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Revolution One Step at a Time



"While the official theme of the issue focuses on waterparks, I'd say the whole issue supports a secondary theme, namely evolution. Here's why."

They say if you're not moving forward, you're moving backward. We're happy to report that the aquatics industry is definitely headed in the right direction.

We see this first in our annual Waterparks package. This year, we have two complementary articles—one that gives us the 10,000-foot view of the industry since roughly the turn of the century; the other, a case study showing how and when waterpark designers must be brought into the process as their wares become increasingly integrated into venues such as resorts, community developments, and multi-use spaces.

In his account of the last quarter century, Craig Nielsen describes a waterparks industry that was progressing steadily as the 20th Century drew to a close. "We had plenty of properties across the country, mostly outdoors, and they generated profit—at least during the summer. But they were novel, generally freestanding, and as seasonal as any aquatics venue."

Nielsen identifies Great Wolf Lodge's indoor-waterpark resort model, which it debuted in 1997, as a turning point. By making an indoor waterpark the central attraction of a resort, the concept addressed significant barriers to profitability for these attractions and helped accelerate industry growth.

Now vice president of strategic partnerships at Landmark Aquatic, Nielsen entered the field around 2000 and witnessed the changes firsthand. Beginning on page 12, he traces the sector's evolution and shares his expectations for where it may be headed.

As waterparks become more integrated into larger ecosystems, it has become more important than ever that their design be factored into the venue's planning from the very beginning. A waterpark is not an incidental or

an add-on but rather a core amenity with its own complicated set of needs.

To illustrate, Sylvia Bucklew of AquaWorx walks us through a case study in which the waterpark design and construction took place under these ideal conditions. As the depicted vacation-rental community was being planned, she says, "the waterpark was never an afterthought... [W]hen aquatic amenities are integrated into community planning, mechanical systems, structural supports, and programming zones can be coordinated for optimal performance and long-term operational efficiency."

While the official theme of the issue focuses on waterparks, I'd say the whole issue supports a secondary theme, namely evolution.

While the introduction of Great Wolf Lodge may have represented a watershed for the waterpark industry, most progress takes place more gradually. Incremental steps can produce meaningful results over time. This principle of cumulative improvement is at work in this month's Lifesavers. Pete DeQuincy brings us to the next stage of a process he has been developing over the past several months: lean in-services—15-minute drills focused on one specific skill at a time.

The idea is that, as lifeguards build and practice these individual micro-skills, they become better prepared to perform the larger, more challenging, and more dramatic tasks. This month, DeQuincy shows how to apply those micro-skills to active water rescues.

One step at a time, big things happen.

Enjoy the issue and your month. | **AQI**

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BEST OF AQUATICS NOW ACCEPTING ENTRIES

Submissions are now being accepted for the 2026 *Aquatics International* Best of Aquatics program, which recognizes excellence among aquatics facilities and waterparks.

The annual program honors achievements across a range of categories, including programming, training, marketing, community outreach, management, lifeguard management, and diversity and equity initiatives. We recognize excellence in strategies large and (deceptively) small, from facility-wide training plans to targeted programming to single marketing and social media campaigns.

All aquatics facilities and waterparks are invited to enter. Winning entries will be featured in the November/December 2026 issue of *Aquatics International*. | **AQI**



Join such facilities as the City of Brenham (Texas) Blue Bell Aquatic Center, recognized in Best of Aquatics last year for lifeguard training. PHOTO COURTESY BRENHAM BLUE BELL

Deadline to enter: Thursday, September 10, 11:59 p.m. PT.



For more information or to submit an entry, visit aquaticsintl.com.

Questions may be directed to Rebecca Robledo at rrobledo@kenilworth.com.

AOAP RELEASES EXTREME HEAT PREPAREDNESS POSITION PAPER



The Association of Aquatic Professionals (AOAP) has published a position paper outlining recommendations to help aquatics facilities protect staff from heat-related illness and injury during periods of extreme temperatures.

The guidance calls on facilities to treat extreme heat as an occupational hazard by developing a written "Heat Illness Prevention Plan" tailored to each site.

According to AOAP, these steps ultimately benefit clients: "Protecting aquatic staff from heat-related illness is an essential component of protecting patrons from drowning."

The paper outlines recommendations in three areas: protecting staff from occupational heat exposure, monitoring and responding to environmental conditions inside natatoriums, and ensuring supervised aquatics facilities remain available as community cooling resources when needed.

The guidance also notes that indoor facilities can pose significant risks, as high air temperatures, elevated humidity, and poor air quality may create heat stress levels comparable to those in outdoor environments.

The document was developed to align with OSHA, the CDC, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the International Life Saving Federation (ILS), and other organizations. It is available at aquaticpros.org/resources/advocacy; click on "position papers." | **AQI**

\$2 MILLION SETTLEMENT REACHED IN RETENTION POND DROWNING CASE

The family of a child who drowned at a Florida apartment complex was awarded a \$2 million settlement, resolving claims against the property's owners before a wrongful death lawsuit was filed.

