

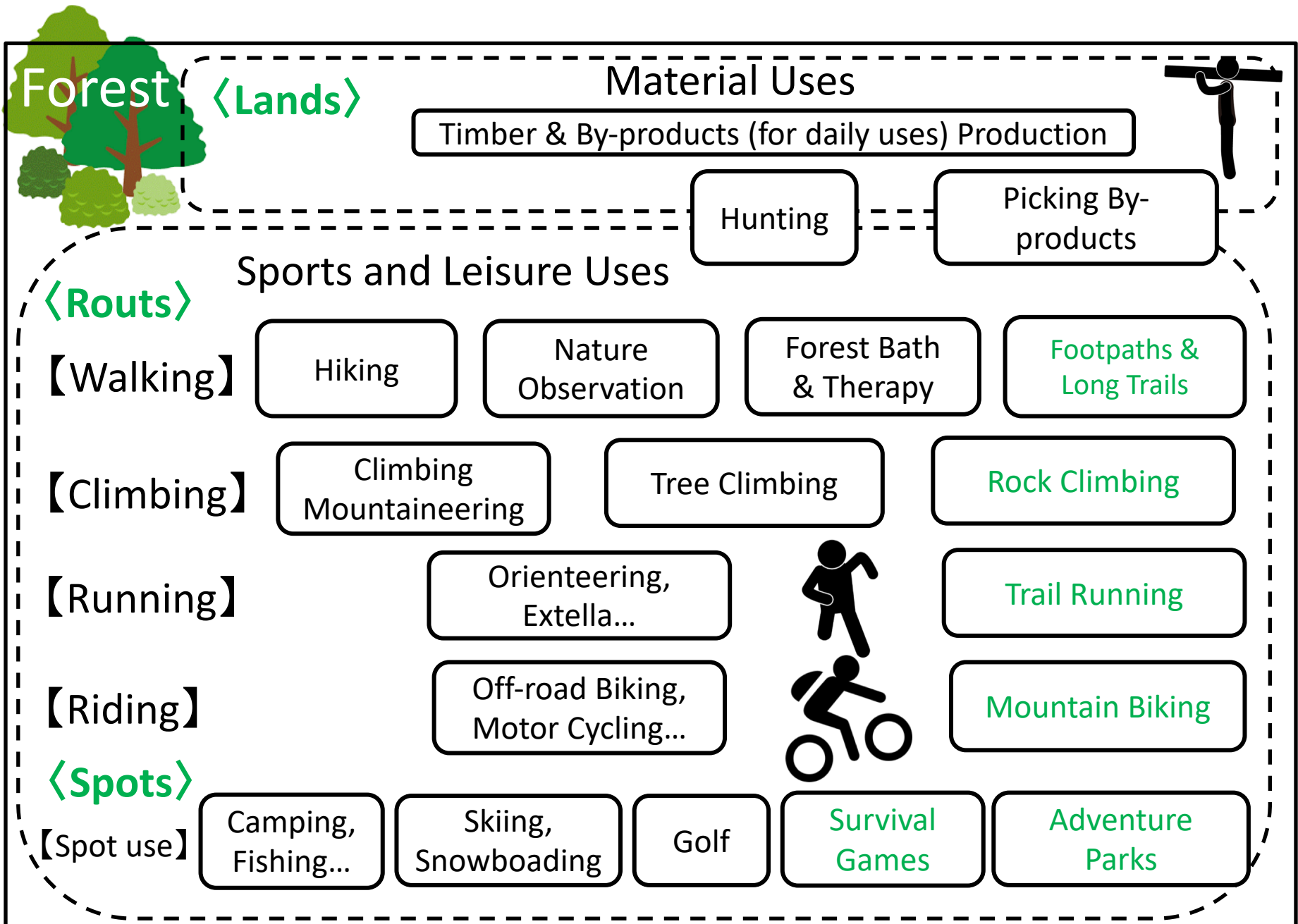
# Development and challenges of recreational sports in forests in Japan

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Recent Trends of Recreational Sports and Leisure in Forests in Japan

# Introduction: Forest recreation in Japan

## Traditional activities (number of users)



Others:  
Golf (7.2m)  
Camping (2.1m)  
Hunting (0.1m)  
.....

