The Winnebagoland Whistle

The Official Publication of the Winnebagoland Division
Midwest Region- National Model Railroad association

Volume 58, Issue No. 4 **Summer 2026**



Photo

Photo courtesy:

Paul Hillmer
"Summer Vacation"

Superintendent's Report

Paul (Tree) Hillmer

Fall is Model Train time! Hope everyone had a great summer.

Lisa and I celebrated our 40th in July by doing an amazing 8-day river cruise on the Rhine River (with the rock band Sister Hazel) and then extra few days in Switzerland followed by NYC on way back. I was blown away by the amazing passenger train service in Western Europe. The afternoon we began our sail up the Rhine from Amsterdam; I spent several hours on top of the boat. With beers in hand, I watched the parallel double track electric train line as passenger trains zoomed by every five minutes. WOW! Later we travelled by train from Basil to Lucerne Switzerland. And the next day, we rode the cog railroad up to the top of a mountain off Lake Lucerne. We then traveled the next day from Lucerne to Zurich. Trains run like every half hour. All electric. Incredible.

In NYC we rode from our hotel by JFK at Jamaica Station to Penn Station. And returned later in the day. Crazy busy and dirty but a must to do in NYC. I was in geeky awe. It was an adventure.

And the cruise itself was wonderful BUT flying sucks. The extra day in NYC was NOT planned as they canceled our flight when we landed at JFK late in the afternoon. NYC to Detroit the next day UGH. Luckily, we were able to add a day at our icky hotel. So, Lisa and I made the best of it. Manhattan is a SEA of humanity. Its wild.

WLD Fall Meet 10/24/2026 and PVMRC operating session 10/23/26

Since I am organizing this with the help of Joel Weeks and Phil Herman, I can report that we are putting together a great meet. Joel will have St. Peters all ready for us and extra fair lunch as a fund raiser for the church. I'm sure it will be tasty and St. Peters is great place for the meet.

Bring along some extra cash for food and maybe some to snag some of Greg Condon's items that he will be selling. We are letting Greg use a table or two to sell off a few of his masterpieces. He has been a wonderful speaker and helper for WLD for years. And of course, an amazing scratch builder. This isn't a swap meet per say, but Greg asked and I said why not. If anyone else wants to do this, please give me a call and we can talk. We do have plenty of room. But we are not selling tables like a swap meet.

Phil Herman has set up three morning clinics featuring Tim Peterson, Phil himself, and Dennis Eggert.

We will have model and photo contest so bring your models and photos. If you do want to bring models just for show and not be judged, we want you to fill out a very short form and given a number for a best if show award than everyone can vote on.

And here is a tip. Photo and Model Judging paperwork is on the web site and I usually fill those out before I go to a meet. Makes things a lot easier!!

And finally, as of this writing, I have set up 6 home layouts and 2 club layouts on tour in the afternoon. Always a treat!

And if you want to come a day earlier, the Paper Valley Model Railroad Club will be hosting an operating session on Friday night 10/23 from 6:30 pm till 9:30. I and/or the club, will create a Facebook event for that. The club can handle up to 20 people.

Please try to attend and please enter the photo and model contest. We need to keep those judges busy!

We have officially kicked off the season of WLD Workshop Wednesday on September 23 via Zoom. What a chatty bunch. Really fun too. Next one is November 18th. Please join us!!

The Wisconsin Valley Model RR Club in Wausau will host the 30th Annual WLD Operating Day in Wausau. It will be Saturday 11/14/26 at 10am. We may do two sessions based on turnout. Facebook Event is tracking (pun) with the help of Tim Peterson and the club members. I will also have sign up forms available by mid-October.

Hope to see you at the Fall Meet October 24th!

In This Issue

Gerry Ring, Whistle Editor

Thank you to all the contributors who have provided content to this issue of The WLD Whistle. Once more it has been a fun year.

2025-2026 Election Results

By Verne Ehlke, WLD Clerk

Electronic Ballots

Started at: March 23, 2026 at 11:00pm CST
Finished at: April 21, 2026 at 11:00pm CST
30 of 93 ballots cast.

