

April 23rd, 2020

To: all academic researchers and people engaged in the conservation projects in the Ogasawara Islands

From: the Scientific Council of the Ogasawara Islands Natural World Heritage Site

Request for preventing COVID-19 outbreak in the Ogasawara Islands Natural World Heritage site

Ogasawara Islands are listed as a Natural World Heritage site on the basis of outstanding universal value that the islands' nature shows. To identify and properly manage the outstanding values, several conservation projects and academic research are undertaken in the Ogasawara Islands.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ogasawara Village has been requesting not to visit the islands unless it is urgent. The island medical system is vulnerable and COVID-19 virus entry is a huge threat to crush the foundation of people's life in the local society.

Although many researchers and specialists visit the Ogasawara Islands every year to properly perform conservation programs and academic researches, it can also be a threat to the local society. Maintaining the local society enables management of ecosystem. Coexistence of the island's nature and human is one of the ideas for Natural World Heritage conservation. Protection measures against COVID-19 is essential in order to continue managing the island ecosystems.

Meanwhile, many species of the Ogasawara Islands are at risk of extinction and in need of sustainable management. It is necessary to avoid losing the outstanding values of Natural World Heritage by completely stopping conservation programs, which leads to species extinction and destruction of ecosystems.

For the safety of the local society and protecting the outstanding values of the islands' nature, we, as the Scientific Council, request all academic researchers and people engaged in the conservation projects the following:

1. As a general rule, do not visit the Ogasawara Islands until things return to normal, unless something critical happens to the outstanding values of the Natural World Heritage site.
2. For academic researches too, as a general rule, do not visit the Ogasawara Islands until things return to normal.
3. Maintain the on-going projects essential to avoid extinction and destruction of ecosystems under preventing the risk of infection to the full extent.
4. Projects to maintain need to be selected based on scientific knowledge accumulated previously.
5. For academic researchers, make efforts continuously to support conserving the Natural World Heritage values.

The Scientific Council of the Ogasawara Islands Natural World Heritage site shall actively correlate with various government authorities and organizations to overcome this difficult situation.