Biodiversity

Hometown Forestation Program

In 2004, in order to protect biodiversity and contribute to a sustainable society, while cherishing our sense of gratitude to nature, we began the Hometown Forestation Programs to plant trees native to each region and revitalize the forests.
We undertook these programs with the cooperation of Fukushima Prefecture from 2004 to 2009 and with the cooperation of Niigata Prefecture and the town of Tsunanmachi in 2010. In addition, in other areas served by JR East, we are planting trees that are native to the areas and we shall continue to do the same in the future.

Shinanogawa River Hometown Forestation Program in September 2012

Forest development along railway lines☆

Beginning in 1992 we have been engaged in tree planting activities along the JR East railway lines. By fiscal 2013 a total of 46 thousand people had participated in planting about 315 thousand trees. Today, we have gone beyond the wayside and do tree planting in cooperation with the communities.

Development of railway trees

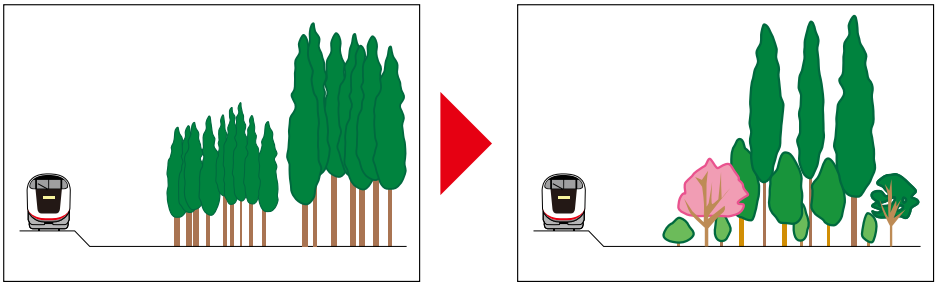
Along some JR East railway lines, we have railway trees planted to shield the tracks from blowing snow and wind. The first railway trees were created in 1893 for disaster prevention. As living disaster prevention facilities, railway forests are playing their roles.
JR East now owns approximately 5.8 million railway trees on a total of about 4,000 hectares along our lines at approximately 1,200 locations. The trees absorb 16 thousand tons of CO_2, equivalent to 0.6% of the CO_2 that JR East emits. In this way, they also contribute to preserving the environment.
In 2008, after fundamentally reviewing the role of railway trees from the viewpoints of both disaster prevention and environmental preservation, we launched a new project to plant trees to replace those that will require replacement over the coming 20 years.

Jinguji No. 2 railway forest on the Ou Line (forest to protect against blizzards)

Tenoko No. 6 railway forest on the Yonesaka Line (forest to protect against snow slides)

Railway trees—From single to multi-variety trees

Traditionally, railway trees were of a single variety, primarily cedar trees, because another function, in addition to protecting against natural disasters, was to generate profits through the production of timber. This has recently been less successful, however, as the demand for domestic timber has declined. In future tree replacement, we will plant several varieties suitable for the local climate and develop them to be more sustainable and ecologically resilient.



Conventional railway trees
(single variety such as cedar trees)

New railway trees
(mixture of different varieties of trees)

Planting new railway trees

Ceremonies for the planting of new railway trees were held in the Kakizaki No. 1 railway forest between Kakizaki and Yoneyama on the Shin-etsu Main Line on September 27, 2008, in the Oitama No. 2 forest on the Ou Main Line between Oitama and Takahata on July 26, 2009, in the Jinguji No. 2 railway forest on the Ou Main Line between Jinguji and Kariwano on May 22nd, 2010, and in the Okama No.1 railway forest on the Tazawako Line on September 29th, 2012. With kind advice and guidance from ecologist and Professor Emeritus Akira Miyawaki of Yokohama National University, several varieties of native trees (potential natural vegetation) were selected and planted. Many local residents and participants from organized tours participated in the ceremonies, and discovered how the trees they planted would grow to become useful as living railway disaster prevention facilities.

Ceremony for planting Okama No.1 railway trees on the Tazawako Line (September 29, 2012)