Division Superintendent

Paul Hillmer: 30 votes 100.00%

Assistant Superintendent

Phil Herman: 30 votes 100.00%

Paymaster

Paul Mastalir: 29 votes 96.67%
Batman: 1 vote 3.33%

Chief Clerk

Vern Ehlke: 30 votes 100.00%

Paper Ballots

5 of 12 ballots returned

Division Superintendent

Paul Hillmer: 5 votes 100.00%

Assistant Superintendent

Phil Herman: 5 votes 100.00%

Paymaster

Paul Mastalir: 5 votes 100.00%

Chief Clerk

Vern Ehlke: 5 votes 100.00%

Totals

Electronic voting: 30 of 93 ballots cast
Paper voting: 5 of 12 ballots returned

Division Superintendent: Paul Hillmer 35 Votes
Assistant Superintendent: Phil Herman 35 Votes
Paymaster: Paul Mastalir 34 Votes
Chief Clerk: Vern Ehlke 35 Votes

In The Hopper

By Paul Hillmer

The weekend of September 18 - 20th, I traveled to Vern Ehlke's new home in Milwaukee and joined in the fun of "Optoberfest"**.**

This free event features 3 days of operating sessions round robin on various layout located around Southern Wisconsin. Organizer Joe Russ told me the Optoberfest roots go back 2011. At one point they also called it "op till you drop". Joe told me they use to do op sessions on Saturday night, but it was just too much. People were pooped out.

This year featured 21 different operating sessions on 4 time slots. Friday Night, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday Morning. Plus, Joe sets up a layout tour Saturday night on two new layouts that are not yet operating.

30 people plus layout owners participate on average (it various a bit day to day). Again, it's free.

I did Friday evening, Saturday AM, Saturday afternoon, and the layout tours. And drove back in the pouring rain after seeing the 2 newer home layouts Saturday night. I had my daughter and son in-law's Packer Chili-N-Soup cook off party Sunday to attend (yum). Vern also did ops on a huge, UP Snake River Canyon Idaho layout in Waunakee WI Sunday morning.

Friday evening session was at Ken Thompson's BN Peoria Subdivision. His HO layout dates to 1972 and is around the wall with several peninsulas and is operated point-to-point. It is based on the old CBQ secondary from Galesburg IL thru rural farmland to Peoria. Ken originally modeled early 70s BN but updated the layout to 1986. The prototype line dates to the 1850s and feed traffic to Galesburg and the big Q east/west mainline from the Peoria gateway and the coal mining that went on in that area. By 1986, the mines were gone and interchange had dwindled due to various eastern road mergers, perfect for more laid-back ops.



Vern and I were assigned to block cars on a transfer freight in the Galesburg Yard and then ran that train to Peoria before the end of the session.

Ken is DCC and uses 30 plus year-old Rail Lynx on local yard cabs and Rail Pro for mainline freights. He told me he has been DCC going back to late 70s and used Dynacontrol! He uses JRMI software to handle the hundred or so cars in ops.



Also interesting is Ken's use of tokens for track movement between Peoria and Galesburg. He has a token for east main move and one for west main move. When a train is ready to depart, the local yard master will give the mainline crew a token to move once it is verified by dispatch that the main clear. There may be a meet involved and the crew is instructed about that. When a crew arrives at the other yard they must stop and give the yard master the token before entering yard limit.

Ken used to use track warrants and train orders but got sick of the paperwork. This system works well for him and I agree. Neat idea (it is very British).

