

# News from Iwate's Reconstruction

The news from Iwate as it moves toward reconstruction

**Ganbaro, Iwate!**  
**Let's stick together, Iwate!**

三陸復興

Volume 84  
May 15, 2015

We are deeply grateful for the heartwarming encouragement and support received from both within and outside of Japan in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, which struck on March 11, 2011. The precious bonds created during this time will always be cherished.

It's the season of green! All of Iwate has come alive with summer greenery.

We will now bring you the news from Iwate's reconstruction.

## The Kosode Ama Center re-opens at the location of the 2013 NHK Drama

Kuji

At Kuji City's Kosode Beach, famous as the location for the popular 2013 NHK morning drama *Ama-chan*, the Kosode Ama\* Center has been rebuilt following its destruction by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. On Sunday, April 26, 2015, it was officially reopened in advance of the summer tourist season.

A grand opening ceremony was held on the same day. "Kuji is now an international tourist hotspot thanks to the production of *Ama-chan*, and so I want many more people to come and enjoy Kuji's beautiful scenery and delicious seafood," said Joji Endo, Mayor of Kuji, at the ceremony. They also gave out mochi rice-cakes at the event and a dance was performed by the Kiddy Ama Corps in order to commemorate the Center's reopening.

The newly-opened Center is a three-story building made of reinforced concrete. The first floor is the fresh foods and souvenir space; the second floor is the exhibit space that describes the history and culture of the *ama* of the northern coast; the third floor is the "Ama Café" where drinks and snacks are sold. There is also an observation deck on the roof, with a great view of the bay.

The Kosode Ama Center is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and from July 2015 there will also be live diving and fishing performances by local *ama*.

It is hoped that the revival of this facility will encourage both Japanese and foreign tourists to come and visit Kuji.

\*Ama: female divers who often harvest sea urchins

(Photographs courtesy of Kuji Municipal Government)



The newly rebuilt Kosode Ama Center



Mayor Endo gives his speech at the opening ceremony



The Kiddy Ama Corps perform their dance

## Reconstruction Support - The SL Ginga Opens Its Doors

Hanamaki - Kamaishi

April 25 was a sunny Saturday during Golden Week, and saw the old-style steam engine "SL Ginga" make its first run of 2015 on the JR Kamaishi Line (Hanamaki Station to Kamaishi Station, 90.2 km).

The SL Ginga is a restoration of the steam train C-58239 that was decommissioned roughly 40 years ago. It was brought back by JR East in order to encourage the reconstruction in the regions that were badly affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

The train ran on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays last year from April to December, and was enjoyed by roughly 12,400 passengers. This is its second year in operation.

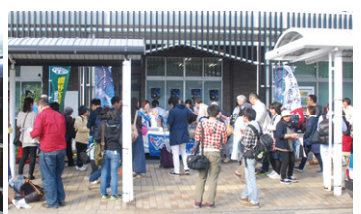
April 25 was its first day of operations this year, and around 170 people were packed in before it left Hanamaki Station. The almost-full steam train set out for Kamaishi Station with a chirp of its steam whistle.

The SL Ginga arrived at Kamaishi Station a little after 3 p.m. and was welcomed by a traditional Kamaishi Tiger Dance. The Sanriku specialty *mekabu-jiru* (soup made from thick *wakame* seaweed stalks) was provided free of charge, welcoming all of the passengers to the region.

The SL Ginga will run again this year on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays, and support the reconstruction by encouraging tourism in the affected region.



The SL Ginga arrives in Kamaishi Station



People enjoying *mekabu-jiru* in front of Kamaishi Station

News from Sanriku

### Your travels can help the reconstruction

The Sanriku Coast is moving steadily toward reconstruction. These bus tours give a rich travel experience by teaching passengers about the disaster and reconstruction progress. It also runs to various sightseeing and local goods venues.



### Iwate Sanriku Tourism Support Bus Tours

Operating Period: April 4 (Saturday) to November 29 (Sunday)

- Course 1 ▶ Sanriku Railway, Goishi Beach and the Miracle Lone Pine Tree (Iwateken Kotsu)
  - Course 2 ▶ Sanriku Railway and The Miracle of Kamaishi DRR Learning Journey (Hanamaki Sightseeing Bus)
  - Course 3 ▶ Jodogahama Beach, Taro Area, Ryusendo Cave (Northern Iwate Transportation)
  - Course 4 ▶ *Je je je!* Kuji, Homeland of the Northern Divers of Kitanriku, and Sanriku Railway
- \* Course 4 has two tours going to different places (Northern Iwate Transportation)

For more information: [www.iwatetabi.jp/special/kankobus/](http://www.iwatetabi.jp/special/kankobus/) (webpage in Japanese only)

## Sanriku-Yamada Oyster Festival

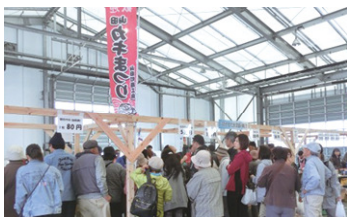
Yamada

On Wednesday, April 29, 2015, the Sanriku-Yamada Oyster Festival was held in the Yamada Fish Market by the Yamada-no-Miryoku Committee.

