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## Polin provides dynamic attractions package Cowabunga Bay slides into Las Vegas water park market

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HENDERSON, Nev. — With a splash heard 'round the Las Vegas Valley, Cowabunga Bay, a new water park, sent water coursing through its Lazy River and colorful collection of slides and finally threw open its gates to the public the first week of July.

The 23-acre property, located at the intersection of Galleria Drive and N. Gibson Road just east of Interstate 515, features 25 rides and attractions in a setting that combines Hawaiian, East Coast boardwalk and 1950s California beach culture themes. The park enjoyed an enthusiastic welcome from its host city and the media, as well as brisk attendance, through the remainder of its partial first season.

The second water park to open in the metro Las Vegas area since the Wet 'n' Wild brand reentered the market in 2013, Cowabunga Bay — also originally set to open last year — cost \$26 million to build. It faced several hurdles between its December 2012 ground-

breaking and completion this past summer.

Changes in the investor group, delays in overseas shipments of critical steel slide support structures and a couple of geological surprises onsite delayed the park's opening twice.

"It's tough to get a brand-new park off the ground, and we've had a few challenges along the way," acknowledged Shane Huish, general manager, whose family is a 50 percent investor in the Henderson property and the sole owner of Cowabunga Bay's identically named sister park in Draper, Utah.

The Huishes, who also own and operate three entertainment properties called Family Fun Center & Bullwinkle's Restaurant in suburban Seattle and Portland, Ore., were approached by local developers about bringing their popular water park brand to the Las Vegas area.

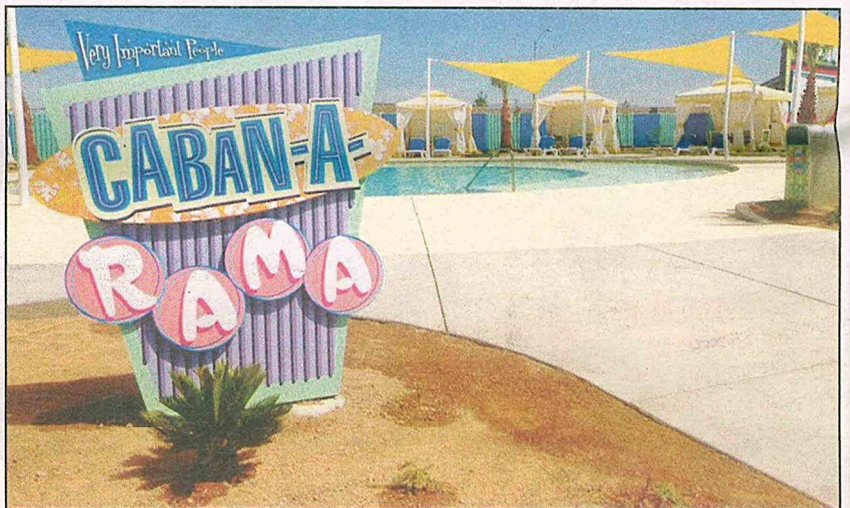
"They had already done a lot of the legwork here," Huish said. "They came up to Utah, we started talking and decided to partner with them. We got a late start last year, and along the way, our partners had a problem coming up with their portion of financing. So we got half of the park built with our contribution."

Construction crews working on the site encountered a naturally occurring, but not uncommon, desert obstacle in the form of caliche — a sedimentary rock similar to concrete.

"We had a slide, our Mat Racer, designed to go down 20 feet under the ground, with an uphill finish," Huish said. "When we started digging, not only did we hit caliche, but 14 feet down groundwater suddenly started pouring in. This was bad news. There's like an underground river; you could go 20 feet to either side and not hit it. We have other foundations that go 30



The colorful theming at Cowabunga Bay Las Vegas encompass several fun zones evoking Hawaiian, East Coast boardwalk and 1950s California Beach cultures. The Caban-A-Rama (below), which has a mid-century flavor, offers private cabanas and quiet exclusivity, while the Surfin' USA mat racer slide (bottom) rocks out. COURTESY COWABUNGA BAY

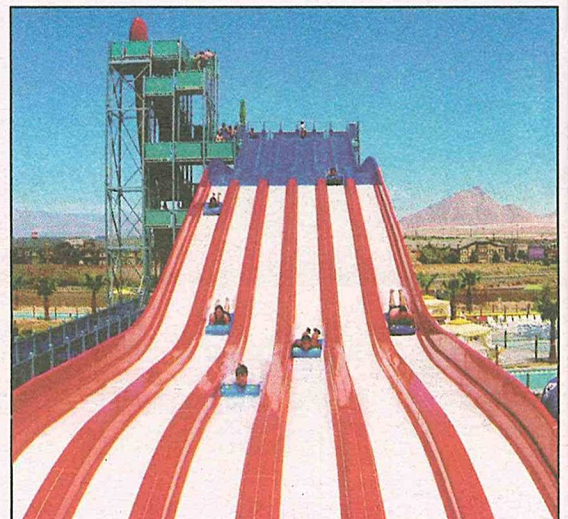


feet down, and it's still dry."

