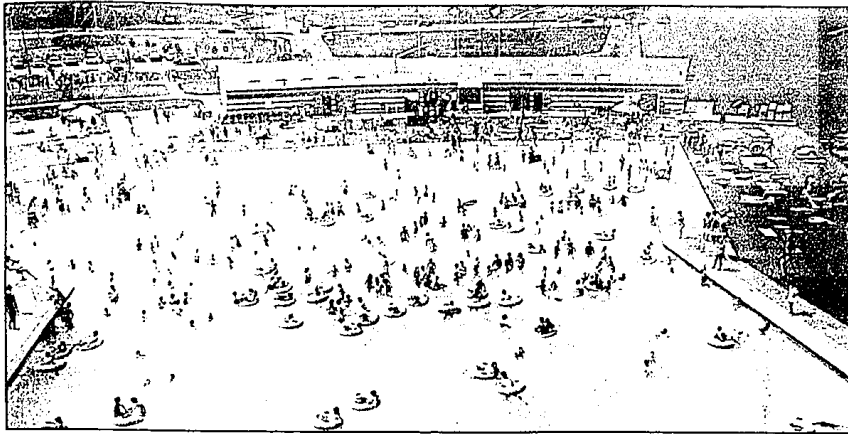




Pool capacity is 2,200 at a time at Red Oaks Waterpark.

An 'anchor' for tourism

Oakland's 2nd waterpark boosts economy

By Tim Richard
staff writer

SOME news splashes on Oakland County's new Red Oaks Waterpark in Madison Heights.

ECONOMIC — Most kids look at the wave pool and three water slides as a great way to spend a summer day, without the need for a ride to a lake. Sid Baker takes a bigger view. "It's a big boost for tourism," said Baker, head of the Southeast Michigan Travel and Tourism Association. He was a guest at last Friday's dedication.

A county park — a tourist attraction?

Sure, Baker replied. "This is going to keep people in the area rather than going out. You know we get a \$6 billion piece of the tourism pie in southeast Michigan out of a \$13.5 billion state total."

"This will be another anchor for tourism," he said, putting the waterpark in the same league with Greenfield Village and the Science Center. "It'll be a place where people bring their out-of-town visitors."

He cast a professional eye over an 80-by-100-foot pool and carpeted deck, packed with nearly 2,000 people and pronounced judgment:

"You can stay all day for five bucks. It's well guarded. It's well maintained — one of the greatest."

He'll feature it in the tourist office's promotional literature.

HISTORIC — "When we built the 12 Town Drain," recalled County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, who was on the drainage board 20 years ago, "we needed a right of way. This was the most direct route," he said of the site on 13 Mile between John R and Dequindre.

"The owner said, 'You want to put a big pipe under my ground? You buy it.' So we bought the whole parcel for \$1 million. Today the cost would be prohibitive."

The county planned to sell off the acreage, but there was no buyer for a small parcel, Murphy said.

Drain Commissioner George Kuhn had 121 acres of land in what was known formally as the Red Run Pollution Control Facility.

"We dedicated all 121 acres to the parks and recreation commission," he said.

"My predecessor had some plans for ferris wheels and amusement park things," Kuhn recalled. Instead the parks commission developed a

small golf course, a golf dome and now the waterpark.

"There are a half-million people in south Oakland County, and they are strong supporters of the parks mileage," said Kuhn, a 10-year mayor of Berkley in the 1960s.

POLITICAL — County Commissioner James Deyon, D-Madison Heights, recalled the pulling and hauling over county parks between the "north end" and the "south end" in the mid-1970s.

"We said, 'Give us something and we'll help renew it.' The quarter mill for parks (25 cents per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation) is renewed by voters every five years."

Lewis Wint, a Republican appointee to the parks commission, promised Deyon some south end park facilities. "I voted for Lew Wint for chairman, and he kept his promise," Deyon said.

"He kept his promise, and I kept mine," Deyon went on. When the county board's Democratic caucus, outnumbered 2-1, put up a candidate, Deyon broke ranks and supported Wint.

"He has been very gracious, very non-partisan," the commissioner said.

"This pool can hold 2,200 people. We'll keep it filled every day."

OPERATIONS — Construction on the \$5 million project took two years, said Ralph Richard, parks and recreation manager, and was delayed by bad weather.

Red Oaks Park's capacity is 2,500, and the pool's capacity is 2,200. With folks coming in and out, it can handle 4,000 a day. It's Michigan's largest wave-action pool.

Other wave pools are at Oakland's first at Waterford Oaks and Huron-Clinton's Lake Erie Metropark.

Red Oaks Waterpark admission is \$5. Richard figures the waterpark should cover its own operating expenses and return some money for the capital fund.

Next project: volleyball courts. Total investment in the Red Oaks recreational complex so far: \$10 million.

Designer is the Troy architectural firm of Hoyem Basso. Construction manager is Barton Malow of Detroit.

Richard said the 40-foot-high waterslides are the Midwest's longest — ranging from 356 to 361 feet.

You can wade in the shallow surf or ride a yellow raft in the higher waves. Or sun yourself on the large

deck. Or eat at the concession stand.

Or use the bathroom. Or leave, get your hand stamped and return the same day.

Or all of the above.

Operating hours through Labor Day are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.



STEPHEN GANTRELL/staff photographer

Midwest's longest waterslides are 356 to 361 feet long, 40 feet high and a barrel of fun when you careen down.

be as simple as it used to be.

Buying boxer shorts may not



But it's a lot

more fun.



Choose from a whole collection of sophisticated boxers. All of 100% cotton, with elastic waist and fly fronts. Made in U.S.A. by Capital Assets. \$14.95. Shown: Plaid boxer in white/black, \$12. Checkered boxer in white/black, \$12. Solid sand washed boxer in black, \$10. Men's Furnishings.

hudson's



Waves are on for three minutes, then turned off, to avoid fatiguing bathers, many of whom rent bright yellow rafts.