According to Haggard Law, which represented the child's family, the settlement stems from the death of Arnez Dowdell, who drowned in a stormwater management vessel after his family had recently moved to a neighboring apartment complex. The property owners denied negligence but agreed to pay the limits of their insurance policy.

After investigating the incident and examining the stormwater system and surrounding area, Haggard Law said a wooden board had been placed into the water as a ramp for turtles. The firm alleged the feature created an "attractive nuisance" by drawing children to the water and increasing the risk of drowning.

The case comes as Haggard Law reports an increase in drowning incidents involving retention ponds and pools at residential properties. Earlier this year, the firm announced a \$6 million settlement involving a retention pond drowning and a separate \$2 million settlement related to a drowning at a short-term rental property.

The firm has called for additional safeguards around apartment complexes, including self-closing and self-latching gates, and has advocated applying commercial pool safety requirements to short-term rental properties. | **AQI**

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Lean In-services for Active Water Rescues

Brief drills help teams communicate during emergencies

By Pete DeQuincy

PHOTO COURTESY CITY OF ALAMEDA, CALIF.

Saving a person who is actively drowning is one of the core skills all lifeguards know. When a life-threatening situation arises, the lifeguard must respond quickly to prevent a potentially deadly outcome.

These scenarios also provide the most drama and gratification. With active water rescues, the person may very well be saved and walk away unscathed. And they will thank you profusely. In practice, they are the most interesting because of the drama. That applies to even the enacted ones performed for training purposes.

But a successful active water rescue depends on certain building-block skills. Up to this point, I have provided short 15-minute in-service sessions, which I call Lean In-service, on CPR, airway management, and other basic skills that combine to make a successful rescue.

Here are two Lean In-service sessions that focus on developing proficiency and speed in responding to an active drowning guest in distress (GID).

Brief but impactful

Lean In-services pack a lot into a little time. That is why I have been promoting them this year.

But it is not just the brevity that makes them so effective. By keeping them short, we are forced to target a very specific skill. We can concentrate on smaller components and then build them up, rather than training on a skill that involves multiple components and therefore multiple opportunities to fail.

Any trainer can develop a Lean In-service for their lifeguards. Here is a review of the structure for these drills.

Summary of the 15-minute in-service framework

15-MINUTE LEAN IN-SERVICE: Topic		
Introduction	1 minute	
Skill #1	3 minutes	Benchmark to be achieved
Skill #2	3 minutes	Benchmark to be achieved
Skill #3	3 minutes	Benchmark to be achieved
Skill #4	3 minutes	Benchmark to be achieved
Closing	2 minutes	



Introduction

The introduction should provide the setup and explanation of the first skill/activity.



Skills

Each skill block should focus on improving one specific skill.



Closing

This time allows the trainer to provide feedback to lifeguards on their skills, the trainer's goals, and how the in-service aligns with overall job duties.



Benchmarks

Benchmarks outline what the trainer hopes to achieve within the skill block. This can include a specific skill to be acquired or a timing goal to be achieved.

LEAN IN-SERVICE #1

15-MINUTE LEAN IN-SERVICE: Active Rescue of Guest in Distress (GID) in Mid Depth

Introduction: How to rescue from the front and rear of the GID	1 minute	Give a quick explanation and demonstrate the contact positions to the GID.
Skill #1: Rescue approaches One person will be the GID designated at point "A," while the remaining lifeguards will make the rescue one at a time. (1–6 rescuers for this drill)	3 minutes Each rescuer will start from the side and swim toward the GID at point "A." The goal is to improve speed and form in the following: modified front crawl with the rescue tube, modified breaststroke with the rescue tube, and swimming with the rescue tube trailing behind. Repeat the skill, striving for nine approaches if time allows.	Benchmark: Rescuers should focus on improving speed while swimming with the rescue tube, continually reducing the time spent separated from the tube.
Skill #2: Repositioning the rescue tube Rescuers will start on one side of the pool and swim to the other.	3 minutes Rescuers swim with the rescue tube trailing. Midway through, they reposition the rescue tube and continue in either modified front crawl or modified breaststroke.	Benchmark: Rescuers should focus on improving speed and proficiency when repositioning the rescue tube.
Skill #3: Front rescues with a rescue tube One lifeguard will be the GID, while the remaining make the rescue one at a time. (1–6 rescuers for this drill)	3 minutes Each rescuer starts from the side, enters the water quickly and safely, makes contact with the GID, secures the GID to the rescue tube, then moves to the side to allow the next rescuer to make the rescue. Note: GID will remain in the water for the next rescuer. Repeat the skill, striving for nine rescues if time allows.	Benchmark: Rescuers should make safe, quick entries and never lose sight of the GID. Additionally, keep arms extended and locked to prevent the GID from grabbing the rescuer instead of the tube.



