Dual Sides of Bukhansan(Mountain) Dulegil

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Bukhansan, or Bukhan Mountain, is unique as a mountain that spreads over the northern part of metropolitan Seoul. On 31st August 2010, Dulegil (i.e. 'a path that runs around something') opened to the public in the Bukhansan section (44km) of Bukhan Mountain National Park. Bukhansan Dulegil was developed in order to attract mountain hikers to the lower part of the mountain as well as to prevent the increasing side trails and natural damage. This scheme was begun in awareness of the endangered habitation for small mammals around the mountain, due to the countless footpaths tearing the mountain into pieces. There has been a considerable level of positive effect resulted, but side effects have also been detected, such as noise, wastage, and conflicts with land owners. However, Bukhansan Dulegil turned out as a popular site among the visitors and mountain hikers.

According to Korea National Parks Authority, around 1.2 million visitors take their way to Dulegil instead of the major summits of the mountain. Whereas those visiting Bukhansan, where Dulegil is created, has decreased by 13.2% (300,000persons), the number of visitors to Dobongsan, where Dulegil is not created, has increased by 0.7% (16,000persons).

A boom on creating such a footpath around mountains, unfortunately, is very likely to cause concerns about crossing over the territories of the national park and other protected areas. In particular, there is a case where a local government has designated illegal side trails as a 'pedestrian road'. Furthermore, it could increase threats to the ecosystem in many ways. The development process will bring in heavy machinery with big wheels that should widen the trails unnecessarily. That will affect the lives of the mammals that should move up and down the mountain. An expert observed that the"creation of Bukhansan Dulegil has rather become a new damaging factor to the area than accomplishing its intended goal." Recently, a record-breaking heavy rain brought about a landslide at a mountain in the southern part of Seoul. Chances are very high that Bukhansan may bring about such a disaster if an attempt to build additional footpaths is realized.