

Preface

This is the final report for the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) project entitled “Sustainability and Biodiversity Assessment on Forest Utilization Options”. The project was led by Prof. Tohru Nakashizuka (now affiliated with Tohoku University) from 2002 to 2006, and by Dr. Masahiro Ichikawa from 2006 to 2008.

The RIHN was established in 2001 in order to tackle environmental problems on a global scale. The RIHN, understanding that global environmental problems originate from problems of human culture, is conducting research on the relationship between human and nature, forming projects consisting of researchers from a variety of academic fields. Our project has focused on the degradation and loss of forests and biodiversity, which have been progressing rapidly in recent decades.

We approached that subject in our project by establishing 4 study sites in Japan and Malaysia. For each site, we studied how forest use had changed in terms of human activities, what kinds of impact the changes had brought to forest ecosystems, biodiversity and ecological services, and what kinds of social and cultural institutions for the sustainable use of forests and biodiversity exist. The studies were conducted through collaborative research by biologists, ecologists, and researchers with backgrounds in social studies.

The findings of our project provide answers to research topics including questions concerning how ecological services of biodiversity should be evaluated and how options for the future of forests can be projected. In addition to their value to the academic community, the findings will be useful in practical areas, including being of use to people working in policy, regional planning, and forest management to tackle the loss and degradation of forests.

Acknowledgements

This project has benefited from the cooperation of many researchers and research institutions. We could not have accomplished the project without their devoted cooperation. In particular, many thanks go to the Center for Ecological Research, Kyoto University, a RIHN 'partner organization for fluid association', in which our project was proposed and established. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to the following institutes.

Field Research Centre, Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University

Forest Research Centre, Sabah

Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute (FFPRI), Japan

Forestry Department, Sarawak

Kirishima-Yaku National Park, Ministry of Environment of Japan

Sabah Forestry Department

Sabah Parks

Sarawak Forestry Cooperation (SFC)

Sarawak Development Institute (SDI)

Sarawak Planning Unit (SPU)

Yakushima Forest Environment Conservation Centre, Forestry Agency of Japan

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