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Skill #4: Rear rescues with a rescue tube One person will be the GID, while the remaining make the rescue one at a time. (1–6 rescuers for this drill)	3 minutes Each rescuer starts from the side, enters the water quickly and safely, makes contact with the GID, secures the GID to the rescue tube, then moves to the side to allow the next lifeguard to make the rescue. Note: GID will remain in the water for the next rescuer. Repeat the skill, striving for nine rescues if time allows.	Benchmark: Rescuers should make safe and quick entries, never losing sight of the GID. Make contact with the GID from behind, maintain a secure hold, and keep your head turned to the side so the GID cannot grab or injure the rescuer.
Closing	2 minutes	Provide feedback and remind lifeguards how the training aligns with the larger duties and tasks.

LEAN IN-SERVICE #2

15-MINUTE LEAN IN-SERVICE: Multi-Rescuer Response, Multi-adult and/or Child Guests in Distress (GIDs)		
Introduction: How rescuers will work together to rescue an active Guest in Distress (GID).	1 minute	Give a quick explanation and demonstrate the rescuers' roles.
Skill #1: Multi-lifeguard rescue of an active GID, simultaneous response. Three-person rescuer groups, with 2 rescuers initiating the response to the remaining rescuer, who acts as the GID. Rescue tubes needed.	3 minutes Rescuers will respond from two different points to rescue the GID. One rescuer should approach from the front of the GID, and one from the back. After performing the skill, rescuers switch approaches. Repeat the skill to improve technique, speed, and coordination. Repeat the skill, aiming for 6 rounds if time allows.	Benchmark: Rescuers should focus on speed, timing, and communication with one another while securing the GID.
Skill #2: Multi-rescuer response to an active GID, staggered response (5–10 seconds). Three-person rescuer groups, with 2 rescuers initiating the response to the remaining lifeguard, who acts as the GID. Rescue tubes are needed.	3 minutes Rescuers will respond from two different points to rescue 1 GID. One rescuer should approach from the front and the other from the back of the GID. After performing the skill, rescuers switch approaches. One will leave 5–10 seconds ahead of the second. Repeat the skill to improve technique, speed, and coordination. Strive for 6 rounds, if time allows.	Benchmark: Rescuers should focus on speed, timing, and communication with one another to secure the GID simultaneously. If not simultaneously, the secondary rescuer should support the one who makes first contact with the GID.
Skill #3: Multiple lifeguards rescue two active GIDs, simultaneous response. Four-person rescuer groups, with 2 rescuers initiating the response, and the remaining 2 acting as GIDs. Rescue tubes needed.	3 minutes Lifeguards will respond to rescue 2 GIDs. Rescuers should approach each GID from the rear, if possible, to secure each of them. Repeat the skill to improve technique, speed, and coordination. In repeating the skill, strive for 6 rounds if time allows.	Benchmark: Rescuers should focus on speed, timing, and communication while securing the GIDs.
Skill #4: Three lifeguards respond to rescue two active GIDs simultaneously. Five-person rescuer groups, with 3 initiating the response and the remaining 2 acting as the GIDs. Rescue tubes needed.	3 minutes Lifeguards will respond to rescue 2 GIDs. Rescuers should approach the GIDs from the rear, if possible, to secure each of them. Repeat the skill to improve technique, speed, and coordination. Repeat the skill, striving for 6 rounds if time allows.	Benchmark: Rescuers should focus on speed, timing, and communication while securing the GIDs.
Closing	2 minutes	Provide feedback and remind lifeguards how the training aligns with larger duties and tasks.

The Lean In-service provides opportunities for the trainer to identify gaps or rough spots that might require an additional training block or a repeat of an existing block (skill refresher/polish).

Things to consider as the trainer

As the trainer, your critical eye is essential to ensure the lifeguards meet the benchmarks. Keep in mind the following to help ensure a successful in-service:

- Provide visual demonstrations both on land and water. Be prepared to get wet with your trainees.
- The instructor/trainer should be proficient at all skills before the in-service. You should understand the skill thoroughly and be able to demonstrate it.
- Be mindful of your time management; it is easy to exceed the time limit.
- It is okay to repeat a skill block if necessary.
- Less talk, more interaction. Keep lifeguards actively engaged.

Common mistakes seen during Lean In-service

- The rescuer compromises their own safety to rescue the GID.

- Rescuers fail to communicate with each other throughout the multiple-rescuer skill blocks.
- Lifeguard fails to secure the GID after making contact.

Tips to help make training more effective:

Remember, lifeguards must maintain their physical ability to make water rescues. That means training in the water. It is not uncommon for people to say, “We don’t train and get in the water,” even when we are doing water skills. But you have to learn how it feels to perform a rescue in a wet uniform, and how to keep your hair out of your face.

