



Written by: **Dan Whetzel**

# Aqua Mountain

RESORT

INDOOR WATERPARK

New and exciting plans are underway for Aqua Mountain Resort, an indoor waterpark and hotel that will be located on a 14 acre parcel of land on the east side of Maryland Route 219 in McHenry, adjacent to the Garrett County Fairgrounds. The landscape provides a spectacular view of Deep Creek Lake and the mountains behind it. While initial work has already begun, additional development will include an indoor waterpark, a four story full service hotel, log cabin units, and a full complement of amenities, services, and activities, making the resort a destination point for visitors and residents. Aqua Mountain Resort will become Maryland's first indoor waterpark and hotel resort.

The developer of Aqua Mountain Resort, Jonathan "Smiley" Kessler, has been actively involved in the development and hospitality businesses in Garrett County for two decades as the owner of Smiley's Pizzeria, the Fun Zone and Pine Lodge Steakhouse. "We have a very innovative, well

## KEY

- A** Activity Pool
- B** Activity structure with two direction dumping bucket (dumping on Mezzanine Level and also Lower Deck Area)
- C** Flow Rider
- D** River Channel
- E** 3-Lane Octopus Slide
- F** Speed Slide
- G** Children's Pool
- H** Kiddie Slide
- I** Body Slides
- J** Tube Slides
- K** Slide Tower
- L** Whirlpool
- M** Mechanical
- N** Wave Pool
- O** Lower Whirlpool





thought out design because we have been able to think outside the box. Our team combined ideas that will provide for great waterpark and vacation experiences.”

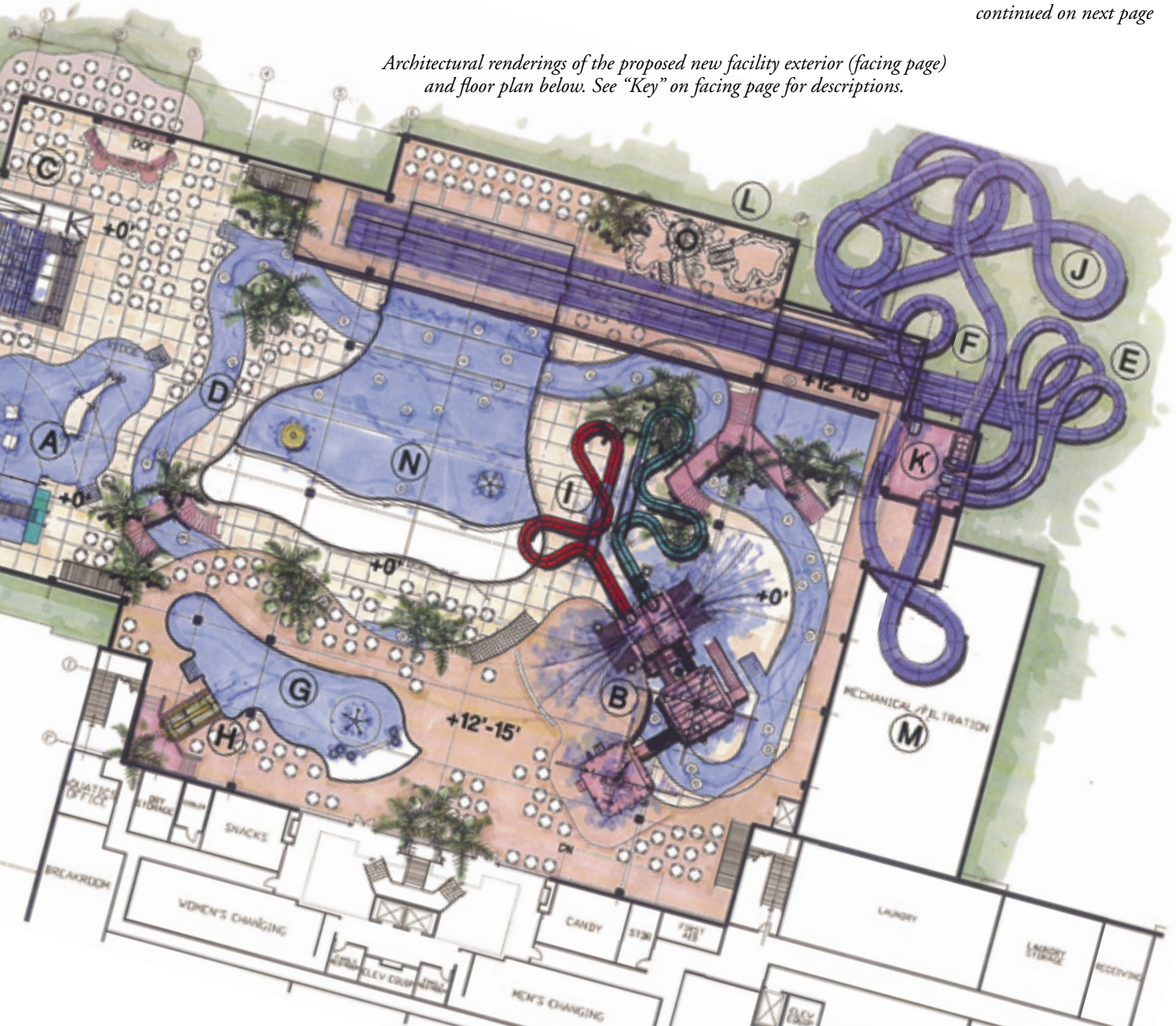
The creative design for Aqua Mountain Resort has been a team effort organized by Mr. Kessler and composed of Bruce D. Robinson, Architect; David Sangree, President of the Hotel and Leisure Advisors; Jeff Lococo Design Group; and Chuck Neuman Water Technologies, Inc. While the team effort was carefully based on marketing studies, research, and engineering skills, the ultimate goal for the Aqua Mountain Resort team can easily be defined: to provide guests with the opportunity to have “new wave” family fun at affordable prices.

