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September 26, 2011

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## Derse Land Donation Preserves 420 Million-Year-Old Reef

**Milwaukee, Wis.** – The Schoonmaker Reef, the first fossilized reef described in North America, was gifted to the City of Wauwatosa in a signing ceremony on September 26, 2011. Derse, Inc. made this \$300,000 property gift to the City of Wauwatosa in order to preserve the reef's historic and educational value. The land, a piece of Derse's old property, is known in scientific circles as "The Schoonmaker Reef" for the family who owned the main quarry here. The reef, once submerged in a warm water sea, is a registered National Historic Landmark and will now be under the care and direction of the City of Wauwatosa.

Discovered in 1844 and declared significant by geologists in 1862, The Schoonmaker Reef is located northwest of the intersection of 62nd St and West Martin Drive in Wauwatosa. Bill Haney, Derse's CEO, officially presented the property deed to Mayor Jill Didier, on behalf of the City of Wauwatosa, at a presentation at the reef on Monday afternoon.

"Derse is proud to be turning historically relevant property back to the public to enjoy," said Bill Haney.

There are special plans for this small corner of Wauwatosa. "The City has a preliminary plan for preservation prepared by the geologist who put together the national register nomination for the reef," said the Mayor of Wauwatosa, Jill Didier. She added, "The plan includes creating an access trail and removing invasive species or hazards. The reef will be managed by the Wauwatosa Historic Preservation Commission as a special historic resource with limited access in order to preserve its geologic features." Geologists Dr. Donald Mikulic and Dr. Joanne Kluessendorf, director of the Weis Earth Science Museum in Menasha, Wisconsin, have studied the Schoonmaker Reef for more than 40 years, and wrote the national historic landmark nomination.

Dr. Mikulic remarked, "The Schoonmaker Reef has considerable historic importance on several levels. Locally, it was the site of one of the earliest industries in Wauwatosa and Milwaukee County, and played a critical role in providing building materials for the developing area. Scientifically, the reef has considerable importance as the first ancient reef described from North America, and possibly the world."

The reef was part of a warm shallow tropical ocean that existed 420 million years ago. The reef, which looks like a stony hillside to the average viewer, has been for the most part forgotten over the last few decades, since the quarrying ended in 1950. Today, the exposed reef is covered with thick vegetation – but its 420-million-year-old heritage is being reintroduced to the community.

The historical significance of this reef has gained the attention from geologists worldwide. Fossils from this reef are in many natural history museums. Dr. Joanne Kluessendorf remarked, "The Schoonmaker Reef was one of the best fossil sources in Wisconsin when the quarries were operating. Specimens from here are found in museum collections around the world. Wauwatosa's pioneer physician, Dr. Fisk H. Day, assembled the best fossil collection from the reef, which now is housed at Harvard University." Fossils of ancient squid-type creatures up to six feet in length have also been taken from this site.



Dr. Peter Sheehan, Curator of the Department of Geology at the Milwaukee Public Museum, paints the picture of the sea that used to be. "Sitting in a boat at this spot during that ancient time we would have been floating in a warm shallow sea that covered much of North America. White beaches would have been nearby and sea food would have been abundant. And, if it were January, temperatures would have been in the 90s," he said.

"Schoonmaker Reef provides a wonderful glimpse of what tropical sea life was like roughly 420 million years ago," said Richard Slaughter, UW-Madison Geology Museum Director. He added, "From corals and sponges to trilobites and snails, the diversity of animals preserved at this locality is impressive. These fossils have attracted the attention of scientists since before Wisconsin was even a state. The reef was the very first fossil reef ever recognized in North America. This was a stunning revelation for the 1860's especially when you consider how far removed Schoonmaker Reef and Wisconsin are from modern oceans. It paved the way for the identification of hundreds of other fossil reefs across the planet. As a paleontologist and a giant fan of Wisconsin geology, I think it is great that Derse is helping preserve this legendary site."

Derse knew little about the historical value of the old property until about five years ago when they started thinking about moving their corporate headquarters to a new location. Once Derse executives became more aware of the historical significance of the old property, the question about what to do with it was evident.

Dr. Sheehan said of the land transfer, "This donation will preserve for future generations a wonderful window into Wisconsin's distant past."

Bill Haney also added, "Engaging with this fascinating piece of land that dates back 420 million years, not far from downtown Wauwatosa, will be an experience many in the Milwaukee area can soon admire."

Derse has been a fixture in Milwaukee's business environment for more than 60 years. Founded in 1948 in a Milwaukee garage, the company headquarters now reside in Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley.

#### **About Derse:**

Derse is a complete face-to-face marketing agency with a smarter approach to building client sales and managing their trade show, marketing environment and event programs. Derse helps organizations align face-to-face marketing efforts with broader business and engagement strategies through:

- Experiential Marketing strategies that help increase sales
- Program management tactics that help control and reduce costs
- Creative architectural and graphic solutions that attract a target audience

Derse has received honors including recognition as one of the "World's Top Event Marketing Companies" (#7) by *Advertising Age* magazine; and Derse's national headquarters received Silver-level LEED certification, an industry first for face-to-face marketing industrial facilities. Derse employs more than 350 people in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Jersey, Pittsburgh, Phoenix, San Diego and San Francisco. For more information, visit [www.derse.com](http://www.derse.com) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/dersesocial](http://www.twitter.com/dersesocial)

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