In addition to skill proficiency, lifeguards should continually improve how they communicate with one another during an emergency. Good physical readiness and communication can make all the difference in performing a successful rescue and staying safe.

Good luck and keep training. | **AQI**



Pete DeQuincy is aquatics manager at East Bay Regional Park District in Oakland, Calif. He is an American Red Cross instructor trainer in water safety, lifeguarding, and emergency medical response.



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WATERPARKS Enter Their Next Era

One industry veteran examines waterpark innovation and expectations

By Craig Nielsen

Water has been a core human pleasure for as long as civilization has existed. The waterpark industry, at its best, is in the business of delivering that pleasure in a safe, accessible, and joyful way.

For the past 25 years, I have been fortunate to play a part in that mission. During that time, I served as CEO of CEM Aquatics, a Salt Lake City firm specializing in the design, construction, and renovation of aquatic facilities across the country. Earlier this year, following CEM's acquisition by Landmark Aquatic, I stepped into a strategic leadership role, charged with leveraging my experience to help my new parent company further its inroads into the waterpark sector.

PHOTO: STOCK_COLORS/ E+/GETTY IMAGES



PHOTO COURTESY CRAIG NIELSEN

Craig Nielsen and his wife, Mari Nielsen, at Cowabunga Bay in Henderson, Nev.

I also co-own two waterparks in Nevada—Cowabunga Canyon in Summerlin and Cowabunga Bay in Henderson. Having built waterparks from the ground up, I bring a hands-on expertise and owner-operator insight.

I can report that the industry has come a long way from the days when waterparks consisted of a couple of fiberglass slides and a wave machine. The momentum is



PHOTO MGSTUDIO/ E+/GETTY IMAGES

At many resorts these days, waterparks have become the main draw for vacationing families.

building, and the future is bright for waterparks. As we look to the next decade, the sky is the limit, as barriers once limiting the industry—seasonality, demographic reach, geographic constraints—have begun to fade. Technology, capital, and an evolved consumer appetite for water-based experiences are converging in a way I have not seen in a quarter century.

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Where waterparks once constituted niche destinations for families to visit during summer, more and more types of venues are including them to attract and retain visitors and generate profit.

PHOTO COURTESY
LANDMARK AQUATICS

THE TRANSFORMATION: CENTURY-END MARKET SHIFTS

During the industry's infancy, few could have imagined that waterparks would become so popular. When people ask what I think about the waterpark industry, I see a story still being written—and an increasingly exciting one at that.

In the early 2000s, the business model for waterparks was remarkably consistent. These attractions were mostly standalone destinations: Guests came for the day, then returned home or to their lodging. The typical waterpark had open and closed flume slides, tube rides, and lazy rivers. These properties were reminiscent of early amusement parks, with snack bars, perhaps a sit-down restaurant, and maybe a gift shop.

The season was typical of other outdoor aquatic facilities—open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Revenues came from admission and upcharges on food and goods purchased at the gift shop. The most sophisticated piece of technology on the property was probably the water chemistry controller.

The complexity of the playing field has changed dramatically since those days.

One of the most important shifts came in the late 1990s/early 2000s with the rise of the indoor waterpark resort. Great Wolf Lodge was one of the first to add lodging to waterparks. This essentially removed seasonality as an obstacle to profitability, especially in the cold-weather states.

From a broader perspective, this innovation by Great Wolf transformed the traditional waterpark business model by treating the indoor waterpark as the hotel's core amenity. It became the centerpiece of the property's entertainment year-round. Suddenly, a family destination that once operated 90 days a year was generating revenue year-round, making it a fundamentally different business.

WHO IS BUILDING WATERPARKS TODAY?

Seeing the success of brands such as Great Wolf Lodge, many operators wanted to reap the benefits waterparks offered.

The popularity of waterparks grew rapidly. Many hotel and hospitality brands began including waterparks in their offerings because of their appeal to consumers. Resort and hotel chains saw the opportunity waterparks provided.



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Waterparks continue to take on different forms, with specialty features such as surf parks, whitewater parks, and lagoons becoming more prevalent.

PHOTO COURTESY REVEL SURF PARK, MESA, ARIZ.

Competition continued to heat up. Amusement parks such as Disney, Nickelodeon, and Wet'n Wild added waterparks, as did hotel brands such as JW Marriott, which incorporates waterparks into its resorts to compete for family travel.

The secret was out: Waterparks attract people. So more and more operators began building them.

Casino operators have also discovered that waterparks and resort amenities can improve nongaming revenue and hotel occupancy. For example, the Great Wolf Lodge resort at Foxwoods in Mashantucket, Conn., is a \$300 million project with 549 rooms and a 92,000-sq.-ft. waterpark. Casino owners recognize that a waterpark can attract families and keep guests of all ages on the property for extended periods.

