Shingashi River, Shakujii River, and Kanda River, and flows in Tokyo Bay. It flows south to north in the seven wards in lower-level eastern areas in Tokyo (Kita Ward, Adachi Ward, Arakawa Ward, Sumida Ward, Taitou Ward, Chuo Ward, and Koutou Ward). Its total length is 23.5 km, its width is about 150 m, and the basin dimension is 690.3 km² including upstream Shingashi River. The basin population almost reaches 6.2 million. Sumida River's water quality, though quite polluted in the high-growth period, has substantially improved by the efforts such as water purification projects for Sumida River restoration (e.g., construction of a filtering plant in Ukima). The variety and the number of fish, water birds, and water plants have also started to increase.



◆ Project Efforts for Restoration

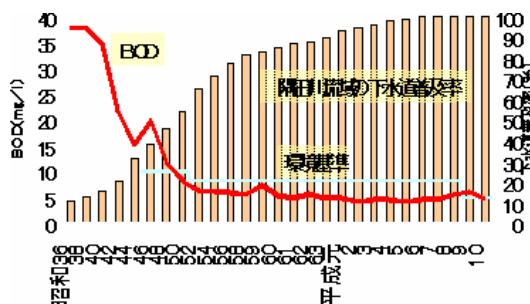
[Water quality improvement]

During the high-growth period, Sumida River was badly polluted as it gulped all the surrounding smelly pollutants. It was deemed "non-inhabitable for natural life" and shunned by the citizens. Stronger plant wastewater regulations, purification water from Tone River, and sewage system development have greatly improved the water quality to about 5 mg/liter, the threshold for fish inhabitation. The next step required is improving dissolved oxygen (DO) amount to a level good for aquatic life reproduction.

[Waterfront space restoration and waterfront development (river-walk)]

Sakura Bridge was built in 1985, and the high water bank was removed for 150 meters of its upstream and downstream respectively. At the same time, gentle-slope bank of berm, water terrace (waterfront river-walk), and super bank were developed.

Sumida River Terrace, from Tsukudajima to Ryougokubashi upstream, is a straight walking trail which also reinforces the riverbank. It has plants and ornaments but no obstacles or traffic lights. It is a relaxation place for the local people, and is a good walking trail for visitors enjoying the view of the bridge.



Sewage system penetration and water quality



Today's view of Sumida River



Source: Tokyo Construction Bureau (<http://www.kensetsu.metro.tokyo.jp/kasen/kasen03.html#top>)

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