

THE NICKEL CITY DISPATCH

NEWS FROM THE NICKEL CITY LINE RAILROAD

JANUARY 2012

Recapping Two Years of Activity

Happy New Year. It has been too long since we reported on the activities of the Nickel City Line. A lot has happened since May of 2009.

Harrisburg to Nickel City Track Improvements

First off, the main leg from Harrisburg to Nickel City was completely redesigned and rebuilt. Continuous problems with the original design necessitated the reworking of that area. The railroad had to be shut down for about 9 months while track work was reengineered and a new right-of-way was established. The relocation of the main-line created a more favorable grade for trains coming from or heading to Harrisburg from Nickel City. It also afforded local industries in Nickel City to claim land abandoned by the railroad on the old right-of-way. Several industries in Nickel City East were reconfigured to provide better service and delivery of railcars. The Nickel City Power and Light Company also expanded its structure to accommodate the increased demand for electricity. The redesign allows for local switching operations in Nickel City to be uninterrupted by mainline trains. This increased the efficiency of the morning industrial switcher run into Nickel City East.



The new Harrisburg to Nickel City route.



The new Western Line

Western Rail Line Completion

In 2011 we saw the long awaited completion of the western rail line to Ridgway. For many years trains headed to Ridgway were diverted at Underwood where they would continue up Driftwood where they would run on leased trackage from the Pennsylvania Railroad to Ridgway. Trains continuing up the Canova Grade from Underwood could only travel as far as the town of Monserrat. With the completion of the western rail line, all Westbound traffic continues through Underwood and up through Monserrat and on to Ridgway and points West. This has added capacity on the rail line and afforded the railroad additional opportunities to add more trains on the mainline.

Work Slow Down

At the beginning of 2011 we decided to slow the fast-clock down from 4:1 to 2:1. This divided a single ops session into three separate sessions (A, B, and C). Longtime operators will remember when we started with a 6:1 fastlock and completed 24 hours of work in 4 hours! With the 2:1 fastlock, operators have plenty of time to figure out moves, deal with passing sidings and work locals without the added pressure of significant compressed time. It has also afforded the railroad to expand the types of trains and destinations served. With each session lasting 4 hours (8 fastlock hours), additional trains (passenger and freight) were added to increase yard activity on the NCL. This has worked out well and aided in keeping rolling stock moving and not sitting idle in the Nickel City Yard. The addition of the western line also helped facilitate this opportunity with the addition of 6 more storage tracks for trains.

New Business for the NCL

The Management Office was pleased to announce in mid-2011 that the Nickel City Line successfully negotiated several contracts with Amtrak and the Pennsylvania Railroad. Amtrak added two additional trains running on NCL trackage. Trains 642 and 643 run daily from New York to Pittsburgh and back via Nickel City. Train 644 replaces Train 642 on Sundays only and runs the same route, but slightly later in the day.

Pennsylvania Trains BF3 and BF4 which run between Enola and Buffalo began stopping in Nickel City in late 2011. The addition of this traffic in the NCL Yard has been an economic benefit to NCL customers which provide them added opportunities to ship goods by rail.

NCL Trains 403 and 404 began regular mine runs daily between Driftwood and Harrisburg. These trains run mid-day non-stop between their destina-

tions. The NCL mines on Driftwood have significantly benefitted by the allocation of regular time slots in the schedule.

More Employee Certifications

Over the past two years many employees have earned a number of certifications. Below are a list of certificates earned:



Advanced Railroad Operator Rob M.

Roger B.

Dispatcher

Brion B.

Yardmaster

Don E.

Hostler

Scott H.

Dispatcher

Hostler

Joel H.

Master Engineer

John H.

Advanced Yardmaster

Pete L.

Advanced Yardmaster

Ernie L.