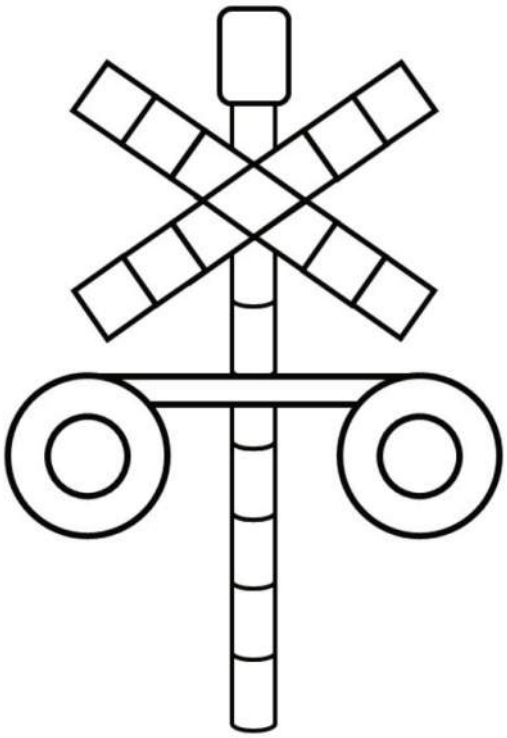
Ken began Op sessions back in the 1970s. He had hosted hundreds over the years. Like me, he always has the layout operating and operate the schedule and cycle of trains on his own between sessions, no tokens needed then!

Saturday morning Vern and I buzzed over to Jim Kelly's Tehachapi Pass N-scale layout. Jim is retired from Kalmbach Publishing and his various Tehachapi layouts have been featured in Model Railroader over the years.

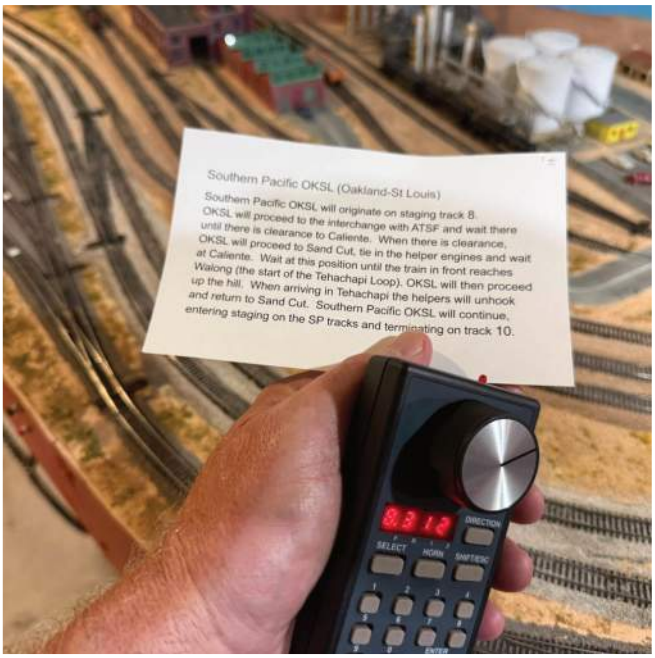
He began building this version when he moved into his current house in 2003 and integrated much of the previous layout in his new expanded layout. It is prototype based and located in a 20' by 20' walk-in room.

The layout features mainline drama of the pass and famous loop with both ATSF and SP trains moving east and west. Jim dispatches 17 mainline freights up and over the pass per session and we finished them all in the 3 hours. For 2/3 of the session, I was the mid train helper stationed on a siding and helped push a bunch of the trains over the loop and then cut off at Tehachapi. With dispatch permission, I would drift back downhill to the siding to await the next train needing my help. Then I was able to run a SP Eastbound mainline freight up and over the top and back down.





Jim uses NCE DCC and code 55 N scale track with lots of sound units. He has typed index cards giving instructions for each of he proto 17 trains. Era is 1986. Plans are to have 3 to 4 locals working the large cement plant and various small industries along this famous place of remote high desert railroad action.