Cruise lines have also developed private islands centered on waterparks. I was part of a Landmark Aquatic strategic leadership team that recently returned from the Bahamas, where team members observed several large cruise lines building lagoons on private islands centered on waterparks. Ships drop passengers off at these islands, where they are entertained for the day. The resorts are massive, with large pools and waterparks.

Consumers today want more from waterparks and often select vacation resorts based specifically on this attraction. With further innovation, waterparks are finding homes in new types of venues. Mixed-use real estate

developers are also adding them. Artificial lagoons, surf parks, and outdoor water amenities increasingly serve as anchors for master-planned communities, resort residential neighborhoods, and entertainment districts.

Increased investment from major hospitality brands and destination operators has raised expectations across the industry. Today's guests compare every aquatic experience, not just one waterpark against another. To meet the challenge, operators now place greater emphasis on immersive theming, unique attractions, guest comfort, operational efficiency, and year-round experiences that encourage repeat visitation.

We see growing demand for attractions that create active, memorable experiences, such as diving platforms, aquatic obstacle courses, climbing walls, deep-water standing wave units, and adventure play features.

Nickelodeon, for instance, has built waterparks in Mexico, and Great Wolf Lodge continues to expand to attract guests to its hotels. Parents and grandparents recognize that children often want to visit waterparks because of these premium features.

THE NEXT OPPORTUNITIES: SURF, RIVERS, AND AI

As waterparks become more common, the industry must continually innovate to compete, attract broader audiences, and maintain the novelty of these attractions.



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Features such as lazy rivers are taking up more space and appealing to a broader swath of consumers with the addition of swim jets and other features to increase interactivity.

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These days, one long-standing feature takes on more forms than even a decade ago. Lazy rivers are being leveraged to attract a broader spectrum of users than before. Where the lazy river of 2005 offered a peaceful, ambling float around the property, today's adventure rivers include rapids, jets, current systems, and obstacle features that create active, multi-lap experiences. These enhanced attractions can justify premium pricing and drive social media shareability.

One of the next big opportunities for waterparks involves surf pools. Companies are producing surfable waves that attract novice to experienced surfers, as well as curious guests who have never seen the ocean. The Cannon Beach surf park in Arizona is a prime example.

Right now, I see surf parks taking a position similar to that of indoor waterpark resorts in their early days. I believe that operators who incorporate surf parks into their waterpark facilities in the next three to five years will gain a significant first-mover advantage in their markets.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has already affected waterparks and promises to play a larger role over time. It can make pump-room operations more efficient, improving water chemistry and pump and filter performance.

Beyond pump-room operations, interactive AI features are poised to transform the guest experience. I have seen examples in Europe where a patron goes down a slide and interacts with a series of buttons and lights. The technology tracks speeds via a wristband, announces daily race winners, and rewards them with prizes such as discounts on food or merchandise. I expect more AI applications to become common in waterparks soon.

Consumers are looking for experiences they cannot re-create at home—something exciting, unique, and worth returning for. Guest expectations and industry innovation drive these trends. The most successful facilities are those that balance new attractions with strong operations, safety, and long-term sustainability. I think it is safe to say that this will not change. | **AQI**



Craig Nielsen is a vice president of strategic partnerships at Landmark Aquatic and a former CEO of CEM Aquatics, where he spent more than 25 years designing, constructing, and renovating aquatic facilities across the United States. He is also the longtime owner of two waterparks.

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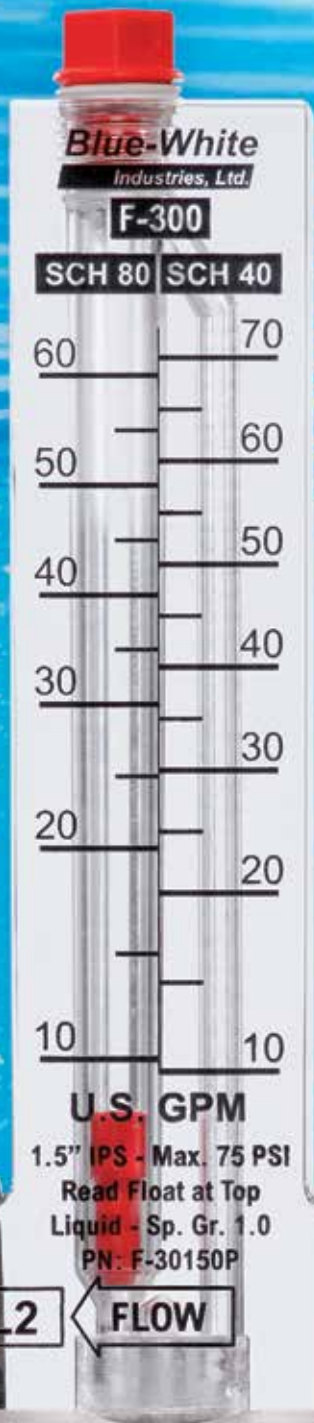
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Planning **WATERPARKS** as Community Assets

Early coordination aligns amenities
and operations

By Sylvia Bucklew

Windsor Cay's dual-flume waterslide combines open and enclosed flume options within one attraction.

