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Service Systems Associates and SeaWeb Partner to Raise Awareness About Coral Conservation

Washington, D.C. – Service Systems Associates (SSA) announced today that it does not and will not supply coral or coral-derived products to any of the 28 gift shops in zoos, aquariums, and museums it serves throughout the United States. In an effort to raise awareness about the threats to corals and to promote coral conservation among its customers, SSA has signed on to the *Too Precious To Wear* campaign, a SeaWeb initiative to create demand for coral conservation.

“SSA is committed to sustainability in every aspect of its operations, especially in the products we provide to consumers,” said Kevin McNicholas, President of SSA. “Making sure that real coral is left where it belongs—in the ocean—and not in our stores is important to us. We are proud to join forces with SeaWeb to raise awareness about threats facing corals and let customers know what they can do to help protect them.”

SSA joins a long and growing list of retail outlets, jewelry makers, fashion designers and home décor designers that have joined with *Too Precious To Wear* to create demand for coral conservation. The campaign raises awareness of both deep-sea and shallow water corals as living animals, and it seeks to address the threats posed to coral by international trade. Others supporting the campaign include Tiffany & Co., Lilly Pulitzer, Pottery Barn, Lela Rose, Temple St. Clair, Monique Péan, Leber Jeweler, Hannah Garrison, Michael Aram and Chantecaille.

“We applaud SSA’s efforts to be a coral-free company,” said Dawn M. Martin, president of SeaWeb. “With the impressive number of visitors to zoo, aquarium and museum gift shops annually, the SSA and *Too Precious to Wear* partnership will serve to educate countless more people about the vital role corals play in the ocean ecosystem. Spreading the word about coral conservation is precisely what we need to help protect vital ocean resources.”

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SSA manages retail and culinary departments at zoos, aquariums, museums and botanic gardens in the United States. SSA champions and supports conservation efforts in communities and educates clients, guests, vendors and employees to continuously improve environmental and social performance as part of its Eco Mission to conduct business in an environmentally responsible manner. SSA's locations that have pledged to be coral free include zoos in Denver, Colorado Springs, El Paso, Sacramento, Honolulu, Detroit, Houston, Boise, Minnesota, San Francisco, Miami, Nashville, Fresno, Dallas, Fort Wayne, Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, as well as the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium, Tulsa Zoo & Living Museum, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Hermann Park Conservancy, Pretend City Children's Museum, and the Museum of Science & Industry in Tampa.

Corals are vital to a healthy ocean. They provide food and shelter to 25 percent of marine fish species and provide us with tourism, recreational, medicinal and environmental services that are estimated to be worth \$375 billion annually each year. However, climate change, pollution, ocean acidification, destructive fishing and direct removal for use in the jewelry, home décor and aquarium industries all contribute to the loss of the world's corals and reefs. At least 75 percent of the world's tropical coral reefs are threatened.

Deep-sea "precious" corals from the Coralliidae family have been taken from the ocean for centuries for their use in jewelry and decorative objects, and shallow-water reef species are now being collected for the curio and aquarium trade. These red and pink corals are most commonly used in jewelry and luxury home décor.

Too Precious to Wear is a SeaWeb initiative designed to create a demand for coral conservation. The campaign raises awareness of the need for coral protection among the fashion, jewelry and design industries and addresses the threats posed to coral by the often-unregulated and illegal trade in these species. Coralliidae are the most valuable and widely traded of all precious coral species, but they are among the least protected.

SeaWeb is an international, nonprofit, communications organization dedicated to creating a culture of ocean conservation. SeaWeb works collaboratively to identify, inform and empower diverse ocean voices and conservation champions in strategic, targeted sectors to encourage market solutions, policies and behaviors that result in a healthy, thriving ocean. SeaWeb transforms knowledge into action by shining a spotlight on workable, science-based solutions to the most serious threats facing the ocean such as climate change, pollution and over-exploitation.

Service Systems Associates manages retail and culinary operations at museums, botanic gardens, zoos and aquariums in the United States, including the San Francisco Zoo, Tampa's Museum of Science & Industry, Los Angeles and Denver Zoos, Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium and Monterey Bay Aquarium. The company is a national leader in visitor service operations for cultural attractions, serving over 17 million guests annually. Service Systems Associates celebrated 20 years of service in 2009.