

NBS Good Practices from Chinese government

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Afforestation efforts in Saihanba Forest Farm

1. Background

Situated north of Chengde, Hebei Province, and south of Hunshandake Desert, Inner Mongolia, Saihanba Afforestation Community covers 93,000 hectares almost became a waste land in the 1950s due to rampant felling of trees. Sustainable forest management is an important line of effort to combat climate change. Years of tireless afforestation efforts has raised forest coverage in Saihanba to 80 percent from 11.4 percent, effectively stalling the southward advances of Hunshandake Desert. The Saihanba Afforestation Community is now able to provide 137 million cubic meters of clean water and 545 thousand metric tons of oxygen every year. The afforestation efforts have proven that ecological restoration is a worthy investment.

2. Influence and achievement

After determined efforts of three generations since 1962, forest coverage in the area has increased from 11.4 percent to 80 percent. Now a green great wall has been erected to stop the southward advances of Hunshandake Desert, and the reclaimed landscape is currently supplying some 137 million cubic meters of clean water and 545 thousand metric tons of oxygen to Beijing and Tianjin every year. The restored forest has stimulated green economic growth that has generated an estimated RMB 12 billion. In December 2017, Saihanba Forest Farm was honored the UNEP's Champions of the Earth Award.

3. Geographic Coverage

North of Chengde, Hebei Province, and South of Hunshandake Desert, Inner Mongolia, China

4. Measures

First, tireless efforts pay off. For half a century, foresters and workers have endured hardships in Saihanba and rehabilitated regional ecosystems. Ecological civilization was not built in a day. All the progresses have come from decades of determined efforts.

Second, a scientific approach to afforestation. While tree planting is important for rehabilitation, management and maintenance is even more so. An incentive and punitive regime has been set up for forest management while public awareness of forest protection has been raised through relentless mass education campaigns. Besides, a comprehensive fire prevention and warning system has been put in place, incorporating traditional methods and advanced technologies such as infrared fire-sensor radar systems and thunder-warning systems.

Third, technological innovation. Affected by a temperate continental monsoon climate, the annual temperature of Saihanba is 1.2 degrees Celsius minus, with extreme high temperature reaching 33.4 degrees Celsius, and extreme low reaching 43.3 degrees Celsius minus. After years of unrelenting scientific research, foresters have made breakthroughs in seed planting, cultivation, afforestation, disease and insect resistance in high-altitude desert environment with extreme cold weather.

5. Best practices and implication

First, Saihanba's success story reflects the conviction that "Lucid waters and green mountains are as precious as mountains of gold and silver." Green development has now become a catchphrase in China. Second, Workers and foresters in Saihanba have wrought one miracle after another, forging a Saihanba spirit with tears and blood. Third, scientific management and technological innovation are indispensable to sustainable development of man-made forest farm.