

Urabandai's Reforestation Project

The eruption and partial collapse of Mt. Bandai in 1888 was one of the worst natural disasters to occur in Meiji-era (1868–1912) Japan. The landslide triggered by the collapse of one of the volcano's peaks buried 11 communities and killed 477 people. The surrounding land was left barren.

A reforestation program was launched in the early twentieth century. The government offered an initiative of low-priced land to people who made significant contributions to the area's reforestation. Endo Genmu (1864–1934), a man from Fukushima Prefecture, came to the forefront of this effort. He traveled from the city of Aizu-Wakamatsu with seedlings via a newly opened railway line. Endo and his collaborator, forestry expert Nakamura Yaroku (1855–1929), are credited with planting some hundred thousand trees over 13.4 square kilometers. Many of the original red pines (*Pinus densiflora*) they planted can still be seen along the Goshikinuma Pond Trail. These efforts contributed to the now flourishing ecosystem.