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UAE's most major environmental challenges addressed

Ecological footprint of the UAE being reduced as part of 2030 plan, minister says

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Tourists at the Al Wathba Wetland reserve in Abu Dhabi. Recently, the Al Wathba Wetland Reserve was recognised internationally as the first internationally renowned Ramsar site in the capital.

Image Credit: Abdul Rahman/Gulf News archives

Abu Dhabi: As one of the first countries to adopt a strategy for reducing its ecological footprint, the UAE is in the midst of several initiatives aimed at tackling some of the biggest environmental issues facing the country.

According to a 2010 report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the UAE was rated number one in the world for having the biggest ecological footprint. The ecological footprint is a measure of a country's sustainability that compares the use of natural resources per person per capita, which is expressed by a unit of bio-productive land called the 'global hectare' (gha).

Following the announcement, a committee of scientists and experts was set up in order to study in detail the methods of energy consumption in the country and determine how they can be improved. This made the UAE the third country in the world to develop the 'Ecological Footprint Initiative' after Switzerland and Japan.

"Since then, the footprint per person in the UAE has gone down from 9.5 gha in 2010 to 8.4 in 2012," said Dr Rashid Ahmad Bin Fahd, Minister of Environment and Water, at a conference today (Monday) in the capital.

steps to introduce environmentally friendly electrical and even medical equipment to the market and ban products which waste a large amount of energy,” Bin Fahd added.

In February, the Regulation and Supervision Bureau in Abu Dhabi and the Emirates Wildlife Society, in association with WWF, signed an agreement to collaborate in developing energy-efficiency standards for residential lighting in the UAE and the policies involved in the country’s energy and water sector.

“Improvements are also being made in the UAE’s biodiversity sector which is already ranked as one of the best in the world. Our 2015 plan is to protect 10 per cent of the country’s land and we are currently on track as reserves currently make up 7.12 per cent of the UAE’s total area,” the minister said.

Recently, the Al Wathba Wetland Reserve was recognised internationally as the first internationally renowned Ramsar site in the capital.

In addition, efforts are being made to monitor and limit diseases and epidemics that may spread to the country from external sources such as the novel coronavirus which threaten the UAE’s biodiversity, according to the official.

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