Summary of the Advisory Board's Evaluation for FY2025

Advisory Board Members:

Dr. YOSHIDA Satoshi (Executive Officer / Deputy Director, IES Co-Creation Center, IES)

Prof. Deborah H OUGHTON (Professor, Norwegian University of Life Sciences)

Prof. Thomas JOHNSON (Professor, Colorado State University)

Dr. Florian GERING (Head, Emergency Preparedness & Response Division, BfS)

Evaluation period: April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026

Annual Symposium: March 10, 11, 2026 at CORASSE Fukushima

Advisory Board meeting: March 12, 2026 (Thu) 9:00 ～ 11:45 at IER 6F Conference Room

- **Dr. YOSHIDA Satoshi**

国内外の大学・研究機関と連携し、また、競争的資金も獲得しつつ、着実に学術的な成果を挙げている。事故から 15 年が経過して変化している社会情勢や福島のニーズにも的確に対応しており、福島の住民への成果の還元と人材育成に関する取り組みも積極的に進めている。事故に関連する多くの放射能研究が終了している現在、環境放射能に関する数少ない研究拠点としての役割はますます重要になると考える。一方で、研究所の設立から年次が経ち、施設や設備が老朽化する時期を迎える。長期的な視野に立った整備・更新計画の立案を進めていただきたい。

The IER has been steadily producing academic achievements while collaborating with universities and research institutions both domestically and internationally and securing competitive funding. Fifteen years after the accident, the Institute is responding accurately to the evolving social climate and the specific needs of Fukushima, while proactively promoting human resource development and the return of research benefits to the local community. As many accident-related radioactivity studies draw to a close, the Institute's role as one of the few remaining research hubs for environmental radioactivity is becoming increasingly critical. At the same time, as years have passed since its founding, the facilities and equipment are now entering a period of obsolescence. It is desirable to proceed with the development of maintenance and renewal plans from a long-term perspective.

海外を含めた大学や研究機関との共同研究とそれを基盤にした教育活動を積極的に進めていることは特筆すべきであり、国際的にも認知度が進んで中心的な存在なりつつあると言える。フランスとの連携で開始した「MITATE Lab. Post Fukushima Studies」は、福島事故後の問題に関して、自然科学的な側面のみでなく社会科学的な側面からアプローチするもので大きく評価できる。研究所の取り組みの新たな側面として今後の発展を期待する。ERAN を軸にした非常に多くの共同研究を引き続き実施しており、3 月に福島市で開催した研究発表会も盛況で若手研究者の活躍の場としても有効に機能している。F-REI においても重要な役割を果たしつつある。福島の復興を担う研究機関の一つとして、引き続き積極的な連携を進めていただきたい。

It is noteworthy that the institute has been actively promoting joint research with universities and research institutions, including those overseas, and educational activities based on such collaborations. Consequently, its international recognition is growing, and it is establishing itself as a central hub in the field. The "MITATE Lab. Post Fukushima Studies," initiated through collaboration with France, is highly commendable for addressing post-accident issues from not only natural science perspectives but also social science perspectives. This initiative is expected to further develop as a new dimension of the institute's activities. Furthermore, the Institute continues to conduct

numerous joint research projects centered on ERAN, and its annual meeting held in Fukushima City in March was a great success, serving as an effective platform for young researchers to excel. The institute is also playing an important role in F-REI. As one of the research institutions supporting the reconstruction of Fukushima, continued proactive collaboration is encouraged.

3 月に開催された成果報告会は、専門家向けのポスター発表で質の高い発表がなされ、若手研究者や学生を中心とした非常に活発な議論が行われた。また、合わせて開催された市民向けのシンポジウムでは、社会科学的側面に切り込んだ挑戦的な議論が展開され、現在の福島の重要課題と住民の関心事を的確に捉えていたと評価できる。研究活動懇談会も、地元の漁業関係者と連携して開催するなどの工夫が見られた。
The Annual Symposium held in March featured high-quality poster presentations for specialists, with very active discussions led mainly by young researchers and students. In addition, the concurrent Symposium for the General Public presented ambitious discussions addressing social science aspects, successfully capturing key issues currently facing Fukushima as well as the interests of its residents. The dialogue meetings also demonstrated commendable ingenuity, such as being organized in collaboration with local fisheries stakeholders.

2025 年度に、博士課程に 2 名、修士課程に 4 名の新たな学生を迎えるが、引き続き学生の獲得に努めていただきたい。
In fiscal year 2025, the institute will welcome two doctoral students and four master's students; continued recruitment efforts are recommended to ensure further growth.

