

## Regional natural parks in France and quasi-national parks in Japan

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### Introduction

It is said that the regional natural park system of France is a successful policy to promote rural areas (Kobayashi, 2014). It is interesting that it is similar to the Japanese quasi-national park system in one aspect that it is designated by the national government and managed by local governments, however, different in other aspects. This report describes 1) the outline of the regional natural park system in France, 2) the Brière regional natural park as an example, 3) the Federation of regional natural parks of France and 4) considers its imprecation to the quasi-national park system in Japan.

This report is based on the field work in France in September 2022, literature survey to complement it and verification to interviewees after returning to Japan. I did field survey on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September in the Brière regional natural park and interviewed the staff visiting the park management office on 13<sup>th</sup>. Also on 16<sup>th</sup> September, I visited the office of the Federation of regional natural parks of France in Paris and interviewed staff members there.

In France, in addition to the natural park systems, there is the national park system. As of October 2022, eleven national parks are designated (10% of the surface of the French mainland).<sup>1)</sup> The national park is different from the regional natural park, especially in the point that the former has the core area in which land use is regulated. Also there is the national and regional nature reserve system. Concerning the regional nature reserve, the Code of the Environment stipulates that the regional government designates it and stipulates regulation in it based on the agreement of all landowners concerned.

This journal of National Parks published articles on the regional natural parks in France, by Sekiyama (1997) and Seta (1997). They were written 25 years ago, however, they are interesting to know the situation at the time.

### 1. The outline of the regional natural park system

As of September 2022, 58 regional natural parks are designated in France (Figure 1<sup>2)</sup>). Those surface is 19% of the French mainland. They are considering to designate ten additional areas (Fontana, 2022). The legislation on the regional natural park was firstly stipulated by the Order (Décret) of President in 1967, and the first regional natural park, Saint-Amand-Raismes, was established in 1968, which was then reorganized and became Scarpe-Escaut regional natural park. At the beginning, the Inter-Ministerial Delegation of Land Planning and Regional Attractiveness (DATAR) was in charge of the system, then since 1971, the Ministry of the Environment established in the same year has been in charge of the system. Also in 1971, the Federation of natural parks of France was established, which was then reorganized as the Federation of regional natural parks of France (FPNR, 2007). Nowadays, the regional natural park system has its legal basis in the Code of the Environment (L 333-1-L333-4).

The Environmental Code (article L333-1) stipulates the conditions of the regional natural park that it shall have natural and cultural heritage and valuable landscapes. The Code also stipulates that the role of the regional natural parks shall be; 1) protection of the environment, 2) management of the area, 3) economic and social development, 4) education and awareness raising and that they shall aim to promote policy innovation for sustainable development in rural areas. Therefore, the roles and purposes of regional natural parks are wider than those of Japanese quasi-national parks, protection and use of beautiful landscapes and conservation of biodiversity, stipulated by the Act of nature parks in Japan.

The regional natural park shall be established by announcement of the Prime Minister's approval, after the examination by the Ministry of the Environment, on the draft charter submitted by the Region based on consultation

with the Department and communes. The valid period of the charter is 15 years. They can renew it by the approval based on the examination by the Ministry of the Environment on the new draft charter and the performance of the existing one. There was a case of cancellation on the charter. The charter of then Maris Poitevin Park was cancelled in 1996, because they could not have reached agreement among concerned actors in the region (Yamamoto et al. 2009; FPNR 2007).

The charter consists of 1) policies on conservation of landscape, and concerned actors' roles, 2) inventory of heritage and maps which show allocation of areas and its roles, 3) supplemental documents such as the statutes of "the mixed syndicate for local public administration" (syndicate mixte) which develops and manages the park (the Environmental Code, article L333-1, para.2).

The regional natural park does not have power to control land use. Instead local governments who participate in the charter shall make their regulation compatible with the charter, in accordance with the Code of the Environment (article L333-1, para. V.)

The regional natural park has legal personality. The mixed syndicate consists of the president, the committee of the syndicate (*comite syndical*), the bureau elected from the members of the committee, and the secretariat. It is similar to the Japanese "cooperative for mutual partial administration". "Mixed" means it consists of different levels of local governments (region, department and commune and so on). The committee makes decision on issues such as budget. President and member of the committee are part-time jobs.

