

Cedar Point unveils water park plan

Molly Kavanaugh

Plain Dealer Reporter

11/14/03 Sandusky- Cedar Point's newest roller coaster is a measly 35 feet high, but it will make a bigger splash than even the park's mammoth Top Thrill Dragster.

The unnamed water coaster will be the centerpiece of the \$22 million Castaway Bay, the amusement park's first indoor water park resort slated to open next November.

The park's existing Radisson Harbour Inn, on Cleveland Road at the entrance to the Cedar Point Causeway, is being expanded to house a 38,000-square-foot indoor water park with a dozen water slides, a 100,000-gallon wave pool, two 50-person spas and more. On the coaster, riders and their rafts will be propelled uphill by water jets.

The Caribbean theme will extend to some of the 237 hotel rooms and suites. The existing T.G.I. Friday will remain open during construction, along with the Radisson.

Officials at Great Bear Lodge, Ohio's only indoor water park in nearby Perkins Township, say they welcome the competition.

"We certainly feel that it is a complement with such a progressive company as Cedar Fair that they would definitely follow our lead," said Julie Stokes, the lodge's director of sales and marketing.

Great Bear's success since it opened in spring 2001 has not gone unnoticed by other developers. An indoor water park resort three times the size of Great Bear has been proposed on Ohio 250, south of Great Bear.

Mark Litten, executive director of the Greater Erie County Marketing Group, said that developers of the proposed Kalahari Resort are waiting for county commissioners to approve road, sewer and water improvements before finalizing the deal. Tentative opening date is also next November.

Another out-of-state developer is eyeing land in the vicinity of Kalahari for a water park resort comparable in size to Great Bear, he said.

Litten said the area could support a half-dozen water parks.

Nationally, the indoor water park industry has experienced rapid growth since it began a decade ago in the Wisconsin Dells, say **Jeff Coy** and Bill Haralson, with Hotel Waterpark Resort Research & Consulting. The Dells has 18 hotels with indoor water parks, the largest single concentration in the United States.

This year, 14 hotel water parks opened nationwide, nine are under construction and 46 projects are in the planning stages, according to the consultants' report released last month.

Room rates at Castaway Bay will not be announced until January, but that did not deter visitors who began calling Cedar Point yesterday afternoon to make reservations soon after details were announced, said Janice Witherow, public relations manager.