## New activities & projects: 1990-2000s (number of users or projects)



Others:  
Survival (war)  
games.....



# Recent trends in and problems of mountain biking and trail running in Japan

- Recently, **mountain bikers (1990s-)** and **trail runners (2000s-)** have increased in Japan, reflecting a world-wide trend.
- However, **conflicts and objections** against mountain bikers and trail runners has been getting severer according to their development (Hirano, 2016a, 2016b, 2018).

: Traditional recreation users such as **walkers** claim that their use of forest trails becomes dangerous, and that the mood of the recreational walking is spoiled by bikers and runners.

: **Conservationists** and some **forest owners** are worried by possible degradation of forests and trails.

: **Forest owners and trail managers** are strongly concerned about liabilities for some accidents among users.

...Consequently, some managing authorities have issued **administrative notices and rules, and many forest owners have placed signs excluding mountain bikers and trail runners from specific forest trails** especially close to large cities and in famous national parks where various recreational users concentrated.



# One remarkable tendency arises among mountain bikers and trail runners after they faced these conflicts

- They start to approach local societies in hilly and mountainous areas.

=Bikers and runners started projects to cooperate with local authorities, communities, forest owners, and trail managers.

: These projects facilitate bikers' and runners' contribution to local development.

: Some leaders moved and settled in, others often visit to project areas to engage in activities to support and revitalize the local society.

: In return, they get approval from the local society for biking and running in forests and on trails.

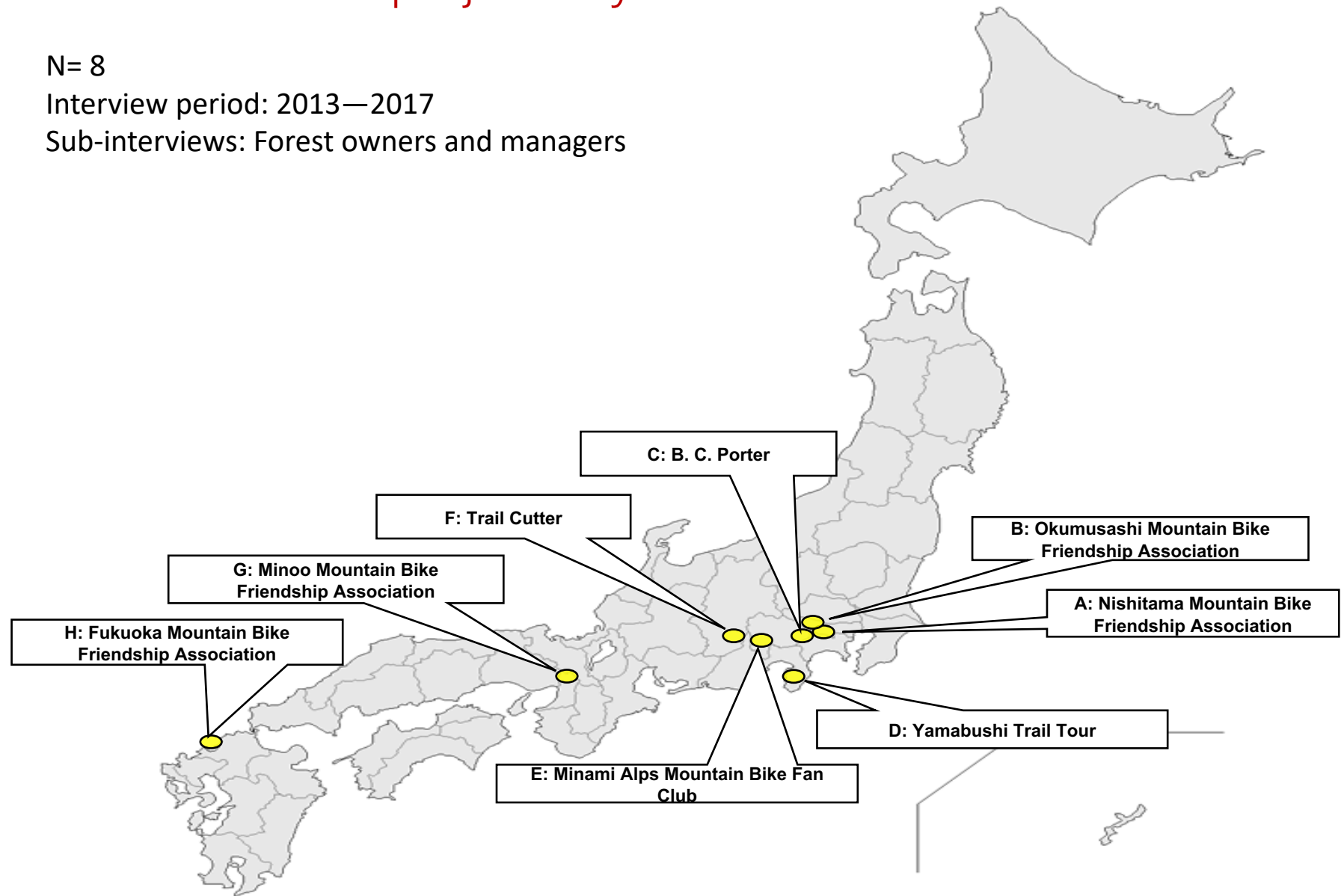
Why did they choose this strategy in Japan?

