هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency- ABU DHABI

Press Release
Abu Dhabi, June 15th, 2010

Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi launches pioneering online Coastal Atlas

- An interactive guide with an innovative online component to Abu Dhabi's coastline and waters will support policy-making and coastal development planning, as well as educate people about the Emirate's rich marine biodiversity
- The result of two years' work, the Atlas is the first comprehensive resource of its kind in the Gulf region and one of the most technologically-advanced in the world
- The Atlas is a dynamic application which will be regularly updated ensuring current information is readily available to all
- The Atlas has already won the international Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Special Achievement Award for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in Environmental Management for 2010

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) has today launched its *Coastal Resources Atlas and Vulnerability Index* ('Coastal Atlas'), a pioneering new resource detailing the Emirate of Abu Dhabi's coastline and waters. The Coastal Atlas is designed to aid local policy-making and coastal development planning, as well as inform and educate people interested in the Emirate's rich marine biodiversity.

The Coastal Atlas, which is available to view online at **coastalatlas.ead.ae/English,** has been primarily designed as a tool to aid policy makers and development planners understand more about the Emirate's marine environment, helping them to understand the potential impact of new policies, legislation and development decisions. The Atlas details environmental sensitivities, such as different habitats, its local biodiversity and their vulnerabilities, according to CMRECS (Coastal and Marine Resources and Ecosystem Classification System) criteria, which is internationally-recognised and considered global best-practice.

As well as technical data, the Coastal Atlas also contains information about Abu Dhabi's coastal and marine environment that members of the public will find of interest, for example locations of Marine Protected Areas. Using easy-to-use software and visually-attractive design, viewers can navigate the coastline and waters from the comfort of their armchairs. For example, people will be able to learn where the Emirate's

population of dugongs can be found, what kind of fish live in the local waters and the impact of climate change on rising sea levels in the Arabian Gulf. Most of the data is 'open access' online, however a second tier of the Coastal Atlas is a GIS-based extension that contains commercial or sensitive information. For example, oil rig locations can only be accessed by authorised parties granted access by EAD.

EAD has designed this tool to be used for environmental impact assessment by planners and developers. For example, a developer planning to dredge along the coastline will be able to map out sensitive areas containing high level of sedimentation and overlay these areas with ecological data. This mapping facility will enable developers to have access to data that will inform their decision-making.

An oil spill modelling application outlines potential scenarios in the event of an oil spill in the Arabian Gulf, showing how the oil could spread out from various locations, wind and wave patterns which could influence its spread and impact on ecology. The software has also been designed to be used as a central near-real-time resource point in the event of a real oil spill, showing the tracking of the oil's movements and helping to ensure critical information is exchanged transparently and smoothly between the organizations involved in the oil spill's management.

The Coastal Atlas has already been recognized with a global best practice award- the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Special Achievement Award for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in Environmental Management for 2010.

Speaking at today's launch, H.E Majid Al Mansouri, Secretary General of EAD, said: "In Abu Dhabi, we are blessed with an abundance of natural coastline and a rich marine environment which is being increasingly recognized, such as that of Bu Tinah Island. We believe that people interested in biodiversity will enjoy learning more about our local marine habitats and wildlife through this easy-to-use online tool. At EAD, we believe that interest leads to knowledge, and that knowledge leads to action. We realize that the more people know about Abu Dhabi's unique environment, the more they will appreciate it and want to protect it."

In addition, Thabit Zahran Al Abdessalaam, Director of EAD's Biodiversity Management Sector, said: "The Coastal Atlas is the first resource of its kind in the region, and one of the most technologically-advanced in the world today. It will function as a live database, and we are actively asking our partners to help contribute on an ongoing basis, helping to ensure that information about the marine environment is readily accessible to those who need it and that environmental considerations are prioritized."

The Coastal Atlas is an expanded and updated version of the Coastal Resources Atlas issued in 2000, a hard copy edition developed by EAD, which focused on potential coastal-based scenarios in the event of an oil-spill in the Arabian Gulf.

-ends-

About Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD)

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) is a governmental agency that was established in 1996. We are committed to protecting and managing biodiversity, providing a clean environment and promoting Sustainable Development in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. We provide a direction for Government, business and the community to build environmental considerations into the way they plan and live without compromising Abu Dhabi development. Since 2008, EAD has been awarded ISO 9001 for Quality; ISO 14001 for Environment and ISO 18001 for Health and Safety.

For Further Information, Please Contact:

Noura Sarraj/ Baraa Hussain/ Reem Hafiz
Weber Shandwick
Tel: 02-449-4457
Email: noura.sarraj@ws-mena.com/ baraa.hussain@ws-mena.com/ reem.hafiz@ws-mena.com