

Is Deforestation Really Eco-Friendly?

北海道の釧路湿原は、タンチョウやオジロワシなど希少な生き物が暮らす日本最大の湿地です。ところが、その周辺で大規模太陽光発電所（メガソーラー）の建設が進み、森林伐採や景観の変化が問題になっています。自然を守りつつ再生可能エネルギーを進めるには、どんな工夫が必要だと思いますか？講師と一緒に話してみましょう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Mountaineer Ken Noguchi has sounded the alarm over plans to build large-scale solar power plants (mega-solar) around Hokkaido's Kushiro Shitsugen National Park. In an interview with The Sankei Shimbun, he warned that deforestation and altering the landscape in the name of clean energy undermine the very idea of being environmentally friendly.

According to Noguchi, wherever mega-solar projects appear, local communities are left in distress. "People come to my office saying, 'Please help us do something,'" he explained. In 2019, he even convened a national conference in Tokyo to discuss the growing wave of problems nationwide.

Kushiro Shitsugen, Japan's largest wetland, is protected as a national park, with its core zone listed under the Ramsar Convention. It serves as a vital breeding ground for the red-crowned crane, a designated special natural monument, and also provides [habitat](#) for white-tailed and Steller's sea eagles. Rivers winding through its reedbeds, sedge fields, and alder forests shelter the giant freshwater fish, ito (Japanese taimen).

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1. Article

But this delicate ecosystem cannot withstand unchecked development. Kushiro City has already identified 27 mega-solar projects planned or under construction nearby. Although the wetlands are surrounded by zoning that limits urbanization, outdoor solar installations are [exempt](#) from the Building Standards Act, a loophole that developers have been quick to exploit.

Noguchi has spoken out about mega-solar many times on social media, but the response to Kushiro was unprecedented. "Frankly, I was surprised," he admitted. "The words 'Kushiro Wetlands' have such an impact, and I think frustration and anxiety had already been building up."

Developers, Noguchi acknowledged, are operating within the law, which makes halting projects difficult. But after Dr Keisuke Saito, head of the Institute for Raptor Biomedicine Japan, shared footage from the site, Noguchi decided it was time to speak out.

He also revealed that entertainer Tsuyoshi Tsuruno has agreed to visit Kushiro. "If possible, I'd like to hold a press conference there," Noguchi said. He and Dr Saito are also discussing the idea of a national conference in Kushiro.

To have impact, he added, private groups must work together with Kushiro City, which has declared "No More Mega-Solar."

Noguchi questioned whether destroying nature in order to produce clean energy makes any sense. "Cutting down forests and altering the landscape — can that really be called eco-friendly?" he asked.

He noted that Germany imposes strict requirements, such as creating six times more forest to [offset](#) trees removed for facility construction. "In Japan," he said, "development has gone ahead without any such legal framework."

He added that while the Fukushima nuclear accident was one trigger for the solar boom, Japan now urgently needs new rules and restrictions.

Noguchi also expressed concern about the long-term future of the facilities, particularly those operated by foreign firms. "Will they really take responsibility for [disposing](#) of panels after their lifespan ends?" he asked.

Utilities are required to buy solar-generated electricity — a system whose durability he questioned. "That won't last forever," Noguchi said. "Once companies say, 'We won't buy anymore,' and profits disappear, I fear the panels will simply be [abandoned](#)."

Noguchi stressed that he is not opposed to solar energy itself. "I'm not saying mega-solar is bad," he clarified. "But when it spreads unchecked, without proper laws and safeguards, what happens then?"

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1. Article

The answer, he argued, is for the issue to be debated nationally. "If people across Japan think about it together, the government will be forced to act."

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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. **habitat** 生息地、居住環境

The wetlands provide a perfect habitat for migrating birds.

2. **exempt** 免除された、適用外の

Because you are a student and do not work, you are exempt from paying taxes.

3. **offset** (損失や影響を) 埋め合わせる、相殺する

Over a million trees were planted to offset the carbon from building the housing development.

4. **dispose** (不要物を) 処分する

We need to dispose of e-waste, such as smartphones, carefully.

5. **abandon** 放棄する、置き去りにする

Someone abandoned their car down the street from my house.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. Why is mountaineer Ken Noguchi worried about the development of large solar plants in Hokkaido? What are the risks?
2. How are the laws for such developments different in Japan and Germany?
3. What is Noguchi concerned about regarding the end of the life cycle of the power plants?
4. How can large-scale solar plants be built responsibly? What should companies be required to do?
5. Are there any alternatives to building large-scale solar plants?

4. 「森の伐採がエコなのか」釧路湿原のメガソーラー開発に危機感 登山家・野口健さんに聞く

北海道の釧路湿原国立公園（釧路市など）周辺の大規模太陽光発電所（メガソーラー）建設に危機感を表明したアルピニストの野口健さんが産経新聞のインタビューに応じ、「森を伐採することがエコ（環境にやさしい）なのか」と批判した。インタビューの詳細は以下の通り。

メガソーラーの問題は、どこに行っても地元の人たちが悲鳴を上げている。僕の事務所に「一緒に何とかしてほしい」と訴えがくるようになり、平成31年に東京で「全国メガソーラー問題中央集会」を開催し、全国で起きている問題について話し合った。

SNSなどで何度もメガソーラーを取り上げてきたが、今回は圧倒的に反応が大きく、びっくりしている。「釧路湿原」はインパクトがある上、色々な人の不満、不安がたまりにたまっていたのではないと思う。

業者は法令にのっとって進めており、止めることは難しいと思うが、（現場動画を公開した）猛禽（もうきん）類医学研究所の斉藤慶輔代表から連絡をいただき、声をあげようとなった。

（タレントの）つるの剛士さんも釧路に来てくれることになったので、できれば現地で記者会見をしたい。斉藤さんとは釧路で全国大会をやりたいと話している。民間団体だけではインパクトが弱いので、「ノーモア メガソーラー宣言」をした釧路市とも連携する形にしたい。

森を伐採し、地形を変えてしまうことが、本当にエコなのか。ドイツでは施設建設で木を伐採するのなら、6倍の森を作るなど極めてハードルが高い。日本はそういう法整備をしないまま、メガソーラーの整備が進んでしまった。原発事故がひとつのきっかけになったと思うが、さまざまなルール、制限を設ける必要がある。

外資企業が手掛ける施設では、耐用年数を超えた廃棄パネルを片づけてくれるのかという部分も見えない。発電した電気を電力会社が買い取る現行の制度は半永久的なものではないと思っていて、電力会社が「もう買い取らない」となってもうからなくなったとき、パネルが放置されるのではないかという危機感がある。

メガソーラーがいけないと言っているわけではなく、法整備をしないまま荒波の勢いでさらに広がってしまったとき、どうなるのかという話だ。

次頁に続く

出典：「森の伐採がエコなのか」釧路湿原のメガソーラー開発に危機感 登山家・野口健さんに聞く
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4.

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みんなで一緒に考え、国民的な議論になれば、国も動かざるを得ない状況になる。



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