# Distribution of projects by mountain bikers as case studies

N= 8

Interview period: 2013—2017

Sub-interviews: Forest owners and managers

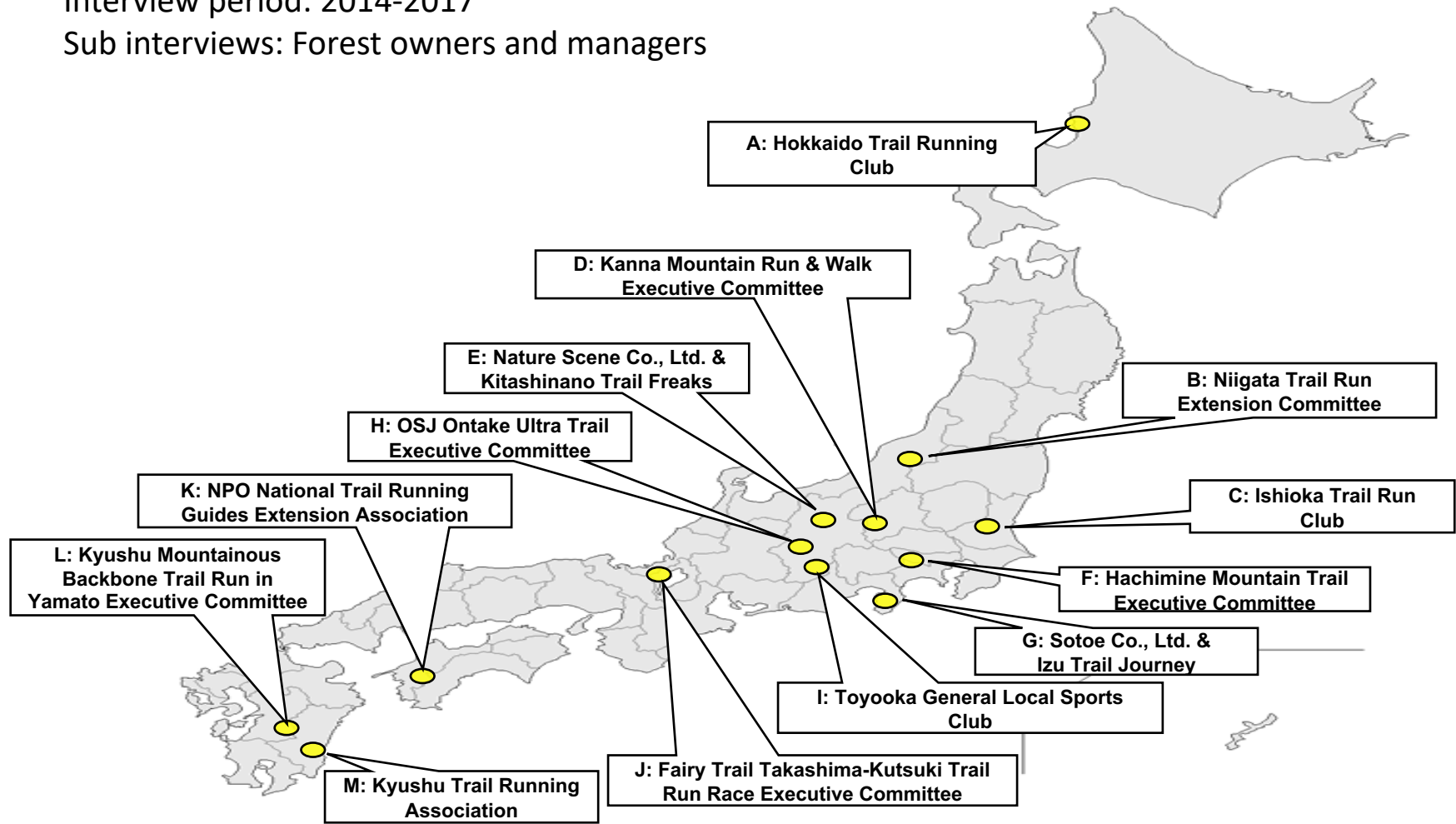


# Distribution of projects by trail runners as case studies

N= 13

Interview period: 2014-2017

Sub interviews: Forest owners and managers



# Q: What are you doing for mountain biking or trail running?

## <Mountain bikers' projects>

A (Bikers' association: 260 members)	B (Bikers' association: 100 members)	C (Mountain bike park management)	D (Trails and guided tours management)	E (Bikers' association 50 members)	F (Trails and guided tours management)	G (Bikers' association: 120 members)	H (Bikers' association: 110 members)
Securing trails and spaces for bikers	Securing trails and spaces for bikers	Securing trails and spaces for bikers	Hosting guided tours on rebuilt trails	Securing trails and spaces for bikers	Hosting guided tours on managed trails	Securing trails and spaces for bikers	Securing trails and spaces for bikers

## <Trail Runners' Projects>

A (Runners' club: 150 members)	B (Runners' club: 30 members)	C (Runners' club: 600 members)	D (Hosting races: <5 runners)	E (Hosting races: 100 runners)	F (Hosting races: <5 runners)	G (Hosting races: 60 runners)	H (Hosting races: <5 runners)	I (Runners' club: 240 members)	J (Hosting races: <5 runners)	K (Runners' club: 50 members)	L (Hosting races: >20 runners)	M (Hosting races: <10 runners)