This development would have pushed the park's opening so far into the 2013 season that it was determined a less-rushed construction schedule targeting a 2014 opening made more sense. Completing the park's financing, however, remained an issue.

"In the off season, our partners either had to come up with their money or we had to find new partners," Huish said. The latter occurred. "The owner of R&R Construction, the contractor building the park, came to us and said, 'Hey, if you guys are looking for another partner, I'm interested.' And it worked out."

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### FAST FACTS

**Name/Location**

Cowabunga Bay Water Park  
900 Galleria Drive  
Henderson, Nev.

**Opening**

July 4, 2014

**Facility Size**

23 acres

**Number of Rides/Attractions**

25

**Number of Employees**

About 400

**General Manager**

Shane Huish

**Attraction Supplier**

Polin Waterparks & Pool Systems, Gebze, Turkey

**Contractor**

R&R Construction, Las Vegas, Nev.



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R&R is local here and they're also in Utah; they know construction, which is what they focused on, and we know operations. It's synergetic and it works great. That's how it all came together."

Huish added that the City of Henderson has also been supportive.

"When you're a project of this sort of magnitude, and when you bring it to a city, it's like everybody's on your team. Henderson has been great. It's so nice to have a city that is pro-business, that wants your project. We've also had the chamber of commerce on our side."

### High praise for Polin

Huish, whose amusement industry background includes years of creative direction for Paramount Parks, Six Flags and others, gave Turkish attraction manufacturer Polin Waterparks & Pool Systems its largest U.S. water park project to date with Cowabunga Bay

"Polin is one of the best companies I've ever worked with," he said. "Whatever I've wanted to do here within engineering reason, they've worked with me on it. I went (overseas) to inspect their factories, met with them, saw their techniques. And they're just great."

Designed exclusively by Polin for Cowabunga Bay is a waterslide called Wild Surf. The giant slide features a four-person raft that begins with a long, rushing trip through the dark followed by a dizzying 55-foot drop into the world's largest man-made parabolic "wave." Riders

twist and turn along the course, speeding through unexpected changes in momentum until they shoot through the wave's crest, get drenched by a water shower spilling from the lip of the wave and then oscillate before splashing into the pool below.

"It offers a creative twist to a ride that already offers lots of great heart-pounding excitement," Huish said. "Plus, it presents an added thrill to guests waiting in line at the top of the slide tower. From their vantage point, they get a bird's-eye view of what's in store as they look down into the funnel and see the riders zipping around inside."

In addition to its aquatic attractions two restaurants and private cabana rentals, Cowabunga Bay's highlights include:

• **Surf-A-Rama Wave Pool:** Set amidst a 1950s drive-in theater, this 32,000-square-foot wave pool is the park's centerpiece and generates waves up to four feet high.

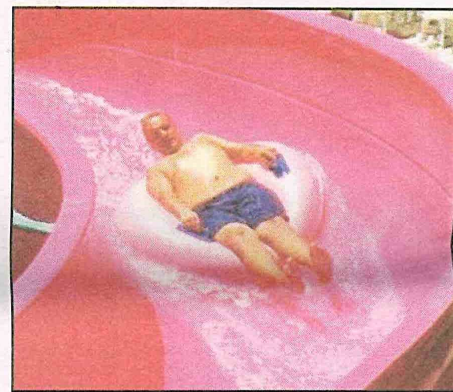
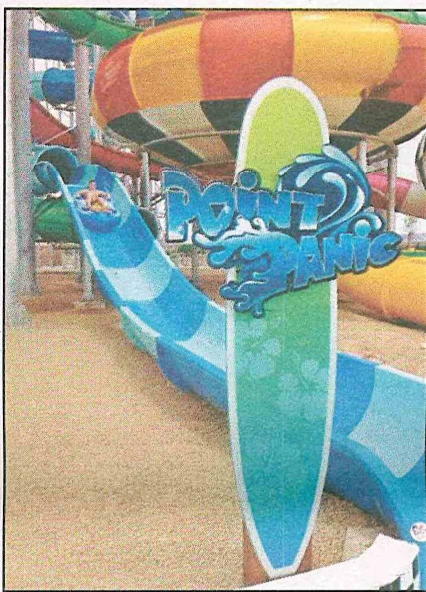
• **Zuma ZOOMa:** Designed for thrill seekers, this slide (Polin's Looping Rocket), the park's tallest attraction, features a unique "launch capsule" 73 feet in the air with a trap door on which riders stand. When the door drops open, riders are sent into a high-speed horizontal 360-degree loop.

