

## Cases

## Pro bono work contributes to protecting Japan's coastal ecosystem



Professionals [Takeshi Nemoto](#)

Date 2020

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Nishimura & Asahi recently provided pro bono assistance to Mobile Sea Otters (MSO), a non-profit organization that seeks to restore deteriorating kelp forests along Japan's coastline.

Across the globe kelp forests, which are the foundation of a healthy coastal ecosystem, are disappearing quickly. This process of kelp denudation contributes to the depletion of marine life diversity, which has serious consequences for the coastal fishing industry. The breakdown of these forests also contributes to global warming. Studies conducted in Japan, the US and Norway have shown that the overgrazing of overpopulated sea urchins is a leading factor in kelp denudation.

MSO's activities include recruiting volunteer divers to catch and remove sea urchins, and then provide them to partner organizations to make use of, which in turn stimulates local fishery and tourism industries.

Partner [Takeshi Nemoto](#)'s pro bono work included advising MSO on its licencing requirements across multiple prefectures, as well as on drafting consent forms for the volunteer divers. As a result MSO is now able to conduct its activities legally and with proper risk protection, for both the organization and the volunteers.

Our firm is honored to have been involved in such an important cause that contributes to the prevention of global warming, the conservation of marine ecosystems, and the protection of the local fishing industry in Japan.

In recognition of Nishimura & Asahi's work on this project, the firm won the TrustLaw Innovation Award at the *TrustLaw Awards 2020*, held virtually on November 5, 2020. TrustLaw is the corporate foundation of Thomson Reuters Foundation, London, UK. Its annual awards celebrate remarkable pro bono projects undertaken by legal teams for NGOs and social enterprises across the globe.

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