

On the last day of the 2012 session, and a day after House Republican leaders used parliamentary procedures to kill a civil unions bill that had the votes to pass, Hickenlooper said he will call them back to work to finish that job.

"Our goal is to try to make sure there is a fair and open de-

have an open discussion."

That discussion didn't happen Tuesday night, when House Republicans filibustered their own bills in an effort to prevent a vote on a civil unions bill, which had already been approved in the Senate.

Earlier this week, the gover-

Instead, Republicans used delay tactics in an effort to kill the bill, which had enough GOP support to pass. Democrats used parliamentary procedures of their own in an effort to force a vote, but those efforts ulti-

See CIVIL, page 7A ➤

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Said he was taking a personal position, and that marriage is an issue best decided by states

wednesday in a historic announcement that instantly gave the polarizing social issue a more prominent role in the 2012 race for the White House.

The announcement was the first by a sitting president, and Republican challenger Mitt Romney swiftly disagreed with it. "I believe that marriage is between a man and a woman," he said while campaigning in Oklahoma.

started to send a \$25 contribution to the president's campaign. "Making a contribution is the best way to say thank you," said Stuart Kopperman.

Obama announced his shift — once opposed gay marriage but more recently has said his views were "evol-

See OBAMA, page 7A

Roller coaster

Job of moving carnival ride from Missouri to Glenwood Springs full of twists, turns

By DENNIS WEBB

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GLENWOOD SPRINGS — If you're ever looking to buy and erect a used, Italian-made Windstorm roller coaster, the first thing you might want to do is find Allan Litts.

Oh, and remind him to pack his photo album when he comes to town.

Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park has come to appreciate the value of someone who has assembled the same coaster before, and has a photographic record of it, as it installs the 50-foot-high roller coaster near the top of Iron Mountain above Glenwood Springs.

"That's become our roa map," Glenwood Caverns mountain operations manager Nancy Heard said of Litts' pictures of his previous installation.

Of course, before installing a coaster, you've got to find one. Glenwood Caverns tracked down its ride in Branson, Mo. There, the Silver Dollar City theme park had purchased a competing park, Celebration City, and eventually shut it



Photos by DENNIS WEBB/The Daily Sentinel

Above, Nancy Heard, mountain operations manager at Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park, looks down on the foundation and base framework for a new roller coaster that will overlook Glenwood Springs and Mount Sopris, both visible in the background. At top, the Windstorm roller coaster operates at a theme park in Branson, Mo., before it was disassembled and refurbished. It will be renamed the Cliffhanger.

See COASTER, page 7A ➤

Third-grade reading scores 'closing the gap' with state

By EMILY ANDERSON

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Seventy-two percent of

The Colorado Department of Education released TCAP reading data for third-graders Wednesday and will release re-

District 51 Executive Director of Elementary Schools Andy Laase said he won't truly be pleased until all third-grad-

elementary schools. "I like the direction we're going."

Nine of those schools earned their highest proficiency rates

reading tests.

Rocky Mountain Elementary School had the lowest level, 49 percent, of third-graders

Speaker: Exploit natural gas now

By GARY HARMON

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Western Colorado should seize what appears to be a momentary chance to export natural gas from the Piceance Basin to international markets, an industry expert said Wednesday.

"I see a window of opportunity of maybe 10 years, but we have to take advantage of that now," John Harpole, president of Mercator Energy in Littleton, told the Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce during an energy briefing.

That window of opportunity is narrow because of the speed with which knowledge of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing of natural gas-bearing formations is spreading around the world, Harpole said.

Two pipelines, the Rockliff Express that carries gas from the Rocky Mountains east, and the Ruby that carries gas from

See GAS, page 7A

WET GAS

Natural gas liquids byproducts

Natural gas liquids, the hydrocarbon components extracted when natural gas is processed, include ethane, propane, and butanes. Natural gas liquids are important inputs to many industrial activities such as:

■ **ETHANE:** used to produce ethylene, common feedstock in plastics manufacturing

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COASTER: Expanding into adventure park

► Continued from Page One

down, leaving assets to sell.

"We were fortunate enough to grab this coaster," said Glenwood Caverns mountain Operations Manager Nancy Heard.

"What's really cool is they got their start with a cave," she said of the company that owns Silver Dollar City.

Herschend Family Entertainment now has theme parks in numerous states after the family first offered tours at Marble Cave near Branson in the 1950s. Heard said the company has served as an inspiration for Glenwood Caverns' own business model of expanding from just cave tours into an adventure park.

ADVENTURE PARK

Glenwood Caverns started out with cave tours in 1999, and has been growing its offerings ever since, with attractions such as its Giant Canyon Swing, laser tag, a "4-D" theater and a bungee jump. It is expanding in a big way this year, including by adding another smaller, kid-friendly coaster and the Mine Wheel, a Ferris-wheel-style ride.

