

Chronological table on the developments of partnership, public participation, information access and access to justice in the environmental policy of Japan

2013・03

year	International scenario	Events in Japan	Policy development
1971		The Environmental Agency was established.	
1972	Stockholm Human Environment Conference UNEP was established	Decision on the Yokkaichi air pollution lawsuit: The court decided that the companies in the Yokkaichi Industrial Complex were responsible for the air pollution which damaged the near-by residents. Decision on the Itaitai disease lawsuits. The court of appeal decided that the Mitsui mining company was responsible for the itaitai disease of the residents in Jintsu river basin. The Environmental Dispute Coordination Commission was established in the national government	
1973		Decision on the first Minamata disease lawsuit: The court decided that the Chisso Company, which emitted mercury, was responsible for the Minamata disease of the residents living in the Minamata bay area. A compensation agreement was entered into between the accused Showadenko Company and the plaintiff sufferers' group of the Agano river basin area. A compensation agreement was entered into between the accused Chisso Company and the plaintiff sufferers' group of the Minamata bay area.	"The Green Census", the first nationwide natural survey, was started. The Law on the Pollution Related Health Damage Compensation was enacted. The compensation scheme was established by the national government.
1974			
1975			The minister of the environment asked the Central Council for Pollution Control an advice on the System of Environmental Impact Assessment
1976			Kawasaki City enacted the municipal ordinance on Environmental Impact Assessment.
1977			
1978			
1979			The Central Council for Pollution Control released a report on the introduction of the Environment Impact Assessment system.
1980			
1981		Osaka International Airport Noise Pollution Case: The supreme court denied the appeal for the suspension of the airport where aircraft's noise caused severe problem.	The Cabinet submitted the bill on the Environmental Impact Assessment to the Diet.
1982			
1983			The bill on the Environmental Impact Assessment died due to the dissolution of the diet.
1984			The Cabinet set the procedure of the Environment Impact Assessment (the so-called "EIA by Cabinet decision").
1985			
1986	The Accident in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in USSR.		
1987	UN World committee for environment and development published its report "Our Common Future".		
1988	International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established.		
1989		The plan to reclaim a coral reef to build the new Ishigaki airport was withdrawn.	
1990	IPCC published the first assessment report on Climate Change.	Public concern emerged on the plan to build a dam at the mouth of the Nagara river.	
1991	Large scale oil spill happened in the Gulf War.		
1992	UN Conference on the Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro. The Rio declaration and Agenda 21 was adopted. The Convention on the biodiversity (UNCBD) and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted		The first Public Comment Procedure was implemented to prepare the national report of Japan to the Rio Summit.
1993			The Japan Fund for Global Environment was established to support NGO activities to protect the environment. The Basic Environment Law was enacted. The Administrative Procedure Act was enacted to secure fairness and transparency of the government.
1994			
1995		The Hanshin-Awaji earthquake disaster happened and many volunteers gathered to save the victims. The settlement on the Nishiyodo air pollution lawsuit was agreed between the plaintiff patients and the defendant plant companies.	The cabinet agrees on the settlement on Minamata disease. The sufferers who were not compensated by the Chisso Company received a lump sum payment and medical care according to this settlement.
1996			The Environment Agency set up the Environmental Partnership Office and the Global Environmental Information Center to promote partnership activities among the administration, NPOs and private companies. The first basic environmental plan was established. The plan specified the "participation" as one of the main policy pillars.
1997	COP3 of the UNFCCC was held in Kyoto and the Kyoto Protocol was adopted.	The Navotoka Tanker's heavy oil spill incident polluted the Hokuriku coasts in Japan. Many volunteers participated in the activities to save sea birds. The potential endocrine disruptors chemicals caused wide public concerns. The Isahaya bay was closed by a dike to expand farmlands.	The Act on the Environmental Impact Assessment was enacted to introduce the EIA procedures for large scale public projects. The Residents Life Impact Assessment was introduced for the construction of waste disposal plants (mini-assessment). The Act on Rivers was revised. The environmental protection was included aiming at rivers management purposes. The public hearing of the residents was incorporated to the procedure for the river management plan.