2026 Waupaca Depot Spring Meet, May 1-2

Photo Contest Winners

Joe Lallensack Photo Contest Chair

Paul Hillmer

Best of Show: GN F3 #357A at Atlantic, Model Color Print

First Place, Prototype Color Print - Dummy in the Crummy

Second Place, Prototype Color Print - Fox Lake Depot

Third Place, Model Color Print - Millwork in Menasha



Emory Luebke

First Place, Model Color Print: -Key's Shop Salvage



Dominik Hildebrandt

Second Place, Model Color Print - Brach's Candy Car



Virgie Hildebrandt accepting award for her grand son Dominik

I want to thank Randy Williamson and Roger Wurtzel for assisting me in judging. The winner's list is short again as only 3 people entered photos. However, one of the people who entered was Roger Hildebrandt's 8-year-old grandson! Come on, if an 8-year-old can enter, and win, so can you as well. Also, Paul & Emory are looking for some competition as they are the ones seeming to enter each time lately.



Photo contest committee at work.

A bit of news to add to my usual short report. From a suggestion from Roger Wurtzel, Mike Eiden has added the guidelines for the photos for the contest on the Division Website. The two guidelines about the photos and the limit to 5 photos are under the Contest Form tab under the Contest Rules link on the web page. Give yourself a chance to be a winner at the Winnebagoland Division Photo Contest!! Remember, you can't win if you don't enter (forms attached).

Model Contest Winners

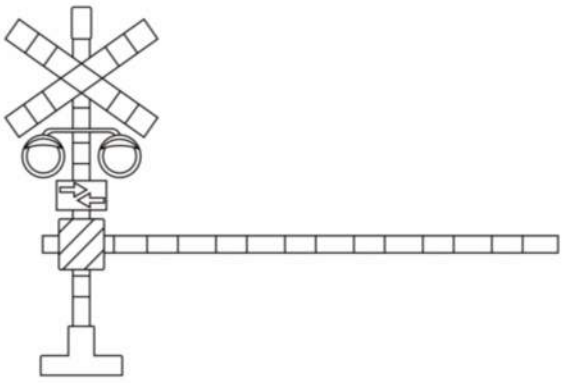
Richard Cooke, Model Contest Chair



Richard Cooke and John Leow at work.



Tom Davis receives merit award.





Matt Holman receives popular vote award.

The Clinics

Phil Herman, Clinic Chair

Gregg Condon



Scenery Methods

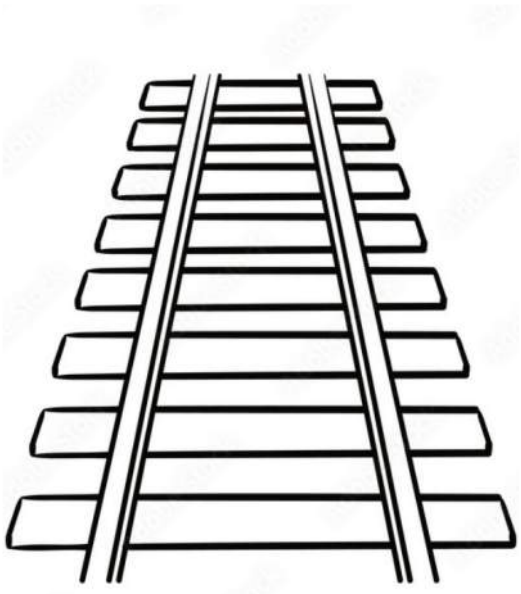
This clinic explored Gregg's scenery techniques. Rather than relying on a single approach, he uses a range of materials and methods to solve each challenge. During 60 years of layout building, he has tested many well-known published techniques and developed several of his own. He has even created a new method for his current layout that he is excited to share.

