

Mobile Shark Soapbox in race to save marine life

Winner of global competition will get funding to further conservation awareness

Dubai: A global competition organised by international scuba foundation Project Aware has shortlisted UAE shark awareness initiative as the competition enters its final stages.

Project Aware has selected 12 projects from a total of 68 entries for its Ocean Warriors competition. The UAE project called The Mobile Shark Soapbox is a mobile shark-themed kiosk that would travel to public spaces and schools to act as a focal point for educational activities aimed at raising awareness about the plight of shark species in the Gulf.

Melanie Salmon, director of Global Ocean, which submitted the kiosk theme to the competition, said winning the competition would help provide funds to make the travelling awareness programme a bigger success.

"Monies generated via the Project Aware will be matched by funding from Global Ocean," Salmon told Gulf News. "This initiative is great for Dubai as Awareness is the key word- to inform young people about the treasures of the deep means to inform their parents too, and knowing what one can do and how to respect and protect depleted marine life is the first stage of preserving marine biodiversity and in this case, healthy fisheries."

The public is now being asked to vote for their favourite projects by September 1 - the project with the most votes gets funding.

Salmon said her group is hoping "to get permissions for the kiosk to visit schools, malls and beaches to inform the public about what they have to lose before it's too late. In this case, there are 16 vulnerable, endangered or threatened species of sharks, sawfish and rays that need our protection here in the Gulf."

Students visiting the kiosk will be treated to "illustrations of the 16 IUCN [International Union for Conservation of Nature] listed species, puzzles and quizzes relating to Elasmobranchs and their natural history, plus information as to the threats these sea ancients are facing along with ideas how we may positively contribute to responsible stewardship of the Gulf", she said.