1998	The Aarhus Convention was adopted.	The reclamation plan to build a waste disposal site at the Fujimae tideland was criticised and abandoned. Public concerns on Dioxins emissions from waste incineration sites spread. Nishiyodo air pollution lawsuit: a settlement was agreed among the plaintiff patients and the defendant national government and the Hanshin expressway corporation.	The Act to Promote Specified Non-profit Activities (the so called "NPO Act") was enacted: NGOs can obtain juridical personality for non-profit activities more easily.
1999		The cabinet set the plan to relocate the Futenma airbase to the Henoko coast. A massive illegal waste dumping was found in the Teshima Island in Setonaikai sea.	The Act on Access to Information held by Administrative Organs was enacted. The public comment procedure was introduced in the national government (a cabinet decision, later included in the Administrative Procedure Act). The law amendments for decentralization was enacted: local governments have more autonomy power from the central government. The Act on Pollutants Release and Transfer Register was enacted: citizens can access to the information on chemicals in the plants.
2000		The Aichi International Exposition plan was changed after discussion between governments and NGOs.	The City Planning Act was amended: The residents proposal procedure on the district planning was introduced.
2001	International year of volunteers	Central government reform started: the Ministry of the Environment was established.	The Roundtable on Chemicals and the Environment started to discuss and promote risk communication of chemicals. The Government Policy Evaluation Act was enacted.; The government shall carry out the policy evaluation and publish the evaluation report.
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa.		The Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures (Climate Change Policy Law) was amended. The government shall establish the Kyoto Target Achievement Plan. Local Partnership Councils to promote activities to reduce GHGs are to be set up. The Natural Parks Law was amended: local NPOs can participate in natural parks management. Law for the Promotion of Nature Restoration was enacted: the Nature Restoration Committee, whose members are governments, local residents, NPOs etc., is to make a restoration plan and coordinate its implementation.
2003			The Act on Environmental Conservation Activities and Environmental Education was enacted to support NPOs activities for environmental conservation.
2004		Supreme court decision on the minamata disease lawsuits in Kansai area: national and prefectural governments were held liable for the damaged to the Minamata patients. The Administrative Case Litigation Act was amended: standings was expanded.	The Law Concerning the Promotion of Business Activities with Environmental Consideration was enacted: the companies are encouraged to release reports on their activities' impacts on the environment. The Landscape Act and related acts were enacted. Landscape protection is strengthened in the city planning.
2005		Kubota Company revealed that many patients of asbestos-related diseases existed in and around its plant in Amagasaki city (the so called "Kubota shock"). Supreme court decision on the city planning decision of elevated railway of the Odakyu line; The judgement expanded the standing to sue concerning the city planning decision.	The Climate Change Policy Law was amended: greenhouse gas emissions from the plants or companies' activities shall be calculated, reported to the government and published.
2006		Supreme court ruling on the lawsuit for landscape damage by a skyscraper in Kunitachi city: the judgement pointed out that the landscape is worth being protected for the resident concerned.	The Act on Asbestos Health Damage Relief was enacted: lump sum payments and health care is to be provided for the sufferers of asbestos related diseases. Reforms on public interest corporations were implemented. The reform expands judicial status of the non-profit organizations.
2007		The settlement on the Tokyo air pollution lawsuit was entered into between the plaintiff patients and the defendant national government, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Metropolitan highway company. The health care programme was established for the patients.	
2008			The Basic Act on Biodiversity was enacted: the act specified partnership of stakeholders, public participation to decision making and early stage EIA of the large scale project, as basic policy pillars on biodiversity.
2009			The Act on the Special Relief for Minamata Disease was enacted: a lump sum payment and health care is to be provided for more minamata disease sufferers.
2010	COP10 of the CoB was held in Nagoya.		The Act on Biodiversity Conservation Activities at the Local Level (SATOCHI SATOYAMAM Act) was enacted: the act encourages partnership activities among stakeholders to conserve biodiversity at the local level.
2011		East Japan Great Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant Accident	The Environmental Impact Assessment Act was amended: the assessment procedure at the planning stage is established. The Act on Environmental Conservation Activities and Environmental Education was revised and strengthened: partnership activities between governments and private sector/NPOs is institutionalized and policy proposal by citizens is specified in the act. NPO system was strengthened: NPOs can obtain favourable status on tax more easily.
2012	UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 was held.	The Nuclear Regulation Authority was established.	