Hosting a race and training sessions	Hosting a race and training sessions	Hosting races and training sessions	Hosting a race, and securing trails for day run	Hosting races	Hosting a race	Hosting races	Hosting a race	Hosting training sessions for children	Hosting a race	Hosting guided tours and training sessions	Hosting a race	Hosting races

- Every project **reflected the leaders concern for the social isolation by facing conflicts**, aiming to **secure and maintain the location (trails and spaces)** for biking and running.
- Mountain bikers' projects can be divided into **local bikers' association** and **local business** (guided tours for visiting bikers) styles.
- Trail runners' projects are **mostly based on hosting entity of trail running races** or **local runners' clubs**.



# Q: What are you doing for the local society?

## <Mountain Bikers' Projects>

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TM	TM	TM EE	TM EE	TM	TM EE	TM	TM
VW DE	VW		DE	VW DE	DE	VW DE	VW

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TM EE	TM	TM	EE	TM EE		TM EE	EE		EE	TM EE VW DE	TM EE	EE
DE	DE	DE		DE	DE	DE	DE	DE		DE	DE	

TM: Forest **trail maintenance** by themselves for multiple, sustainable use.

EE: Creating positive and remarkable **economic effects** on local society.

VW: **Volunteer works** to support local community and environment, such as cleaning, agriculture, traditional festivals, and forest management.

DE: **Direct engagement** in managing local society through settling down, or having authorized positions in project areas.

