

Hundreds of areas deemed ‘important waters’



Two dugongs, a marine species related to the manatee facing imminent danger of extinction, swim off Okinawa in July 2005. | ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY/KYODO

An Environment Ministry panel has designated around 280 coastal areas in Japan as “important waters” in which biodiversity should be preserved, officials said Friday.

The areas, which account for around 18 percent of Japan’s coastal waters, include locations in Shizuoka and Aichi prefectures where loggerhead turtles lay eggs, and Kasaoka, Okayama Prefecture, which is known as a breeding ground for horseshoe crabs.

Also covered are most coastal areas of the main island of Okinawa, which hosts the threatened dugong, they said.

“The designation aims to present scientifically important areas, and it does not immediately lead to regulations on fishing activities,” a ministry official said.

The government expects research data from the experts to be used in compiling local conservation policies and for environmental education.

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