

## **Saving the Reef for Future Generations**

The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Japan has 50 Ramsar Sites or Wetlands of International Importance (as of February 2017). The Keramashoto Coral Reef was first designated a Ramsar Site in 2005. Then, in 2014, the original 353-hectare area was massively expanded to 8,290 hectares after the government's designation of the area as Keramashoto National Park.

## **Why Does Kerama Matter?**

A few statistics show why Kerama is important. The Keramashoto Coral Reef accounts for 62% of all the reef-building coral in Japan. Almost 250 varieties of coral have been identified. Species include table, branch, antler, block and encrusting coral. In some places, more than 90% of the area is covered with corals. Furthermore, Kerama's coral reefs and the coral larvae they produce support an ecosystem of extraordinary biodiversity. The reefs are home to damselfish, butterflyfish, and sea turtles, including endangered species like the hawksbill turtle, green turtle, and loggerhead sea turtle. In the winter months, humpback whales migrate here to calve.

## **Eliminating Threats, welcoming Visitors**

At one time, the reef was under serious threat from the coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish. Ongoing efforts by the locals have now all but eradicated it from the area. Ramsar describes the Keramashoto Coral Reef and the surrounding areas as "among the most beautiful marine waters in Japan ... highly valued for nature observation and tourism." We are committed to preserving this very special place for future generations.

Learn more about the Ramsar Convention.