

Restoration of Yanagawa's Canals

Yanagawa's canals were once devastated. The citizens participated in the movement to improve environment, ahead of other cities. Their driving force was that, during the over 100 meetings with the government, each member recalled the "life with the canals," the days people enjoyed fishing and playing in the water.

With the understanding and cooperation by the citizens, dredging was unexpectedly well proceeded in a short period, together with the citizens. It resulted in a dramatic decline of mosquitoes, in changing previously flood-prone areas to flood-free, and in a rise of citizens' morale for river protection. Especially, the ex-moat sections in the central target areas, where coastal planted landscaping and walking trails were constructed, are now organically utilized as the relaxation place for the local people, and have many tourists, contributing to the Yanagawa City's economy.

◆ Key to Restoration

- River cleaning plan
- Enlightenment activities that realized citizens' understanding and participation
- Traditional cultured city's preservation section development project

◆ Overview of the Canals

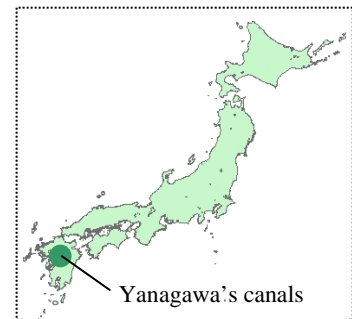
Yanagawa City on the front of the Ariake Sea, in the southern part of Fukuoka Prefecture, is a town of water. The water network (rivers and canals) that honeycombs the city had long been the base of the town. It was connected closely with people's living and production activities, and played an important role. The water was used for cooking and washing as well as for drinking, plus transportation.

However, water transportation was replaced by land transportation.

Dredging water course to add fertile soil on farms became no longer necessary due to the modernization of farm work. Especially, the introduction of chemical fertilizers added a burden on water resources.

Also the drinking water system's penetration deprived the canals of their value as drinking water source.

The shift from pipe-up toilet to tank toilet added to the wastewater's direct inflow to the channels, accelerating the water pollution. Observing such a situation, the awakened citizens were eventually moved by the sentiment to regain the clean water, and the restoration efforts started.



◆ Project Efforts for Restoration

【River cleaning plan】

It aims at: regaining the clean water in the devastated rivers and canals, based on citizens' participation; restoring a comfortable living environment synthesized by water and greenery; carrying it over to the next generation. Specifically, "river development" and "prevention of wastewater inflow," represented by dredging, securing streams, creating coastal planted landscaping, and preparing walking trails, were focused as well as "maintenance and management" with citizens' participation.

【Enlightenment activities that realized citizens' understanding and participation】

The basic idea was that citizens' understanding and participation was indispensable for river cleaning, and that the government needed to directly and closely communicate with the citizens to enlighten them.

Round-table gatherings and other enlightening activities were done. Such activities, including over 100 meetings in two years, raised the citizen's latent hope for clean water. For instance, though dredging had been expected to be difficult and time-consuming, it completed in an unexpectedly short period, together with the citizens who understood and were ready to cooperate.

【Traditional cultured city's preservation section development project】

Yanagawa's canals area was designated in "Traditional cultured city's preservation section development project," one of the local cities development pilot projects based on the third national planning in 1978.

This project aimed at restoring and purifying rivers and canals, enhancing various facilities like bank protection works, walking trails, and vegetation to make the area suitable for settlement. It also aimed at reviewing the relationship between water and citizens; making the canals the key of the city's traditional culture; restoring, conserving, and utilizing a comfortable living environment synthesized by water system.