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From the time Pulte Homes broke ground on Windsor Cay Resort in Clermont, Fla., the waterpark was never treated as an afterthought. The 693-unit vacation-rental community—positioned just minutes from Disney World and Universal Studios—was conceived from the outset with a full-service aquatic amenity at its core. That decision, made at the development planning stage, is an important consideration for commercial aquatic consultants advising mixed-use resort or short-term rental communities.

The project team assembled for Windsor Cay included waterpark contractor Village Pools of Central Florida, JK2 Construction, WET Engineering, AquaWorx, and Water Odyssey. The result is a cohesive aquatic environment featuring a dual-flume waterslide, a multilevel interactive water play structure, a winding lazy river with propulsion, and a dedicated swimming pool—all tied together by a centralized filtration and mechanical infrastructure system.

For builders and consultants, the significance is clear: Integrating aquatic amenities into community planning creates the opportunity for mechanical systems, structural supports, and programming zones to be coordinated for optimal performance and long-term operational efficiency.

In vacation-rental communities, waterparks can serve as differentiators with their ability to transform a property into a destination in its own right. Engaging, on-site recreation encourages guests to spend more time on the property, creating opportunities to extend stays, increase on-site spending, and enhance overall guest satisfaction. Positioning aquatic infrastructure within the master site plan—rather than as an add-on—also allows mechanical systems and cross-brand features to be coordinated from the design phase forward.





▲ The multilevel water-play structure sits at the heart of the kiddie pool zone.

MULTILEVEL PLAY STRUCTURE

One of the more technically detailed elements of the Windsor Cay project is the multilevel water-play structure at the heart of the kiddie pool zone. What makes it distinctive for commercial aquatic builders is not just its visual impact—it is the deliberate integration of products from two separate brand families into a single, cohesive structure. AquaWorx manufactured the custom fiberglass play structure while integrating Water Odyssey's decorative spray features throughout the design, creating a cohesive play environment

▲ Windsor Cay Resort brings together a dual-flume waterslide, a multilevel water-play structure, a lazy river, a swimming pool, and centralized mechanical infrastructure within a coordinated amenity area.

that blends interactive water play with a unified visual aesthetic.

The structure combines slides and interactive spray features, including a large water bucket that creates an overhead water release, as well as a rotating water-play feature that invites guest participation. Coordinating these elements within one play structure enabled the project team to create programming for multiple age groups while maintaining a cohesive visual and operational design.

Surrounding the structure, ground sprays are positioned directly on the pool floor to extend the interactive zone beyond the structure itself, encouraging movement, discovery, and multi-directional engagement.

The integration of AquaWorx and Water Odyssey components demonstrates how features from separate product lines can be combined into a single play structure. Strategic component mixing—when coordinated by experienced aquatic designers—allows consultants to maximize play value, hit specific

age-group programming targets, and create visually distinctive structures that differentiate one resort from the next.

ONE STRUCTURE, MANY EXPERIENCES

Windsor Cay's dual-flume waterslide combines open and enclosed flume options within one attraction. For commercial aquatic consultants, the feature illustrates how different slide experiences can be incorporated into a single structure.

The color scheme—vibrant yellow, green, white, and blue—is a visual anchor for the waterpark. The ride also includes a dispatch system based on red-light/green-light sensors. The system helps lifeguards manage rider intervals and is intended to support consistent slide operations during variable guest volumes.

At Windsor Cay, the sensor-based dispatch system was incorporated into the slide installation during design and construction, enabling coordination with the slide structure's hydraulic and operational controls.



Five Planning Takeaways from Windsor Cay

1 | Plan aquatic amenities

early. Integrating a waterpark into the community plan enables coordination of mechanical systems, structural supports, and programming zones from the outset.

2 | Coordinate multiple attractions as one amenity area. Windsor Cay combines a dual-flume slide, a water-play structure, a lazy river, a swimming pool, and centralized mechanical infrastructure.

3 | Mix components for broader

play value. The multi-level play structure combines AquaWorx's custom fiberglass structure with Water Odyssey spray features, slides, and interactive elements.

4 | Design slide exits with guest flow in mind.

The dual-flume slide exits directly into the lazy river, helping reduce bottlenecks at the slide base and encouraging continued use of the attraction loop.

5 | Conceal guest-facing mechanical equipment where possible.

Windsor Cay's subterranean lazy-river thrusters support water flow while minimizing the visibility of propulsion equipment.




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FEATURE | WATERPARKS



Surrounding the structure, ground sprays are positioned directly on the pool floor to extend the interactive zone beyond the structure itself.