- Self-maintenance of trails is the standard on bikers' projects, and runners' volunteers for trail maintenance is also become popular.
- Economic effects and direct engagement are seen more in runners' projects, since these are based on events such as races, cooperating with local runners, authorities, and communities.















# Why do bikers and runners in Japan commit to local development to secure recreational benefits?

## 1: Win-win relationship with local society in mountainous areas

Organized efforts by bikers and runners (TM, VW, DE) and economic effects (EE) of their events are welcomed by local authorities, communities, and residents especially in mountainous areas affected by the declining population and the “underuse” of forest land.

## 2: No certain legal rights of using forest trails in Japan

Japan stipulates no clear rights and responsibilities for accessing and using forest trails by any users. Even managing authorities cannot clearly identify “who can use,” “what you can do or you can’t do,” or “who has liability in what cases” in forest trails.

Theoretically, trails as “public roads” should be open to everyone, so rules and obstacles to exclude bikers and runners as a result of conflicts may not have any legal force, but DO have real effects, giving society a negative impression of them.

This is the hidden reason **why they choose “local society”, not “central executive and legislative agencies”, as the target of lobbying** to legitimize their use of forest trails.

# Q: What are the challenges of the projects?

- “It is very hard and time-consuming work to earn and keep the trust and approval of local societies.” (8/8 for bikers’ projects, 11/13 for runners’ projects)

: They need to create wide (and “new”) relationships, from authorities to communities and owners.

: These relationships should be continuously updated to maintain, since the person in charge of forest and trail management in local authorities or communities, and forest owners change frequently.

- “Forest owners and trail managers are reluctant to permit or support our forest trail uses.” (6/8 for bikers’ projects, 10/13 for runners’ projects)

: Almost all managers in local authorities and public forest owners fear they might be liable for accidents if they let bikers and runners use and manage forest trails.

- “We do not have any guarantee for continuing to manage and use the trails. If serious accidents happen or objections against us get more severe, our activity might be stopped.” (6/8 for the bikers’ projects, 8/13 for the runners’ projects)

=Need legislative advocacy and guarantees?

# Conclusion:

- Recently, new recreational uses of forests by sports users, such as mountain bikers and trail runners, has increased in Japan.
- Facing conflicts with other stakeholders, many leaders of bikers and runners have initiated projects to contribute to local development in mountainous areas, by organizing self-maintenance of trails, by volunteering in local communities and environments, by directly engaging in management of local development, and by promoting local economies through their sports events.
- These projects are a good match with local societies affected by the declining population, and give a positive impacts to their rural revitalization.
- However, these projects are challenged by obscure legal system concerning recreational use of forest trails in Japan.
- Legislative advocacy and negotiation will be required to authorize and develop these projects and activities of recreational users in forests.
  - = Some bikers associations (A, G, H) start lobbying to managing authorities as representative of bikers, modeling IMBA (International Mountain Bicycling Association) in the USA.
  - = Japan Trail Runners Association was established in 2015 by leaders of runners' projects (A – E, G, H, J, K, M) to handle conflicts, represent runners in lobbying, and develop cooperation with local societies.

# Discussion: Characteristic of the conflict resolution by mountain bikers and trail runners in Japan

The mountain bikers and trail runners projects in Japan

Major way in abroad?

