

A NATIONAL PARK FACILITY IN JAPAN

From a translation by Yasuhiro Hagihara of the Japanese Trade Mission, Washington, D.C. This article is presented to GUIDELINE readers through the courtesy of William J. Hart, Head, Park Systems Planning Program, International Commission on National Parks. The text is keyed to Park Practice DESIGN sheets A-1101 and A-1205 to which the reader's attention is invited.

I. The Outline of the Area

Location: Kamikochi, Nagano Prefecture

Owned by: The Department of Welfare of Japan (58.4 hectare)

Description: It is located at the source of the Azusa River which runs through the Northern Alps composed of Hodaka-dake, the highest, Yake-dake and Kasumizawa which all reach an altitude of 2,500-3,000 meters. The Kamikochi area is 1,500 meters above sea level, and surrounded by variagated trees such as larch trees, liverwort trees, white birches and many others. The willow trees which are so abundant in the area are placed under the protection of a national conservation program. The catchment basin of the Azusa River embracing the Taisho-pond, Tashiro-pond and Myojin-pond has been designated as a natural beauty spot.

Number of Visitors: In 1962, some 355,000 people used this area, 90% of whom were mountain climbers, hikers and campers. The remaining 10% comprised the pleasure and comfort seekers. The season with the greatest influx of visitors used to be the summer, but as of now both the summer and the fall have attracted the public.

II. The Basic Objectives of Development Programs

- (1) Since the Kamikochi area is the center for mountain enthusiasts, sound and healthy consolidated facilities should be constructed.
- (2) Since this area is beautiful enough to be designated as a natural scenic spot, a great effort should be made to preserve the inherent quality by constructing facilities that would be harmonious with the surroundings.
- (3) To serve the public in this area, such elementary facilities as foot-paths, recreation areas and parking lots should be completed.
- (4) Because of the accumulation of silt on the river bed of the Azusa River and also because of the erosion of the banks, the construction of proper facilities is quite limited, so that more effective methods should be promoted.
- (5) Lastly, because of the constant shifting of the Azusa River and because of the overflow of the flood waters into the nearby fields, some measures should be taken for the maintenance of environmental sanitation as well as for the protection from disaster.

III. The Scale of the Programs

Date to be completed:	1965
Number of Visitors estimated:	422,000
To Kamikochi site:	350,000
To Tokusawa site:	72,000
Average yearly increase:	7%
Average yearly occupancy rate:	48%
Average length of occupancy:	1.56 nights
Ratio of campers against total lodgers:	18%
Maximum number of visitors per day:	4,900
To Kamikochi site:	3,900
Maximum number of visitors per hour:	2,450
To Kamikochi site:	1,850
Type of Use:	Summer camping



Mt. Yake, Active Volcano, Viewed from the Entrance to Konashi Camping Site.

IV. The Allotment of Facilities

A. The Area for Public Facilities: 4.16 hectare

Major Facilities

- Office of Park Administration
- Traffic and Transportation facilities
- Medical and Emergency facilities
- Communication facilities
- Exhibition facilities
- Park Police stations
- Information Centers

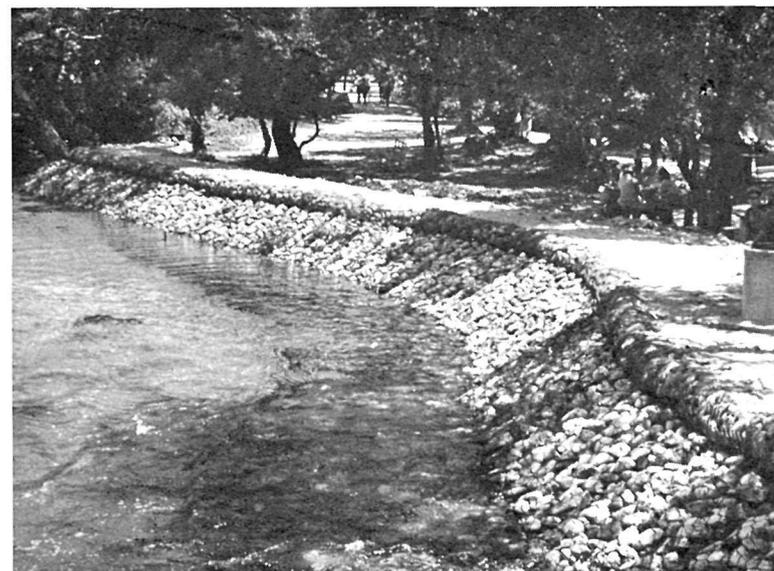
Outline of Program

1. To meet the increasing demand for public facilities, the direction of flow of visitors shall be clearly defined, and crowding of major points of interest be avoided.
2. The transportation terminals shall be set up to provide the separate facilities for loading and unloading buses.
3. An open space shall be prepared adjacent to the Azusa River at the time of the construction of the embankment. And willows, white birches, larch trees, and bamboo grass shall be planted in the open space in such a way as to harmonize with the existing physical landscape.
4. The exhibition facilities shall be combined with those of the Chunichi Newspaper Co. branch, and a botanical garden be set up.

