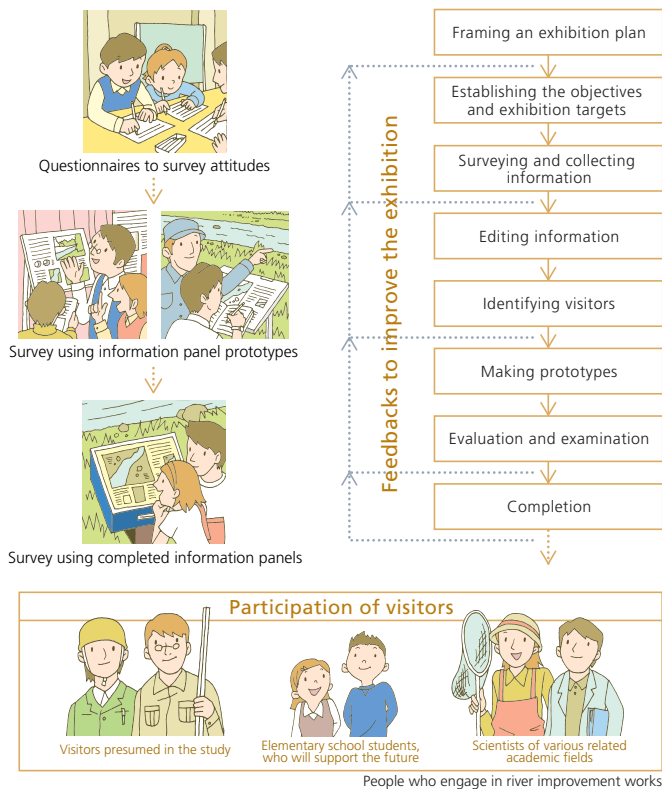


# Developing information panels for explaining studies at Aqua Restoration Research Center

## Process of developing information panels at Aqua Restoration Research Center



## Difficulties of exhibiting river information while evaluating visitors' reactions to an exhibition

River ecosystems consist of various phenomena that undergo changes and mutually interact in a complicated fashion. When at the riverside, people who are not accustomed to visiting them may overlook the riverside plants, the fish in river, the currents that vary in direction and speed, and many other kinds of information. It will be especially difficult for this person to understand the relationships among the various factors. Specialists are capable of actively reading information from natural environments, but the general public cannot do it by themselves. Thus, exhibition methods that are easy-to-understand are needed to effectively transmit information on river ecosystems.

Apart from its river studies, the ARRC investigates effective methods of publishing the significance and results of its studies aiming to enhance the attitude of people toward environmental conservation. Utilizing the advantage of being in an area where people can experience experimental rivers, information panels were prepared to exhibit the results of river

studies in an easy-to-understand manner. In the process of preparing the panels, visitors to the ARRC were asked to answer a questionnaire, which looked at their attitudes to rivers and their evaluations of the boards. The results were used to improve the exhibition methods and expressions. As a result the information boards were produced in an interactive manner.

## Development process of information boards

### Survey to understand the awareness of visitors toward rivers

The attitudes of visitors toward rivers must be understood in order to prepare effective information boards. Thus a questionnaire survey was produced to understand the interests of visitors on river ecosystems before preparing the boards themselves.

The basic constituents of a river ecosystem were classified into three groups: space, water, and organisms. Of the constituents, the visitors were asked to mark those that interested them. Although the visitors varied in terms of their living environment, knowledge, and the group to which they belonged, they had common interests. They were all interested in constituents that are visible and easy to perceive, and were least interested in invisible elements that are difficult to see. The results suggest that expressing invisible elements in a easy-to-understand form is a key to exhibiting the relationships among river constituents.

### Evaluation and examination using prototype boards

Prototype information boards were prepared for six study topics on the experimental streams. These were set up alongside the streams, and were evaluated by the visitors. The expressions of the boards, including the text, figures, and tables, were examined by asking the visitors' questions to check whether they understood the studies' objectives and content. The majority of the visitors mentioned that the boards contained too much information. Some suggested that the contents were too technical and were difficult to understand. Based on their comments, the questions used as titles and the expressions that led the readers to the answers (the points to be communicated), were revised. The amount of information was reduced by focusing on the points and reducing the text, figures, and tables by a half. The contents that the visitors considered difficult-to-understand were revised for the entire layout. Information that was difficult to visualize was supplemented with photographs. Illustrations and devices were added to express difficult river phenomena.

## Characteristics of completed exhibition boards

### Communicating technical contents in forms that are easy-to-understand

On the left-hand side of each board, a simple question and its answer were laid out. Important terms in the text were emphasized using large, bold letters. Technical terms were explained using illustrations. Boards that contain information that can be checked by seeing the rivers were placed