The festival was held for the second time (the first being last year) since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

Oysters-in-the-shell, scallops and other sea food of Yamada were sold at an affordable price, with a huge line for the free oyster soup (only 400 servings). Many people from both within and outside Yamada gathered to taste the area's delicious spring catch of oysters.

There was also a barbecue corner where visitors could grill the seafood products they bought, as well as a game corner where they could try their hand at using a fish hook to scoop oysters and scallops out of a fish tank. The event really showed a close-up view of the recovery of Yamada's fisheries.



The bustling festival venue



A barbecue showing Yamada at its most delicious

(Photographs courtesy of Yamada Tourism Association)

## Shrine festival revived after an 8-year hiatus

Ofunato

In hopes for reconstruction and to pass on local traditional performing arts, the Kamo Shrine in the Ofunato district of Ofunato City held its Quadrennial Grand Festival in the same district.

The festival is held once every four years, and was planned for 2011 but was called off because of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and so when it was held on Sunday, May 3, 2015, it was the first time in eight years.

This year's festival saw a parade of young children wearing dazzling costumes, *mikoshi* shrine palanquins, and feudal lords walking through the central part of the city, which is still under construction, and the temporary shopping district. At the main venue — the Ofunato Fish Market — *gongen-mai* and *shishi-odori* dances were performed along local performing arts from ten districts in the city.

The shrine palanquin was also hoisted out on the sea by some 30 fishing boats flying colorful banners as part of a water-crossing ritual that prays for a big fish catch.



The main venue, Ofunato Fish Market

Many young people are diligently helping the affected area of Sanriku move toward a full reconstruction. The section "People for Sanriku's Future" introduces these young people and their powerful feelings.

Part 38 introduces Ms. Aoi Yokoyama's efforts.

### Profile:

Originally from Miyako, Iwate.

In March 2015 she graduated a local high school and found employment at Northern Iwate Transportation, Inc.

She began training at the company after the entrance ceremony on March 19, 2015. On April 30, she made her debut as a Miyako Jodogahama Bay Tour Boat Marine Guide, the first high school graduate to do so in their first year in 25 years.

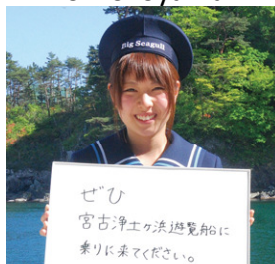
### A dream come true in Miyako

Jodogahama Beach (Miyako) is one of the best-known tourist spots in Iwate Prefecture.

Yokoyama says that she first decided to pursue her current career when riding one of the Miyako Jodogahama Bay Tour Boats during her summer holidays two years ago and being deeply impressed with the "Marine Guides" who provide information on the boats. It was at that point, she says, that she decided she too wanted to become a Marine Guide.

## People for SANRIKU'S Future

Northern Iwate  
Transportation, Inc.  
Marine Guide  
Aoi Yokoyama



"Please stop by Miyako and take a ride on one of our Miyako Jodogahama Bay Tour Boats."

After graduating high school and joining the company in March 2015, she undertook training in Morioka and Miyako, and on April 30 finally made her debut as a Marine Guide.

While many other young people are leaving the region, Yokoyama was able to make her dream come true in Miyako, the town where she was born and raised.

### The importance of a smile to the tourism industry

The Miyako Jodogahama Bay Tour Boats sail around the Jodogahama area for around 40 minutes at a time. She says it can be difficult memorizing the names and locations of all the famous spots dotting the coastline, and occasionally she has to battle with seasickness, but she says the work is very happy and rewarding. "When I see the passengers listening intently to what I'm telling them, and when they come up and talk to me as they are getting off the boat, I feel really good about myself and that I'm doing something worthwhile," she told us.

Smiling, she says about her hopes for the future, "I hope to keep studying hard, so that I can become an excellent tour guide like the older guides, and make the passengers happy."

We wish Ms. Yokoyama all the best as she works hard to rebuild Sanriku through tourism.

### Casualties & Damage in Iwate As of April 30, 2015

- ▶ Human casualties/deaths: 4,672; Missing: 1,129
- ▶ Buildings destroyed (residences only, total/partial): 26,163

To make a donation to aid in Iwate's reconstruction:  
[www.pref.iwate.jp/fukkounougoki/dayori/news/011100.html](http://www.pref.iwate.jp/fukkounougoki/dayori/news/011100.html)

### Thank you for all your support!

As of April 30, 2015

**Donations for survivors:** Around ¥18.38074 billion (91,452 donations)

**Donations for reconstruction projects:** Around ¥19.67782 billion (7,305 donations)

**Iwate Learning Hope Fund donations:** Around ¥7.31347 billion (15,346 donations)

※ This fund is to assist in the study and daily life of affected children by encouraging sport and study activities.

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