

Commemorating 10 Years of Using the Decommissioned Mt. Fuji Weather Station

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Although November 2015 marked the 10th anniversary of the founding of the registered NPO Mount Fuji Research Station (known as NPO Mt. Fuji), this year (2016) marks the successful completion of 10 years of monitoring activities by us and others using the summit facility, which began in 2007. We are deeply grateful to the society members, various funding agents, the researchers active on Mt. Fuji, and the summit team—who have ensured that research activities at the summit are carried out safely—for all their support.

When the Mt. Fuji radar reached the end of its operational lifespan after many years of protecting us from typhoons, and the summit weather station was in the process of being decommissioned, a group of researchers realized the potential of this valuable facility for study across a wide range of fields. Citing the uniqueness of the facility, located in a summit environment where the conditions in winter can be as harsh as those at the North or South Pole, and the value of the data that could still be obtained from the facility, numerous scientists argued for its continued use, not only for meteorological research but also for monitoring research in a wide variety of fields. Although the most ideal case would have been to have the station certified as a national research facility, given the extreme

difficulty of securing such a certification, it was decided that the best option to preserve the facility would be to establish an NPO under whose umbrella researchers could be assembled to effectively carry out research activities. Thanks in large part to the efforts of the first chair of the society, Katsumi Asano, the first vice-chair of the society, Yukiko Dokiya, and especially the first head of operations, Toyohiro Watanabe, the NPO Mount Fuji Research Station was established.

Although the much-awaited summit monitoring campaign began after the NPO was established and it became possible to lease the summit weather station, many difficulties lay ahead. Some researchers outside the society, and even some members of the society, strongly doubted that the NPO would last 10 years. However, despite such inauspicious beginnings, thanks to the efforts of many individuals, the number of participants both in research and other activities and the number of conference presentations yielded by the station have steadily increased. The thought that we have been able to continue summit monitoring activities all this time fills me with emotion.

The study conducted at the Mt. Fuji summit is world-class research that in the vast majority of cases relates directly to our immediate environment. We hope that, for the next 10 years, we will be able to continue using the weather station as a foundation from which to carry out valuable research and educate our youth. I sincerely ask for your participation and cooperation with our ongoing efforts.

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Photograph of the author explaining the facility for a TV report