
Peaceful Use of Bukhan River Basin: Towards Active Inter-Korean Exchange and Collaboration

Since the construction of the Imnam Dam, or Mt. Geumgang Dam, in the upper Bukhan River, problems have been raised with the common use of water resources of the shared river. However, currently there does not exist sufficient institutional tools to solve the problem, or to promote joint projects to establish peace in the Bukhan River basin among South and North Korea, and the United Nations Command. The construction of the Imnam Dam by North Korea in 1986, has blocked water flow southwards and significantly degraded the ecosystem of the Bukhan River basin. In addition, dam construction has been deterring power generation by dams in the lower Bukhan. Despite this, no fundamental measures have been put in place yet to protect the ecosystem or to secure water resources. To be specific, the Imnam Dam changes the water course to another drainage basin so that North Korea's Anbyeon Chungnyeon Power Plant along the Bukhan River water system can generate power. Consequently, water flow to the Bukhan River has significantly dropped, causing changes in the ecosystem, creating water contamination, and impeding power generation.

Need for Peaceful Use of Bukhan River Basin

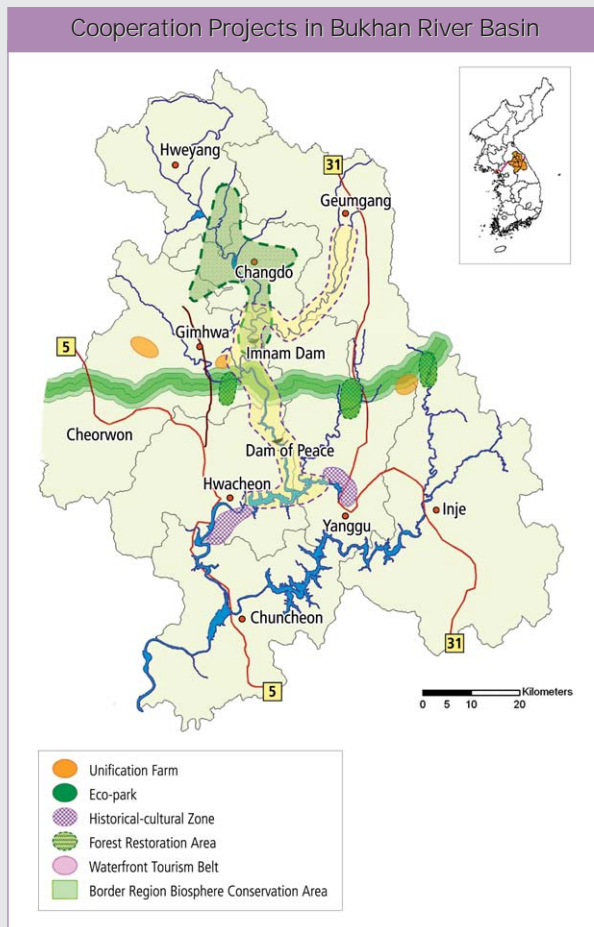
As the possibility of conflicts grows over water use in the shared river between the two Koreas following the Imnam Dam construction, it is increasingly necessary to establish fundamental measures of addressing the issue. In other words, measures to link and peacefully use the Imnam Dam of the North to the Dam of Peace of the South are expected to contribute to the alleviation of militaristic tension and promotion of peace in the area. In addition, the inter-Korean border region, a vast amount of land designated as a military operation area, has been currently left idle. Therefore, the land use efficiency in this region needs to be enhanced by using - jointly between the South and the North - the water and land resources, along with the eco-resources of the Bukhan River basin, which is situated in the central part of the Korean Peninsula.

Another reason to peacefully use the Bukhan River basin is to activate inter-Korean exchange and cooperation. To be specific, the joint use of water resources, development of tourism resources, joint prevention of disasters, conservation and management of the natural environment and electricity production in the Bukhan River basin can contribute to the revitalization of exchange and collaboration between the two Koreas. Lastly, it is necessary to develop the river basin in order to address the inconvenient living environment and underdevelopment in this region, which has aggravated with the blockage of the border region following the division of Korea.

Directions

In order to develop the Bukhan River basin and establish peace in this region, it is necessary to systematically prepare and institutionally support joint water use and other collaborative projects. The directions to the peaceful use of the Bukhan River basin can be detailed as follows: preparation of institutional tools by the two Koreas for the use of the shared rivers so as to jointly use the water resources, establishment of joint measures for disaster prevention and for joint handling of floods and damage from cold weather, planning for preservation and provision of support systems for systematic management of the eco-system, fundamental prevention of disasters through forestations in the Bukhan River basin, promotion of projects of joint exploration for historical remains preservation and restoration, planning for eco-friendly and sustainable use to enhance efficiency of territorial use, linkage of collaboration at the public level to that of the private level phase by phase in terms of main bodies for collaboration and collaborative projects.

As for the selection of collaborative projects, the following detailed criteria can be applied for project assessment: pending issues that both Koreas should jointly deal with preferentially, economic benefits through bilateral collaboration by the two Koreas,



preservation of major eco-resources and cultural and historical resources, possibility of project participation by North Korea, and effect on exchange, collaboration and peace establishment. The possible projects can be suggested as follows: joint use of water resources of the Innam Dam and the Dam of Peace along with electricity cooperation, joint study on the eco-system and creation of eco-parks, designation of areas for biosphere conservation in the border region, forestation in the Bukhan River basin, expansion of pilot farms and farming infrastructure, restoration of discontinued transport networks, promotion of a waterfront tourism belt to link to inland tourism, and joint exploration of cultural and historical remains.

Promotion Strategies

The suggested promotion stages for the inter-Korean collaborative projects, which are intended for a

peaceful use of the Bukhan River basin are, first, 'Peace Belt Preparation,' second, 'Peace Belt Formulation,' and lastly, 'Peace Belt Completion.' To be specific, during the Peace Belt Preparation period, North Korea promotes the opening-up policy and inter-Korean cooperation take place in a limited manner. Secondly, during the Peace Belt Formulation period, North Korea expands its opening-up policy, and as inter-Korean exchange is revitalized, collaboration between the two Koreas begins to take root. And lastly, during the Peace Belt Completion period, inter-Korean economic exchange and cooperation takes place without obstruction in the lead-up to the political reunification.

The following are the major collaborative projects suggested for each stage of the promotion for a peaceful use of the Bukhan River basin;

- **Peace Belt Preparation Stage:** Promotion of peaceful use of the Innam Dam and the Dam of Peace, joint study on major eco-resources, promotion of the UNESCO designation of the border region as a biosphere conservation area, preparation of collaborative measures for disaster prevention in the border region, forestation in the Bukhan River basin, and expansion of pilot farms and farming infrastructure.
- **Peace Belt Formulation Stage:** Preparation of measures to link and use the Innam Dam and the Dam of Peace, restoration of transport networks, joint use and utilization of the eco-resources of the neighboring border region for tourism, joint exploration of the cultural and historical resources, and creation of a tourism belt along the waterfront of the Bukhan River basin.
- **Peace Belt Completion Stage:** Turning of the Bukhan River basin into the Peace Zone targeting Peace Belt establishment in the border region, and creation of a tourism belt in the central eastern inland linking the Peace Belt to the Special Tourism Zone in Mt. Geumgang of the North and Mt. Surak of the South.