Master Yardmaster

Bill L.
 Master Engineer
 Advanced Yardmaster
Rob M.
 Advanced Hostler
Gregory T.
 Dispatcher

CERTIFIED RAILROAD OPERATOR

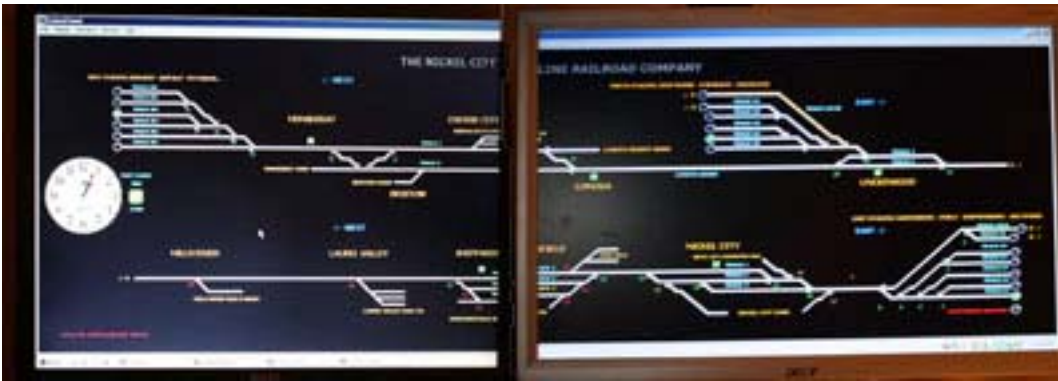
Don E.
 Scott H.

ADVANCED RAILROAD OPERATOR

Rob M.

Congratulations to all our NCL employees on these great accomplishments! Job well done.

NCL Upgrades Technology



The new Dispatcher's CAD screen. A modern look for a modern turn of the century railroad.

In May of 2009 the NCL received the addition of a DB200 booster to address power concerns, especially with sound equipped locomotives. By mid-2009 the NCL purchased a Digitrax PS2012 20 amp power supply to run the DB200 and the DCS100 Command Station. Two RRampMeters from Tony's Train Exchange monitor the power output to both the DCC command station and booster. All electrical components were tied in by early 2010 which greatly improved operations on the NCL.

JMRI 2.12

The NCL upgraded computer operations software to JMRI Version 2.12. With this addition, the main dis-

patcher's panel has been updated to reflect the look of a modern CAD train dispatch panel. The newer version of JMRI allows for the allocation of Train Warrants. Train Warrants can be assigned by the Dispatcher to a train. The Warrant aligns a pre-defined route and allocates the tracks to that train. Track indicators show the allocated route and track the train's progression across the dispatched territory. The preprogrammed routes are being developed at this time and are expected to be on-line later in 2012. This will be a tremendous aid to the dispatcher, providing less errors and more efficiency to dispatching of trains on the NCL.

Nickel City Yard.

The NCL Yard also received a computer upgrade. The manual yard panel was replaced with a flat screen and computer equipped with JMRI software. The Yardmaster now controls turnouts in the yard and consist locations on a computer screen instead of via magnets. This has increased the efficiency of yard operations and provided better tracking of cars when they are in the NCL



New Yardmaster computer screen.

Yard.

What Lies Ahead

2012 will bring a number of new changes to the NCL. Management recently purchased two DT4R throttles. These will augment the two DT100 throttles, providing 4 guest throttles for future ops sessions. The DT4R throttles are currently on back order but are expected to arrive prior to March 2012. Until then, Management still requests operators to bring a few Digitrax throttles for use until the new throttles arrive. And of course, if you prefer to use your own Digitrax throttle, you are always welcome to use it. Just remember, the NCL still operates on a simplex radio system, so duplex throttles will be unable to use duplex radio functions on the layout.

All rolling stock is undergoing review. Wheels, trucks, couplers, weight and general condition of cars are being evaluated and addressed. Some cars will be pulled permanently while new cars will be added.

More motive power is planned as well. A GP35 is currently being prepped for painting and decoder installation. The unit is planned to be added to the NCL roster by mid 2012.

Lighting is planned for installation in Underwood so that operators can clearly see what is going on under there. Management is also looking at closed circuit television for key areas. Those areas would report back to the Dispatcher via wireless transmission. This will aid in providing better information on what the status of trains are on the layout.

Finally, there will be several Wednesday evening mini-ops sessions held during 2012. These 2 hour sessions will require less staff but still be as enjoyable as the weekend sessions. It will also afford those operators who have busy weekend schedules to still participate in train ops while not attending a weekend session.



The Nickel City Line wishes everyone a Happy New Year and we look forward to seeing you in 2012!