## 2. The Brière regional natural park

The Brière regional natural park is located at the south-eastern part of the Brittany peninsula and at the hinterland of Saint-Nazair, port and industrial town (Figure 2). The park was designated as the fourth regional natural park, and has been one of oldest of them. It takes about 30 minutes from the bus terminal in front of the Saint-Nazair railway station to the village near the park management office (there are about two bus services an hour in day time).

The park area has 570 thousand ha, 210 thousand ha of which is humid zoon and 7 thousand ha is undivided swamp. Also according to the 2016 survey, the park has 56.5 thousand ha; in which 26.8 thousand ha is farm and pasture land, 22.7 thousand ha is natural and forest land, and 6.92 thousand ha is build-up area (Mr. Damien, private communication). It should be noted that concerning the surface of swamp, farm and pasture land, the area of water body show seasonal large fluctuation, as mentioned later.

This area has the second largest wetland in France<sup>3</sup>), which was covered by a cove in the ancient days. The landscapes of reed beds are similar to wetland areas in Japan. In winter it has so much rainfall that there appears the huge water body. In summer, the water level comes down and there appears huge wet meadows.

The wetland, especially undivided swamp has been belonged to commons of local communities since the medieval era. In the old days, communities around the wetland utilized resources there in diverse livelihood activities, such as grazing, dag keeping, fishing and dag hunting, reed cutting, and peat excavation (Millot, 2004). Tourist can enjoy wetland watching getting on a small boat with a guide. The one-hour course which I got on took about 12 Euro (1700 yen) (Figure 3). Also tourist can see traditional lifestyle in a museum which is a renovated thatched roof house.

The charter has over 150 pages and consists of the strategy of the park, strategic targets and annex such as organizational rules. The part of the strategy stipulates "5 ambitions"; the first is management of landscape and land use, the second is protection of biodiversity, the third is water management in the basin, the fourth is promotion of

environmentally sound agriculture and tourism, the fifth is providing opportunities for environmental study and education.

The wetland in the park area has been designated in the list of the Ramsar convention. Also three parts in the wetland are designated as the regional natural reserve, which surface is 836 ha. The management of two parts in the undivided swamp is entrusted to the Commission of the Grand Brière syndicate. The management of the part which has an observatory is entrusted to the park management office. Hunting and fishing are prohibited in the reserves in the park and visitor's access is only permitted at the limited area.<sup>4)</sup>

The syndicate committee consists of representatives of the region (7 members, each has 4 ballots, total 28 ballots), representatives of the department (7 members, each has 4 ballots, total 28 ballots), representatives of 23 commune (23 members, each has 1 ballot, but 3 of them has 2 ballots, total 26 ballots), representatives of the public establishment agent for inter-communal cooperation (4 members, 7 ballots), a representative of the basin water management syndicate and 5 observers (as of March 2022). It is said that, in general, the committee decides by consensus avoiding voting (Mr. Damien, private communication). The budget for 2022 is about 3 million Euro. The share of contribution to the regular budget is stipulated in the article 6<sup>th</sup> of the statutes that the region 41%, the department 41% and communes et al. 18%. To carry out a project, they get financial support from EU, the state, companies and so on (interview). The park management office (Figure 4) has 20 permanent staff members and 20 short-term staff members(interview).

### 3.The Federation of Regional Natural Parks of France

The Federation of Regional Natural Parks of France has its legal basis in the Code of the Environment (article L333-4). It stipulates the roll of the Federation; 1) representative of the parks as a whole, 2) promotion of information exchange in the network of the parks, 3) publicizing the activities of the parks, 4) speaking for the parks on the state and international levels, 5) consultation in the process of designation and reexamination of the parks, 6) advising to each parks.

The Federation is registered as a non-profitable association and has the statutes, which stipulates the general assembly, the bureau, the president, committees, the council for research and study, and the financial contribution scheme.