Matt Holman

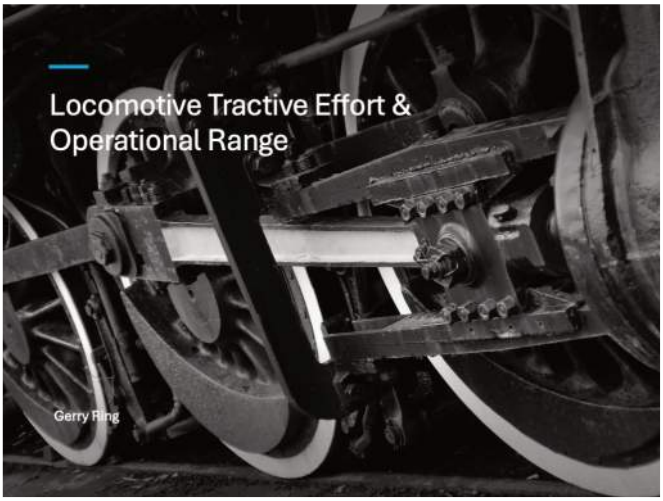


Car Loading Reports for Prototype Operations

This presentation focused on how to read and use railroad car loading reports, train consist reports and switch lists to help build a prototype roster and more realistic billing commodities. Giving realistic destinations for you freight car fleet in any scale.



Gerry Ring



Locomotive Tractive Effort & Operational Range

This clinic described a simple method for selecting and purchasing locomotives that will be able to pull your longest trains at reasonable speeds. Secondly, this clinic described how to properly use force gauges to measure the number of cars that will cause a locomotive to stall on an incline. Lastly, a simple method of calibrating DCC throttles so that realistic locomotive speeds ca be achieved is described.

Layout Tours

Roger Hildebrand



Name: Evergreen Hills & Allen Creek
Scale: HO
Size: 20'x58'
Prototype: GB&W, Soo, Freelance
Locale: East Central WI
Era: 1965
Layout style: 3 level walk-n
Mainline run: 700'
Minimum radius: 22"
Turnouts: Med & large Peco
Maximum grade: 3%
Bench work: L-girder, open grid
Roadbed: Homasote
Track: Atlas code 100 (ns)
Scenery: Foam board
Backdrop: Drywall
Control: Digitrax DCC

Arpad Eiler



Name: Great Freedom RR
Scale: HO
Size: 42'x46'
Prototype: Freelance
Locale: USA
Era: 1951-present
Layout style: Point-to-point
Mainline run: 900'
Minimum radius: 28"
Turnouts: Med & large Peco
Maximum grade: 2%
Bench work: Open grid
Roadbed: Homasote on plywood
Track: Atlas code 100
Scenery: Foam hard surface
Backdrop: Painted Masonite
Control: Digitrax DCC
Car forwarding: 9-cycle homemade switch list

Eugene Much



Name: Little Wolf Central (freelance)
Scale: HO
Size: 29'x14'
Prototype: GB&W, Ettrich & Northern
Locale: Kewaunee - Ettrich WI
Era: 1950s to present
Layout style: Point-to-point
Mainline run: 285'
Minimum radius: 18"
Turnouts: Sm, med, & lg
Maximum grade: 3%
Bench work: Table top
Roadbed: Homasote & cork
Track: Code 100 ns
Scenery: Foam & wood filler
Backdrop: Hand painted
Control: Digitrax DCC

Jim Payton



Scale: HO
Size: 30'x30'
Prototype: Great Northern
Locale: Minneapolis - Cars Lake
Era: 50-60s
Layout style: 3-level point-to-point
Mainline run: 275'
Minimum radius: 24"
Turnouts: Atlas & Peco
Maximum grade: 2.50%
Bench work: Open grid
Roadbed: Cork on plywood
Track: Atlas code 100
Scenery: Hard shell
Backdrop: Drywall
Control: Digitrax DCC

Waupaca Depot



RIP



William "Bill" Moede, July 20, 1958 ~ June 4, 2026

https://www.valleyfh.com/obituary/WilliamBill-Moede

Officers and Volunteers

http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=personnel

Division Officers

Paul Hillmer	Superintendent
Phil Herman	Asst. Superintendent
Paul Mastalir	Paymaster
Vern Ehlke	Chief Clerk
Paul Hillmer	Division Director

Board of Directors

(terms thru 06/2027)

Division Officers (above) plus:

Al Archer	Fred Firkus
Dave Nitsch	Mike Eiden
Gerry Ring	Joe Lallensack
John Leow	Mary Eiden
Craig Volkman	

Committee Chairs

Gerry Ring	Whistle Editor
Gerry Ring	Membership Chair
John Leow	AP Chair
Phil Herman	Clinic Chair
Paul Hillmer	Operating Session Chair
Paul Mastalir	Company Store Chair
Richard Cooke	Model Contest Chair
Joe Lallensack	Photo Contest Chair
Michael Eiden	Webmaster
Paul Mastalir	Scout Coordinator
Paul Hillmer	Social Media Chair

Event Calendar

October 17-18, 2026

Marshfield Train Show, Oak Ave Community Center - Marshfield, WI.