Architectural plans encompass 70,000 square feet of waterpark facilities divided into two levels: 55,000 square feet on the first floor, and 15,000 square feet on the mezzanine level, an area the approximate size of one and a half football fields. Up to 1,800 guests will be able to enjoy the water attractions at one time.

Upon arriving, guests will appreciate Aqua Mountain’s natural exterior blending with Garrett County’s outdoor beauty. Stone is planned for the lowest level, followed by logs in the center levels and cedar shakes on the fourth level. Entrance to the lobby will be from the third floor to accommodate the natural slope of the land toward the lake. A rustic elegant atmosphere, complete with wooden accents and twin stone fireplaces, will welcome guests.

*continued on next page*

*Architectural renderings of the proposed new facility exterior (facing page) and floor plan below. See “Key” on facing page for descriptions.*



After checking in, guests may walk westward through the expansive lobby toward Deep Creek Lake where dramatic views of the indoor park, lake, and Marsh Mountain will provide for a scenic vista. According to Mr. Kessler, “No other waterpark has that design feature.”

Guests will be able to observe many of the waterpark activities from the third floor including three tube slides, three matt racers, two body slides, tree house structures, hot tubs and water games, basketball and polo areas, a 520 foot lazy river that will encircle much of the park and pass through a wave pool, and a “Flow Rider” with hydrated waves for surfing and boogie boarding. For adventurous guests, several loops of tubes filled with rushing water will exit the building, dramatically twisting high above ground level before returning to an indoor pool.

An event sure to create special excitement will be a ringing bell, signaling the “dumping bucket” is ready for action. Mr. Kessler points out, “Our dumping bell is unique because there are two levels involved.” Kids will no doubt scramble to a different level to experience the deluge. Water temperature at all venues will remain at a constant 84 degrees.

Creating an environmentally friendly facility is also important. Mr. Kessler notes that “We are going to use the county water system as our primary water source, but we will also reclaim roof water. Actually, the park will not use much more water than a large swimming pool. A regenerative media filtration system will require only one tenth the amount of water (50,000 gallons per year) that would otherwise be used with a conventional sand filtration system. A retractable roof combined with solar heaters for the waterpark will also mean that we won’t have to expend energy to cool the park. It will be delightful to enjoy natural sunlight on a warm day.”

Aqua Mountain Resort plans include development of hotel rooms that will provide guests with a variety of options depending on ones tastes and budget. According to Mr. Kessler, “One of our goals in planning the park was to provide for a segment of guests who no longer come to Deep Creek Lake. Over the last fifteen years, we have out priced our core guests who are eager to visit the area

but believe they can’t afford it.” Completion of 165 hotel rooms and 60 log cabin units will accomplish that goal because accommodations will be offered at moderate rates and include waterpark admission.

Mr. Kessler notes that all rooms will be consistently themed and maintain a family friendly atmosphere. An Adirondack ambiance featuring extensive use of open spaces, logs, natural stones, and fireplaces is planned. Four different suite styles will be available in 15 x 30 foot rooms. One choice includes a “Kid’s Cove Suite,” providing youngsters with four bunk beds within their own enclosed section of the room and a king bed in the perimeter area. Additional suite options include king beds, double sleeper sofas, lofts with separate beds, and Jacuzzis. Two styles of larger 30 x 30 foot suites will offer dining rooms and loft amenities.

Guests who desire free standing accommodations at Aqua Mountain Resort may consider lodging in log cabin units adjacent to the hotel. These units will come in a variety of shapes and colors including eastern, frontier square-style logs with chinking, and western style round ones. According to Mr. Kessler, “Each cabin will have its own character, making our village unique.” Both single and duplex cabins are planned.

Supplementing the waterpark and hotel will be a spa and fitness center, massage and facial services, a pizzeria, arcade, snack bar, family restaurant, and a lounge. To serve large gatherings,





a 10,000 square foot meeting space, including a divisible ballroom and breakout rooms is included in the plans. For smaller gatherings, such as birthday parties, accommodations and services will also be provided upon request.

The economic benefits derived from the waterpark's construction and operation will be considerable. A consultant's report concluded that 657 direct and indirect jobs would be created during the two-year construction period. Two hundred seventy-five, full-time equivalent jobs will be created at the indoor park resort during the first year.

Following the initial year, staff projections are in the 225-250 range. It is also projected the park will draw an additional 250,000 visitors to Deep Creek Lake, thereby increasing the area's total visitation numbers by approximately twenty-five percent.

The Aqua Mountain Resort team plans a 2009 Grand Opening. For more information regarding Aqua Mountain Resort, visit:

**[www.aquamountainresort.com](http://www.aquamountainresort.com)**



*Architectural rendering of the proposed new facility interior.*