A large water bucket that releases water overhead, paired with a rotating interactive water-play feature encourages guest participation.

Riders exit the slide directly into the lazy river, providing a direct transition that helps improve overall guest flow and reinforces the interconnected nature of the waterpark layout. That deliberate exit-point integration is a design decision with real operational consequences: It helps reduce bottlenecks at slide bases and encourages guests to continue engaging with the attraction loop.

LAZY RIVER PROPULSION

An especially sophisticated technical element of the Windsor Cay waterpark is the lazy river propulsion system. The lazy river is powered by

subterranean river thrusters, a mechanically concealed approach that supports water flow while minimizing the visibility of propulsion equipment to guests.

The thrusters are camouflaged in green to blend with the surrounding landscape, an intentional design choice that preserves the space's resort-style appearance. For commercial aquatic consultants designing for hospitality or vacation-rental communities, this approach provides an example of mechanical concealment within a guest-facing water feature.

CENTRALIZED MECHANICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A waterpark's long-term operation depends in part on the reliability of the filtration and mechanical systems that support it. At Windsor Cay, a centralized hub brings together water-quality management, slide pumping stations, and hydraulic controls for the interactive water features.

Locating these functions within a coordinated mechanical infrastructure system supports the project's overall approach to integrating aquatic attractions and operations from the outset.

For consultants, Windsor Cay illustrates how filtration, slide pumping, and hydraulic controls can be addressed during initial project planning as part of the broader aquatic amenity plan.

RELATED RESORT-COMMUNITY PLANNING STRATEGIES

Windsor Cay was designed with explicit reference to the nearby Windsor Island Resort. For commercial aquatic builders working with real-estate developers, the relationship between the two communities illustrates how a developer may apply a similar amenity concept across related vacation-rental projects.

For builders and consultants, projects such as Windsor Cay demonstrate the value of experience with resort-integrated aquatic environments and coordinated project teams. That experience may be relevant when developers consider similar amenity-driven community projects.

The collaboration among AquaWorx, Water Odyssey, and Village Pools of Central Florida demonstrates the coordination required when a project combines cross-brand play

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The structure combines slides and interactive spray features, including a rotating water-play feature that invites guest participation.



The structure combines slides and interactive spray features to create programming for multiple age groups while maintaining a cohesive visual and operational design.

AquaWorx manufactured the custom fiberglass play structure while integrating Water Odyssey's decorative spray features throughout the design.

Decorative spray features create a cohesive play environment that blends interactive water play with a unified visual aesthetic.

features, concealed mechanical systems, and programming for different guest groups.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL AQUATIC PLANNING

Windsor Cay Resort illustrates how a waterpark can be planned as part of a vacation-rental community rather than added after the broader site plan is established. The project brings together a dual-flume waterslide, a multilevel water-play structure, a lazy river, a swimming pool, and centralized mechanical infrastructure within a coordinated amenity area.

For commercial aquatic builders and consultants, the project underscores the importance of early coordination among attraction programming, structural requirements, mechanical systems, and the project team. Windsor Cay also demonstrates how cross-brand features and concealed propulsion equipment can be incorporated within a unified resort-waterpark design. | **AQI**



Sylvia Bucklew is a marketing professional with seven years of experience in the aquatic play equipment manufacturing industry. She showcases innovative aquatic play projects and supporting projects

that bring interactive, inclusive aquatic experiences to communities, resorts, and recreation centers. Bucklew is currently the marketing manager at AquaWorx | Fountain People | Water Odyssey and can be reached at sylvia.bucklew@aquaworxusa.com.

Ground sprays are positioned directly on the pool floor to encourage movement, discovery, and multidirectional engagement.

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Product: Vantage ACF

Features: Vantage ACF series of calcium hypochlorite feeders is designed to make chlorination easy; calcium hypochlorite, a source of unstabilized chlorine, provides sanitation without the hassle of liquid chlorine.

Contact: vantagewatercare.com



BECS Technology

Product: BECSys Controllers

Features: Easy-to-use water chemistry controls, equipment room controls, and CO2 feed systems; includes advanced features such as integral Gbit Ethernet with EZConnect, total alkalinity monitoring and control, VFD interface, and BECSys Live online access; NSF-certified.

Contact: becsys.com



Aquatic Development Group

Product: WaveTek

Features: WaveTek wave generation equipment has a global presence of more than 550 installations; crafted with precision at ADG's headquarters in New York, every system undergoes rigorous manufacturing processes and strict quality control measures; a wide range of applications, including wave pools, action rivers, and more.

Contact: wavetekwaves.com



ChlorKing

Product: NEXGEN on-site chlorine generator

Features: ChlorKing commercial on-site chlorine generators are designed to help protect facilities against the ever-changing costs of chemicals, replacement parts, and labor for repairs; helps prevent recreational water illnesses (RWIs) and improve swimmer comfort; produces 10–120 lb of bleach per 24 hours and uses pool water; one unit can sanitize up to six bodies of water.