Resolution 1

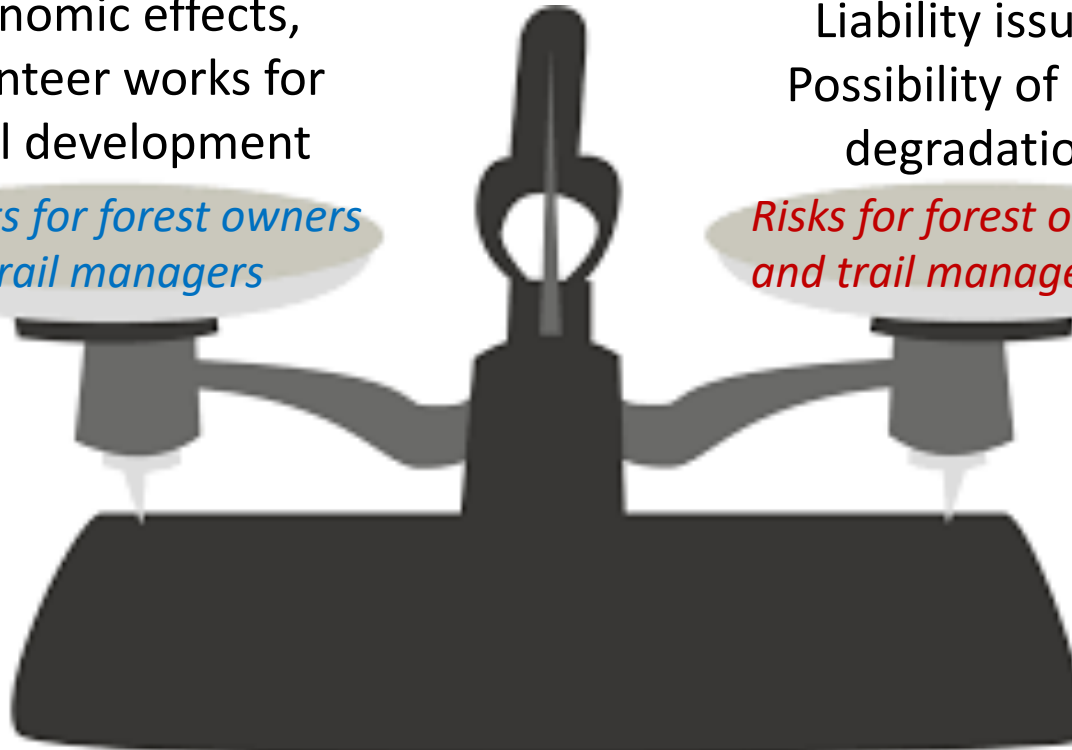
Trail & forest maintenance,  
Economic effects,  
Volunteer works for local development

*Merits for forest owners and trail managers*

Resolution 2

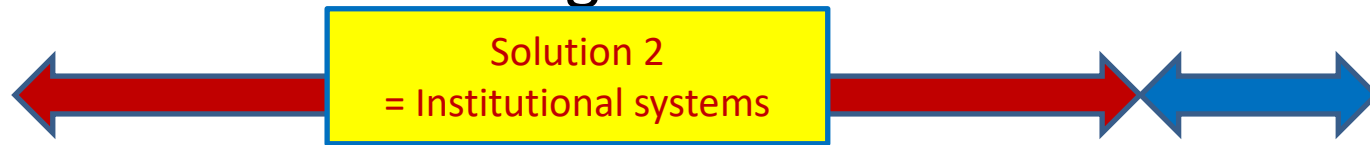
Users' conflicts and complaints,  
Liability issues,  
Possibility of land degradation

*Risks for forest owners and trail managers*





# Different Types of the Conflict Resolution by the Sports Users among Countries



	Perm ission for Use	R ights for Land & Trail Uses	L iability	Advocacy by Users' Groups	Sustainable Trail Management	Contribution to Local Societies	Supports by Governments
United States	◎	○	○	◎	◎	△	△
	By Landowners	Contract and Easement	Desined by Laws and Contracts	Strong (cf. <b>MBA</b> )	By Groups and Trail Builders	Maintaining Trails	For Managing B ke Parks
United Kingdom	◎	◎	◎	◎	△	×	○
	Under the Rights of Way	<b>R ights of Way</b>	Under the Rights of Way	Strong	By Trail Managers	None	For Transportation and Tourism
New Zealand	◎	△	◎	○	◎	△	◎
	By Landowners	Contracts etc.	Desined by Laws and Contracts	Existing	By Trail Builders and Managers	Maintaining Trails	For Tourism as the Main Industry
Japan	×	×	×	△	△	◎	×
	D iverse & Unc lear	None	Unc lear	Only by Some Local Groups	Only by Some Local Groups	Many Groups Focusing on	Passive and Negative

**US:** Based on users' groups' advocacy, built up the institutional system.

**UK:** Adapted existing legal rights for recreational access.

**NZ:** Based on government support, built up the institutional system.

**Japan:** Without certain institutional bases, relied on local societies through users' contribution.

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