B. The Area for Recreation:	30.39 hectare
Rivers :	14.5 hectare

Major Facilities

- Recreation facilities
- Lounges
- Rest rooms
- Parking lots



Outline of Programs

1. Separate facilities in different recreation areas shall be maintained by separating the Nakanose site from the Azusa River site.
2. The Nakanose site shall be maintained as a daytime recreation spot.

3. Since the Azusa River site is a natural scenic spot that offers an excellent view of the nearby mountains, the foot-paths, benches and trash boxes shall be situated so as to give the temporary visitors useful service.

C. The Area for Camping: 9.98 hectare

Major Facilities

- Central lodges
- Cabins
- Tent sites
- Cooking facilities
- Rest rooms
- Tables and benches
- Trash boxes
- Outdoor grills

Summer at the Konashihira Camping site



Outline of Programs

1. Separate camping sites shall be planned at Konashihira and Oku-konashihira.
2. The former shall be maintained as an outdoor camping site, and foot-paths that follow different routes be constructed so as to provide for the influx of visitors during the height of the camping season. In the off season, the camp sites be transformed to picnic sites, and tables and benches be provided within such spots.
3. The latter shall be set aside as locations for cabins. To accommodate the maximum influx of visitors during the season and to better establish security measures, the cabins shall be constructed as one-story multiplex buildings with

their windows facing north.

4. The administrative function shall be strengthened so that sanitary conditions in camping areas are efficiently maintained.

D. Ryokan (Inn) areas: 6.10 hectare

Major Facilities

- Inns
- Roads for motor vehicles
- Parking lots

Japanese Inn, Nishi-itoya



Outline of Programs—To divide into three areas as follows:

1. The area of the Kiyomizuya-ryokan and the Kamikochi-onsen-ryokan.
 - a. Since there is no uniform style in the present structures, if it should prove necessary to reconstruct the inns, a uniform architectural plan shall be insisted upon.
 - b. In the case of reconstruction, better parking facilities be considered.
2. The area of the village-owned ryokan, Nishi-itoya and Shirakabaya located on the right shore of the Azusa River.
 - a. The natural surroundings in the Azusa River area be conserved.
 - b. If any additional structures are needed, they shall be built on the mountain slopes rather than on the river sides.
 - c. Any future road construction for the purpose of carrying people and goods shall be made on the mountain sides.
 - d. Parking lots shall be built close to the ryokan.
3. The area of the Gosenjaku-ryokan which is located on the left shore of the Azusa River.

a. Since the Kappa Bridge area is a place for gathering picknickers, future facilities shall be constructed in such a way that they will not hinder the natural beauty of the spot.

b. Parking lots facing the mountain side shall be provided for by the reconstruction of the shops. However, the backs of the shops shall not face the river side.

Principle Guides

1. To keep the legal height of the wooden houses within three-stories.
2. In regard to roof construction, gable roofs are preferred.
3. To paint the outside walls in tan-colored paints.

E. Hotel Area: 7.77 hectare

Major Facility
Hotel

Imperial Hotel and the Western Hotel



Outline of Programs

The security of the Imperial Hotel area shall be preserved. Since a limited number of tourists use the hotel, no plans are being made at this time for additions to the hotel proper.

V. Problems

The areas in which the consolidated facilities above-mentioned have been constructed are also areas that have been set aside under conservation program. The scenery along the Azusa River from Taisho-pond to Tokusawa site has a higher aesthetic value than that of Hodaka-dake site. When too many people congregate at one time in

such a beautiful place, it decreases the natural beauty of the Kamikochi area. Therefore, before plans could be completed on these areas, the problem of the optimum utilization of the area together with the optimum number of people had to be resolved.

The present number of visitors has not exceeded 300,000. The reasons are: insufficient road construction leading to sites, and also damage due to natural causes during the open seasons of the area. Since there has been a great potential demand to see the Northern Alps, Nagano Prefecture is now attempting to petition the Japan Public Road Corporation to construct a toll road from Matsumoto, Sango, Ohtakiyama, Myojin-pond, to Kamikochi site, thereby increasing the possible number of sightseers.

According to this petition, an expected 2,800,000 would be able to visit the site yearly, while the maximum estimated number per day would be 46,700, and the maximum estimated number per hour 30,000. Parking lots to meet this demand require a specified area of 65,000m² and parking facilities for 1,700 cars.

If the recreation and hotel areas are included in this specified square meters, then the Kamikochi area would be cluttered up with human



Newly Built Picnic Ground and Riverside Walk; Azusa River

beings and facilities, and thereby destroy its appealing scenery completely.

Furthermore, there is a fear that car horns in the daytime might reverberate even to the top of the mountains, and exhaust fumes from cars might contaminate the air, bringing about some changes in the plants and terminating the lives of wild animals and beneficial insects. And finally it might break the balance of nature.

On the other hand, it has been suggested from the Gifu Prefecture side that a cable car system be made on the route from Nabeya, Nishiho-sanso to Kamikochi since the Kamikochi area is so attractive.

So the problem of optimum use of the area would become very serious in the near future.