But its biggest addition is the former Windstorm coaster, which it is renaming the Cliffhanger because of its location. Perched near the top of Iron Mountain and on the edge of Glenwood Canyon, it will offer breathtaking views of the canyon and the Roaring Fork and Colorado river valleys as riders experience thrilling drop-offs and tight curves during an 80-second, 1,600-foot-long trip with speeds up to 34 mph. At 7,160 feet high, it's the highest-elevation adult roller coaster in the world, Heard said.

Getting the coaster to the mountains first involved shipping the coaster cars to Florida to be tested, and their wheels and bearings replaced. The disassembled track likewise has undergone testing, refurbishing and sandblasting and will be repainted.

COLORADO BOUND

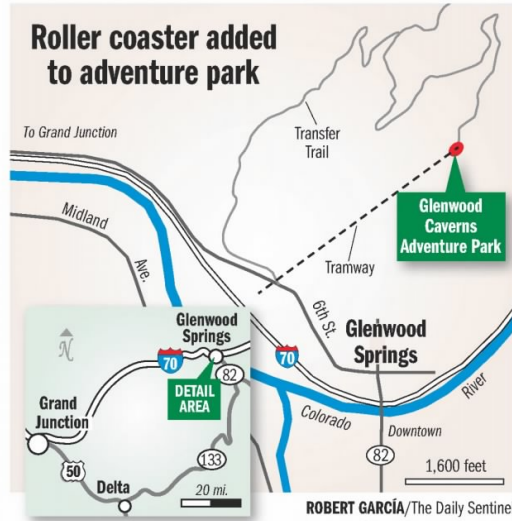
Now the parts and pieces are being shipped to Glenwood Springs in what is expected to take about a dozen trips by semi trucks.

Despite what Heard said has been some grumbling by flatland truckers, they've been delivering the shipments to a parking lot on the unpaved Transfer Trail Bureau of Land Management road, high up Iron Mountain.

Although the coaster came with operating and maintenance manuals, that wasn't the case when it came to assembly instructions. And that's where Litts comes in.

Heard said Glenwood Caverns was able to track him down

Roller coaster added to adventure park



through the connections of the National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials, through which Heard is a certified inspector.

"The ability to find someone like that is huge," she said.

Heard said there may be only about four of the Windstorm coasters in the country. Both she and Litts describe the disassembled track as something of a puzzle. But Litts adds, "It only fits one way. Once all the pieces fit, you've got it."

'NO PROBLEM'

Litts lives in Florida and also does ride refurbishment, and has worked both for a ride manufacturer and for a Florida theme park. It was in Florida that he worked in the late 1990s to assemble one of the coasters with the Italians who built it. With the language barrier, he said, conversations often involved asking the Italians along the way, "Problem or no problem?" If they said "no problem," they continued with their work; if there was a problem, they managed to communicate enough to solve it together.

Fortunately, Litts added, "I've got a pretty good photo record of ever step of the way" along the assembly process.

Heard said the coaster purchase and installation probably will cost about \$1 million when all is said and done.

"We'll probably spend \$50,000 just in bolts, in hardware," she said.

Old bolts and fasteners — about 2,000 of them — must be replaced with new ones in order to properly meet specifications for torque, or tightness.

Sourcing the bolts, which are in metric sizes and in some cases more than a foot long, isn't always easy, said Bryan Palmer, general manager of the Glen-

wood Springs Fastenal office, the bolt contractor on the job.

"When you run into about that large, there's only so many (bolts) in the country," he said, holding his hands apart as if describing a good-sized fish catch.

Glenwood Caverns had a concrete base installed for the coaster, but included drains into underlying gravel. That way, the concrete won't keep precipitation from feeding into the extensive caverns system beneath Iron Mountain and continuing to contribute to the underground ecosystem and growth of other-worldly formations.

Litts said the location of the coaster has been the biggest challenge in installing it. And he's not just talking about the shortness of breath that comes with working at altitude rather than sea level.

The site's slopeside location leaves little room for a staging area, meaning coaster pieces must be brought up from the lower parking lot in order of installation.

And the steep terrain means a crane can reach the site from just two sides rather than four, so that a 90-foot crane will have to be used to do the job.

SUMMER OPENING

Glenwood Caverns has been shooting to have the coaster open by Memorial Day, although Heard concedes mid-June might be more likely.

After having dealt with the considerable logistics in getting the coaster installed, Heard is looking forward to being one of the first to get to try out the new Cliffhanger ride.

"Oh, I better be. I better be," she said with the smile of someone who loves the thrill of a roller coaster ride as much as the challenge of installing one.