Contact: chlorking.com

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Counsilman-Hunsaker

Product: Aquatic Feasibility Studies

Features: Counsilman-Hunsaker's Aquatic Feasibility Studies combine feasibility analysis, pro forma development, and master planning to help communities make informed aquatic-facility investments. The team evaluates more than 60 factors and 200 data points, including demographics, market demand, operating costs, and comparable-facility performance. Customized revenue and expense models account for each community's goals, growth potential, and local conditions. Flexible master plans help facilities adapt over time, while collaboration with municipal leaders, aquatics staff, and community stakeholders supports long-term sustainability.

Contact: counsilmanhunsaker.com



Hayward Commercial Aquatics

Product: CAT 5500

Features: Water chemistry controllers with TDS, temperature, and salt monitoring; equipped with state-of-the-art sensing and control capabilities tailored specifically for salt chlorine applications; offers pH, ORP, conductivity/NaCl, backup sanitization, and internet-based monitoring.

Contact: hayward.com



Lincoln Aquatics

Product: Chemtrol Controllers

Features: Chemtrol controllers, manufactured by Santa Barbara Control Systems, offer a full range of commercial pool controllers—from simple automation to advanced, integrated systems—backed by decades of unparalleled customer service and support; Chemtrol has a controller for facilities of all sizes.

Contact: lincolnaquatics.com



Recreonics

Product: Wibit SpeedSlide standalone play inflatable

Features: Wibit SpeedSlide is a compact, standalone inflatable attraction for small, shallow-water pools. Guests can slide on their stomachs, knees, or even while standing, with the technique determining when they enter the water. Its separate slide area supports a smooth guest flow and enhances operational safety. The attraction has minimal space requirements, and no water supply is required.

Contact: recreonics.com



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Product: Pulsar® Precision and Pulsar® Precision 30

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Contact: pulsarpoolproducts.com



Water Odyssey

Product: Fun Forms Aqua Slides

Features: Available in more than 40 different, brightly themed, hand-detailed designs; can be added to any aquatic play setting; can be custom designed to fit your space and theme; suitable for spray parks and all types of pools, including zero-entry/beach entry; sized for ages 2–5 and 6–12 years; ideal for fast and easy retrofit; ASTM compliant.

Contact: waterodyssey.com



Vortex Aquatic Structures

Product: Elevations™ by Vortex

Features: Elevations™ is a multilevel aquatic play structure designed for guests of all ages. It can transform an underused wading pool or replace an aging attraction with a space-efficient play destination. Featuring interactive games, slides, and dynamic water effects, the structure encourages movement, exploration, and social connection. Customizable themes, colors, and configurations allow it to fit virtually any space or project vision, while safe, *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*-compliant access options support inclusive play for guests of all abilities.

Contact: vortex-intl.com



WhiteWater

Product: AquaAdrenaline

Features: AquaAdrenaline is a modular waterpark attraction combining aquatic play with adventure-course obstacles—without a harness. Designed for purpose-built or qualifying existing pools, it accommodates multiple age groups and physical abilities. Platforms can incorporate features such as Zip'N Swing, Cannonball Run, and AquaClimb Traverse, allowing guests to test their agility and build confidence. Its flexible configuration supports a variety of footprints, while high play value, low staff-to-guest ratios, and spectator appeal make it a dynamic capacity absorber.

Contact: whitewaterwest.com

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As the predominantly family-friendly village of Wellington, Fla., continued to see population growth, officials decided to provide residents with a highly flexible aquatics facility that could serve everyone from water exercisers to competitive swimmers to kids just having fun.

To fill the bill, a design for the Wellington Family Aquatic Center created a multiuse space with separate pools and a building structure in between.

The pools were designed with fun, practicality, and inclusion in mind. Variety and versatility were always top priorities. The initial design included four pools to provide more specialized spaces. As the price tag crept over budget, the team decided to build a stretch-50 competition pool and a multi-purpose recreational pool.

For more ambitious visitors, the nearly 16,000-sq.-ft., 64-m-long pool was outfitted with a movable bulkhead, allowing operators to divide the vessel into different configurations. It features 1- and 3-m diving boards and ranges in depth from 6 ft. 8 in. to 13 ft.

On the other side of the building, creating a completely separate space, sits the nearly 8,100-sq.-ft. leisure pool. A freeform, beach-entry pool with play structures provides a safe space for little ones and offers a curvy contrast to the attached rectangular lap pool. The obstacle course, whose framework hovers over and across the rectangle like a bridge, draws attention and is colored the same blue as the umbrellas and other features.

Simple forms and bright colors were used on the building and pools to create a timeless, practical aesthetic. **IAQI**

—Rebecca Robledo



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