October 24, 2026

WLD Fall Meet - Appleton, WI.

October 31, 2026

WLD 2026 Annual Operating Day

November 7-8, 2026

Trainfest - Baird Center - Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

January 23, 2027

BOD Meeting at the Arctic Run Train Show - Stevens Point, WI., and on Zoom at 10:30 AM.

January 23-24, 2027

Arctic Run Train Show - Stevens Point, WI.

Company Store

Make sure to check out the WLD Merch store for WLD boxcars, shirts and caps:

http://www.wld- nmra.com/?action=co_store



Just a few of the HO-scale Winnebagoland boxcars are left; let Paul Mastalir know how many and he will work out getting them to you. His phone is (715) 853-7274, or email him at

mastalir54166@yahoo.com or *wldpaymaster@gmail.*



2026 NMRA Winnebagoland Division



WLD Fall Meet October 23-24th, 2026

St. Peter Lutheran School N2740 N French Rd, Appleton, WI

2026 Fall Meet Timetable

Show off your railroad photography skills – bring your pics for the photo contest!!!

Bring your models to show off or enter in the modeling contest!!!

Friday, October 23rd

- **6:00 – 9:00 pm Paper Valley Model Railroad Club Operating Session**
  (Pre-registration Required, space is Limited)

Saturday, October 24th

8:00 – 10:00 am **Registration**

9:00 am – Noon **Clinics**

Shipper-driven Traffic Simulator (STS) – Tim Peterson
Modelers Round Table SCENERY – Phil Herman
Modeling 1970's Small CN&W Engine Facilities – Denis Eggert

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Lunch – St Peter Fundraiser**
(lunch not included in registration fee)

- **1:00 pm Model-Photo Contest Awards**
- **2:00pm – 6:00pm Layout Tours**

2026 Fall Meet Registration (Checks Payable to Winnebagoland Division)

NAME: _____ **NMRA#:**_____

Email: _____ **Phone #:**_____

Meet Registration Fee

Friday Night Operating Session ☐

NMRA Member $15 X ___ = $_____ + Non-Member $18 X ___ = $_____

Registration at the Door : Members $18 non-members $20.

For more info and meet updates visit www.wld-nmra.com

Return this form and Payment **by 10/16/2026** to:
Paul Mastilar
135 Hillside Lane
Shawano, WI 54166

PHOTO CONTEST RULES

In order to encourage as many entries as possible, there are only 2 things that we ask to enter a photo.

One, the photo should be a minimum of 5 by 7 inches and no larger than 11 by 14 inches. We have accepted smaller than 5 by 7 but they are hard to examine. Photos larger than 11 by 14 take up too much room on the contest table.

Second, we ask that the photo be mounted or matted to reduce damage during handling and judging. We have had the range from a curled-up print to a glass framed print right off the wall.

One last requirement that we don't deviate from is that you cannot enter more than 5 photos in the contest, total. This makes it fair for everyone.

That pretty much covers the "rules" for the photo contest.

PHOTO CONTEST ENTRY BLANK
WINNEBAGOLAND DIVISION

Entry No._____ Date_____

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

Directions

1. Fill out a separate entry blank for each photo entered.
2. Print Name, Address, City, State, and Date.
3. Select from a Category listed below.
4. Identify and describe photo as much as possible.
5. Fill in the Entry No. which you receive from the registrant.

Categories

Prototype color slide___100's	Prototype color print_____500's
Model color slide_____200's	Model color print_____600's
Prototype B&W print___300's	Tongue-in-cheek_____700's
Model B&W print_____400's	

Describe Photograph

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____