



THE NICKEL CITY DISPATCH

NEWS FROM THE NICKEL CITY LINE RAILROAD

MAY 2012

OUT WITH THE OLD. IN WITH THE NEW. MAJOR UPGRADES ON THE NCL



A pile of old plastic wheels sets sits next to the Nickel City roundhouse awaiting pickup to Bristow Scrapworks.

A railroad is never finished. Whether it is track work, scenery, or equipment, there is always work to be done. The Nickel City Line has been busy on a number of fronts since our last issue. Phase I of rolling stock assessment was completed in February. A number of issues were found. Some of them were corrected. Other issues required cars to be placed out of service with a Bad Order sheet and sent to the shop for repair. In January the NCL made a major purchase of metal wheel sets and Kaydee couplers. Rolling stock was inspected one by one and plastic wheels were replaced with metal ones. This will greatly improve performance as well as keep down dirt build up on the rails.

SEE OLD, PAGE 3, COLUMN 1.

EMPLOYEE ACHIEVEMENT

Many of our NCL employees have been busy earning certificates or hours towards future certificates. Since January, the following employees have earned certificates:

John H.

Dispatcher

Master Yardmaster



Bill L.— Advanced Dispatcher



Gregory T.

Hostler

Certified Railroad Operator



Many other employees are close to achieving certifications in one or more areas. Congratulations to all for your hard work!

THE WHITE TAILS HAVE ARRIVED

We are not talking about deer. Rather we are speaking about the latest change to the NCL paint scheme. With the recent overhaul of two of the fleet’s GP 35s, management elected to modify the existing paint scheme when the Geeps went to the paint shop. As you may recall, in September 2005 the NCL unveiled it’s latest locomotive purchase, a AC6000 to handle increased traffic on the mainline. This locomotive, number 909, displayed the new paint scheme of the NCL. A solid white nose with the lettering NCL replaced the traditional white tiger stripes and NCL logo familiar to many. The remainder of the paint scheme remained unchanged.

In February 2012 the two refurbished Geeps received the same white nose but in addition, the wrap around strip was replaced with a solid white tail and NCL logo. Management elected to make the change for safety reasons. The white is more visible, especially in low light conditions. The refurbished **SEE WHITE TAILS, PAGE 3, COLUMN 1**

Visit Once, Visit Often
The Nickel City Line website
<http://home.comcast.net/~nclrr/index.htm>

White Tails, From Page 2.

Geeps, numbers 269 and 272 can be seen almost daily running freight between Harrisburg, Shippensburg and Ridgway. Keep an eye out for them.



Above: NCL 272 (l) displays the new white nose while NCL 270 (r) displays the traditional tiger stripe nose.

Below: NCL 272 (l) displays the new white tail and logo while NCL 270 (r) shows the traditional wrap around white stripes and logo.



Old, From Page 1.

Couplers were also evaluated. Plastic McHenry and other types of plastic couplers were replaced with Kadee Number 5 or similar couplers. In some cases overset couplers, underset couplers, or shims were necessary to get proper coupler alignment. A new coupler height and weight measurement track was created. Each car was placed on the track. A scale ruler on one side determined the scale car length.

On the other side, an NMRA weight chart determined the proper car weight based on car length. Cars were weighed and weights were adjusted to gain NMRA conformance. Coupler heights were checked next. Based on the height at time of assessment, overset or underset couplers may have been required with final alignment achieved through shims and washers. Upon completion of the assessment, cars were logged on a master sheet which identified compliance with NMRA weight, Kadee couplers, metal wheel sets, detector wheels and whether the car was assigned to the layout and logged in Ship It (*the car movement software used for ops sessions*). The date completed was logged as a point of reference.

Many cars are now in conformance. But a number of cars still need work and parts must be ordered. So the NCL still has its work cut out for it over the next several months.

Speaking of cars, several modifications or additions were made to freight and passenger cars. All flat cars and gondolas are now properly weighted to meet NMRA specifications. Pennies served as the weight of choice. To disguise the weight on flatcars, loads of wrapped lumber were constructed and added to each car. Gondolas needed scrap loads and since the NCL recently did an overhaul of it's rolling



New lumber loads for flat cars and scrap loads for gondolas.

stock, there was an abundance of old plastic wheels, McHenry couplers and other items in the workshop junk drawers to make realistic scrap loads. The results were well received and the cars run well on the layout. Passenger cars were upgraded. The NCL purchased a number of Bachmann Spectrum Silver Series Amfleet cars. The cars run well and are lighted. The lighted cars replaced the Walthers Amfleet cars which tended to derail frequently due to faulty trucks.

A number of other items were added to enhance operations. A closed circuit TV system was installed to allow the Dispatcher to monitor a key meeting point at Underwood. The town of Underwood is not visible to operators and is literally “under the wood” hence the name Underwood. Dispatchers can see train movement on the new CAD screen but the visual sighting of train meets at Underwood greatly enhances the Dispatcher’s understanding of what is going on. So far the CCTV system has been a real bonus.

Management added town markers to the layout fascia with more information for operators. Each marker contains the town name; its orientation to East or West; and the next two or three towns in each direction. This will greatly aid new and experienced operators when running on the NCL.



A town marker at Sheppardsfield.

Universal Throttle Holders were added to the fascia in May. Now almost every Loconet plug in has at least one Universal Throttle Holder for an operator to set their throttle in.



One of nine Universal Throttle Holders on the NCL layout.

Operations wise, Management added Employee Bulletins for each session. There are three separate bulletins per session to cover the three time periods operated. Each bulletin contains the basic operating rules, speed limits and radio channels for the session. The bulletin also contains an abbreviated timetable for the time period being operated as well as a simple layout schematic. The bulletins are available at each ops session and are downloadable from the NCL website.

A Bad Order system was added in March. The system modeled after an April 2012 NMRA Magazine article by M. R. Snell titled Bad Orders Operational Opportunities. The system described in the article was modified and enhanced for the NCL. What it does is allow operators to record problems, work out a solution using a series of decision points and then take action to keep the session going. It also tracks these issues so the layout owner has a punch list of items to work on between sessions.

Management found a number of issues that had gone unchecked for years. Not because we didn’t care, but because the items were never written

down and then were forgotten between sessions. This system has really helped management to correct a number of issues that have greatly improved operations on my layout.



Bad Order card and log.

The NCL website underwent a facelift in early 2012. The new website is crisper and has a better, more interactive layout. Several JavaScript applications allow the site to better respond to the user. Favicons (those little icons you see on your browser tab, favorites and on the page title) were added as well. The updated site has generated new interest in the NCL. To visit the site go to:

<http://home.comcast.net/~nclrr/index.htm>

Well that wraps up this issue of the Nickel City Dispatch. See you in the next issue!



2012 NICKEL CITY LINE OPERATIONS SCHEDULE

January

January 15, 2012 11:00a to 3:30p

February

February 26, 2012 11:00a to 3:30p

March

March 25, 2012 11:00a to 3:30p

April

April 29, 2012 11:00a to 3:30p

May

May 20, 2012 11:00a to 3:30p

June

June 20, 2012 7:00p to 9:00p

July

July 18, 2012 7:00p to 9:00p

August

No Session - Layout Maintenance

September

September 12, 2012 7:00p to 9:00p

October

October 17, 2012 7:00p to 9:00p

November

November 18, 2012 11:00a to 3:30p

December

No Session—Happy Holidays