• **Point Panic:** Riders on this slide (Polin's Black Hole) experience a midnight surf run down a fully enclosed, pitch-black water slide.

• **Surfin' USA:** This one-of-a-kind racing slide (Polin's Uphill Multisurf) allows six guests at a time to plunge face-first downhill from a 55 foot starting point, and then



The Cowabunga River offers riders a heated, leisurely drift past giant surfboards, water features, vintage vehicles and the park's delightfully twisted array of Polin-manufactured slides, including the fully enclosed Point Panic (below left) and the oscillating Surf-A-Go-Go (bottom right). COURTESY COWABUNGA BAY



it's up and over a unique speed bump finish.

• **Beach Blanket Banzai:** This giant raft slide (Polin's Family Rafting) allows up to four family members and friends to ride together down 600 feet of twists, turns and drops before a gushing finale.

• **Rock-a-Hoola:** Riders brave a 300-foot-long slide (Polin's Space Boat) before entering a giant bowl and whirling around for several revolutions before the splash-down.

• **Surf-A-Go-Go:** This 600-foot-long slide (Polin's Space Shuttle) features two giant "rebound chambers" that send riders up the walls and rebounding from side to side.

• **Cowabunga River:** Riders floating on this heated leisure river cruise by giant surfboards, water features and a groovy 1967 VW bus.

• **Boardwalk Bay:** Relaxation rules in this carefree pool. Guests splash in playful fountains or just enjoy the sun as they float their cares

away.

• **Cowabunga Splash:** This water-play structure (Polin's Aquatower) — part of Cowabunga Bay's future expansion — is designed with kids in mind and features six stories of bridges, tunnels, net climb and water toys.

Huish noted that an ongoing issue at his family's Utah water park was oxidation of the slides' finishes. Figuring into his decision to go with Polin as Cowabunga Bay's aquatics design firm was the company's patented Magic Shine finish, which Polin adds to all of its slides. The desert temperature-resisting finish, which is smooth and shiny on both sides of each waterslide component, utilizes resin transfer molding technology.

### Room for growth

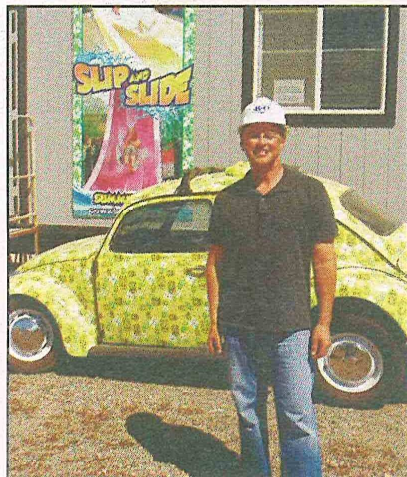
Although Wet 'n' Wild, located in Summerlin, got a head start in the market, Huish said there's plenty of room in the Las Vegas Valley for two major water parks.

"They are literally on the opposite side of Las Vegas, with I-15 right down the middle," he pointed out. "I'm sure there will be some degree of (customer) blending — people will be curious to try both parks — but for the most part, residents in this valley tend to stick to one side of the freeway or the other. It's pretty evenly split, and it may come down to a matter of convenience."

Huish also noted that Cowabunga Bay offers "a little bit more of a unique experience. We've spent a little more effort on theming." And that, he feels, is a valuable contribution to the appeal of both Henderson and the recreational offerings of Greater Las Vegas.

"I'm excited because the market is here to support Cowabunga Bay. We've started off with the basics, but we're not just going to run it, we're not just here to serve. We're here for the long haul, and we're here to grow."

•cowabungabay.com



Shane Huish, general manager of Cowabunga Bay Las Vegas, enjoys a moment with a vintage Volkswagen Beetle that now serves as a prop for Surf-A-Rama, the park's drive-in-themed wave pool.

AT/DEAN LAMANNA