

# ***A “SMART” ENDEAVOUR BY FUJAIRAH MUNICIPALITY***

***Fujairah Municipality primed to hold the first SMART workshop in the MENA region.***

*By Tharindu K.WA.*

Fujairah Municipality is proud to have hosted the first ever SMART (Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool) training workshop at Wadi Wurayah National Park (WWNP). The workshop’s guest list included government agencies from throughout the Emirates and was the first to open the door to this ground breaking tool in the field of spatial monitoring in relation to protected areas. The Workshop had its opening ceremony at the Concord Hotel Fujairah over two days; the 28<sup>th</sup> of February and the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, and then proceeded to host the training workshop at WWNP from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of March.

WWNP provides the ideal backdrop for a workshop such as this as its large area and tough terrain provides many obstacles regarding surveillance and protection of its precious habitat. The National Park is home to a plethora of species, some that are endangered and only found within the park’s boundaries. With such a precious area of biodiversity there are sure to be threats. Threats such as poaching and violations which include severe littering, graffiti and habitat destruction are constant problems that Park Rangers face on their patrols.

This is where new advancements in technology such as “SMART” can bring about solutions that help officials on the ground by adding a powerful tool to their belts. SMART is a revolutionary software developed to enhance conservation efforts by assisting officials on the ground in recording and efficiently analyzing threats to the environment that they try so hard to protect

WWNP being the first in the region to have integrated this software into its patrolling programs has seen great improvement in the efficiency and quality of information being gathered. This is directly reflected in the effectiveness of actions taken to reduce threats and improve park management. For example between 2014 and 2015 the park recorded 12 incidents of poaching occurring in the park. However thanks to the use of this software the park was able to allocate resources like ranger patrols into the right areas and place 13 signboards, displaying both information and law based warnings strategically. This didn’t just do well it completely stopped poaching in the following years.

Workshops like this are truly crucial to protected areas as they allow for the exchange of ideas and expertise between different government-entities. Participants from the other emirates were able to learn from and expand on the experience of the rangers at WWNP leading to exchanges of knowledge that benefit all involved.

As his Excellency Mohammed Al Afkham, Managing Director of Fujairah Municipality puts it “It is only with advancements like this that we can begin to improve the management of protected areas and truly protect that what is most precious to this land, nature in all its beauty.