The general assembly consists of representatives of the regions, departments and communes and so on and have two meetings a year. The president of the general assembly is elected from each regional natural parks' president. The bureau consists of 18 members elected from the members of the general assembly, and have 6 meetings a year. The secretariat has 20 professional staff members including the director and 8 part-time staff members. The assistance to draft and revise the charter are so important that two staff members are in charge of those works. The Federation's regular budget in 2022 is about 3.8 million Euro. It includes funding of about 1.6 million Euro from the state's ministries and agencies (the biggest one is about 0.91 million Euro from the Ministry of the Environment), about 0.86 million Euro contribution from regional natural parks, about 0.32 million Euro contribution from regions.<sup>5)6)</sup>

The Federation is carrying out PR activities such as standardization of symbol marks of the parks, promotion of agricultural products, foodstuff and artisan crafts produced in parks, and publication includes the book which introduced dishes and foodstuff in the parks (Chaplain, 2020) and the book which introduced landscapes and history of parks (Vincens & Pirovano, 2016). The Federation holds the Congress of the regional natural parks of France once every two years. In October 2022, the Federation and the regional natural park of Brière co-hosted the Congress in Saint-Nazaire.

#### 4. Imprecation for quasi-national parks in Japan

The quasi-national park system (the Japanese system) was established by the Natural Parks Act in 1957 in Japan. Unlike the regional natural park system in France (the French system), the Japanese system has provisions to control land use, applying *mutatis mutandis* the provisions for national parks. Other than this, it has many weak points compared to the regional natural park system of France. Firstly, the charter of the French system stipulates the park's directions and roles of concerned actors. On the other hands, the park plan of the Japanese system mainly stipulates the land use plan and the allocation plan of facilities for visitors. Its "basic direction" part describes mainly the park's natural characteristics and stipulates briefly the basic direction at the end of the part. Secondly, it seems useful to have a management office in the park area to inform public of the existence and management of the park. However, limited cases of Japanese quasi-national parks have their management offices in the park areas. Thirdly, in Japan the prefectural government's personnel system routinely changes staff of the park in every several years. Therefore, a limited number of the staff have professional backgrounds. Fourthly, in the Japanese system, municipalities play important roles. However, a limited number of parks have the council in which municipalities participates. And consultation with municipalities is not stipulates in the legislation except for the hearing in the process of drafting the park plan. Fifthly, the Japanese system has no national association. Therefore, sometimes an official in charge of the park system does not know what other prefectures are doing in managing the parks, and also they have no system to advertise quasi-national parks and promote their branding strategies.

65 years have passed since the quasi-national park system was legislated. I hope that consideration should be started to strengthen the system. Also I hope exchange of information should be promoted among actors, including researchers, who concern the Japanese quasi-national parks and the French regional natural parks. If you are interested in it, please contact Kamigawara (Kamigawara.k@ses.usp.ac.jp).

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#### Note

- 1) Prigent, B. (2020) Discover France's 11 national parks. <https://www.france.fr/en/news/article/france-11-national-parks>, referred 15 November 2022.
- 2) There are two regional natural parks in overseas territory of France (Guiana and Martinique), other than those parks shown in this map.
- 3) <https://www.reserves-naturelles.org/marais-de-briere>, referred 8 November 2022.
- 4) Commission Syndicale de Grande Brière Mottière and Syndicat Mixte du Parc naturel régional de Brière (2019) Plan de Gestion de La Réserve Naturelle Régionale « Marais de Brière » (2019-2024).
- 5) Fédération des parcs naturels régionaux de France (2022) Budget prévisionnel 2022.
- 6) Departments do not directly contribute to the Federation. However, the parks contribute directly to the Federation, and are also financed by the departments. Therefore, the Federation is indirectly financed by the departments via the parks (Fontana, personal communication).

#### About the author

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Entered the Environment Agency in 1984 (After 2001, the Ministry of the Environment).

After working for the Ministry as the secretary to the Minister and the director of the Policy and Coordination Division of Nature Conservation Bureau and so on, has been Professor of Department of Environment Policy and Planning, School of the Environmental Science, the University of Shiga Prefecture since 2013, and firstly knew the regional natural park in France visiting the Brière regional natural park to study management of an invasive alien aquatic plant in 2015.

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