- **Prof. Deborah H OUGHTON**

The IER continues to carry out excellent research at a high international level, and both the director and researchers should be credited with ensuring that the Institute attracts a good level of national and international collaboration. The work carried out with, for example, the IAEA and with Japanese ministries and funders shows interaction with important actors in the area.

The six separate Research Activities have a good publication record, and it is encouraging to see that there are also a number of cross-cutting activities. The research surrounding the discharge of water from the Daiichi NPP being an excellent example. However, some of the papers, particularly in the speciation RA, seem to be rather far removed from research in environmental radioactivity. While it is good that staff at IER also have other research interests, it is unclear whether such studies have been, or should be, funded by grants on environmental radioactivity. Perhaps such papers could be listed as additional work.

New research directions on decommissioning and the use of radioisotopes as tracers for environmental studies show the development and application of research to new directions. The inclusion of the human factor in environmental radioactivity research reflects ongoing international developments and should be encouraged. Collaboration with other faculties at Fukushima University should help to promote such research.

Student research projects and presentations at the annual conference show a continued interest for the research area from young scientists, and the dialogue meetings show interest and dissemination on a societal level. In broadening dissemination, the IER could consider how to better use some of the material produced for the annual report.

- **Prof. Thomas JOHNSON**

The IER is doing extraordinary work. I am especially impressed with the public workshops, and meeting with individual work groups. Meeting with fishermen and farmers is essential for recovery.

The IER engagement with students is also very encouraging and rapidly developing. Teaching the next generation about radiation and the environment is a key aspect in the training of new scientists that understand radiation. The research is relevant, applicable, and exceptional, with collaborators from around the world. The collaborating scientists encompass both senior experienced and renown individuals as well as junior scientists. The IER scientists and collaborators are exceptionally productive, relevant, and important for understanding environmental radioactivity. Dividing the annual meeting into two parts, one for scientists, and another for the public, is another example of the exceptional planning and thoughtfulness of the IER. Collaborative efforts and integration with ERAN helps to increase the IER's role as a leader in environmental radioactivity research.

- **Dr. Florian GERING**

The Fiscal Year 2025 Activity Report is clearly structured, accessible, and highly informative. It offers a comprehensive overview of activities and provides valuable insights for advisory work. Scientific productivity remains strong, particularly in Projects 3 (Ecosystems) and 5 (Speciation of Radioactivity), where the number of peer-reviewed publications is especially impressive. The inclusion of "Future Vision" sections is highly welcome, although the lack of updates in several projects may indicate a need for clearer communication of progress or strategic direction.

The introduction of the MITATE Lab signals an important move toward interdisciplinary research, its integration into the existing structure could be clarified a bit more precisely. The targeted stakeholder engagement approach is commendable; in particular, the specific dialogue meetings for fisheries stakeholders represent a valuable initiative. Providing more transparency on participant selection and the timing of these meetings could further strengthen their effectiveness and inclusivity.

The institute's implementation of an open data policy is highly commendable, as it supports transparency and collaboration; the practical application of this open data policy could be communicated more explicitly (e.g. by giving examples) in future Activity Reports to better highlight this strength.

Financially, the modest (~5%) decline in total revenue—driven by reduced core funding but partly offset by increased mission-oriented funding—does not appear critical in the short term, but could present risks if the trend continues and should therefore be monitored closely.

I recommend to continue to follow systematic processes for identifying and prioritizing emerging research topics, including mechanisms to incorporate stakeholder needs and societal relevance. Furthermore, the institute could benefit from articulating a more explicit long-term strategic vision.

The IER Annual Symposium serves as a key platform for sharing insights into how the Fukushima Daiichi accident has affected residents of Fukushima Prefecture, while also offering valuable perspectives for the scientific community. Through presentations, posters, and related public events,

it consistently delivers engaging and accessible information that appeals to both specialists and general audiences.

The 12th Annual Symposium of the Institute of Environmental Radioactivity at Fukushima University was a highly successful - in both scientific quality and public engagement - and thoughtfully organized event. The program effectively demonstrated the breadth of IER's research, ranging from environmental radioactivity and ecosystem processes to increasingly important social and psychological dimensions. The inclusion of "outside-the-box" topics added valuable breadth, while IER's central role within the Environmental Radioactivity Research Network (ERAN) stands out as a clear success. The flash talks were particularly effective in providing a concise overview of the impressive 101 posters, and the REMO online sessions offered meaningful opportunities for remote participation.

For further improvement, I recommend evaluating how the audience engagement could be further improved (e.g., via YouTube analytics or feedback tools), as this could help further enhance the symposium's outreach and impact.