



The Winnebagoland Whistle

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

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FALL 2025

Photo

*Photo courtesy:
Dave Rickaby*

*Title:
Leaf Drop*



Superintendent's Report

Paul (Tree) Hillmer

We found a small box of new N-scale cars mixed in with the WLD Company Store items after the Sheboygan Falls Spring meet. We are trying to find its owner. If it is yours, please reach out to Vern Ehlke or me.

The WLD Board met at the Soo Line Historical and Technical Society (SLHTS) in Appleton on September 6th. These meetings are open to the public on Zoom. You will see these meetings announced on the Winnebago Division Facebook page (<http://www.wld-nmra.com>) in the Upcoming events section.

The WLD Fall 2025 Meet "Making Tracks to Marinette" is set for 10/4/2025 in Marinette. Dave Rickaby has booked the Holy Family Social Center and has organized a great meet. Dave is setting up a couple limited operating sessions Friday night 10/3/2025, So I am planning an overnigher!

The clinics are all set up. Phil Ogren will start off with a great one on railroading in the paper industry. I saw this clinic at the SLHTS convention last fall, and it is very informative. Joe Russ will then do a clinic on scenery making. Our third clinic is by John Leow and Pat Thoney on the amazing Quincy & Torch Lake in Houghton (featured in The Whistle v57n1). They have insider photos and info of this gem since they volunteer there.



And of course, there will be photo and modeling contest. Do not be shy, share your work!

Pizza and Salad lunch will be provided. And then the home layout tour which will be amazing. Trust me on this. Get your phone camera ready.

Highly encourage you to attend the meet. This will be another good one.

The flyer and registration is out and available. PLEASE register ahead of time so we can get a head count for food. But you can register and pay the day of the meet.

Note that Train Fest in Milwaukee is 11/1 & 11/2 in Milwaukee. Please consult "On the Ready Track" on <http://www.wld-nmra.com>.

The 27th WLD Annual Operating Day will be held on 11/8/2025 in Appleton. I will host an operating session on my N-scale Badger Mid-Wester, while Joel Weeks will also have a simultaneous session on his amazing HO-scale GN Willmar Division layout. If we get enough to sign up, Bill Moede said he can operate his HO-scale Lakeshore & Beecher layout along with Paul Alliet's M&M switching layout. And, if that is not enough, I can always gently twist arms of others in Appleton to open their layouts. I should have the sign up ready by the Fall meet.

This October we will begin our new season of Workshop Wednesday Zoom Calls every other month. We will finalize dates at the board meeting but looks like 10/17/25 will start things.

WLD Spring Meet 2026 will be in Waupaca at the depot on May 2, 2026. I am finalizing things with Brandon Reidl at the Waupaca Club and Mike Kirk at the Depot.

And the WLD is looking for a meet host area for fall 2026. If you have ideas or, even better, want to host, let me know!

Hope everyone has had a great summer. Enjoy the weather but also take some time to retreat to the basement and work on models to enter in the fall meet. Or get out there and snap some train photos for the contest.

Hope to see everyone at the Fall Meet.

In This Issue

Gerry Ring, Whistle Editor

Welcome to the 58th volume of The WinnebagoLand Whistle and a new season of

meets, tours, operating sessions and Zoom meetings. You will find news about all the WLD events on our web site (<http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=homePage>) and our Facebook page (WinnebagoLand Division, NMRA). Our event calendar appears on our web site in the "On The Ready Track" page. You can also find a pdf copy of the current issue of The WLD Whistle on the "The Whistle" page as well as many past issues on the "Whistle Archives Page".

Paul Hillmer continues to write about his passion "model train operating" with his latest "In the Hopper" column. This month he is featuring Steve Hellmann's layout in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin.

To wrap up this issue, my "Off the Bench" column describes the construction of a track dirt detection car.

In The Hopper

By Paul Hillmer

Back in the fall of 2023, Steve Hellmann reached out to me to see if there was any interest in gathering a couple guys to take a road trip to Sturgeon Bay. He had been following the FROG and WinnebagoLand pages on Facebook and wanted us "TOADS" (The Old Aging Dorks) to give him ideas on improving ops on his layout. So, Bill Moede, Craig Volkmann, Paul Alliet, Vern Ehlke, and myself piled into my van and off we went.



Steve Hellmann explaining his layout to James Rybski, Bill Moede, Craig Volkmann, Paul Alliet and Vern Ehlke.

When we arrived, we found a neat BNSF layout that was perfect for operating, and we had lots of fun running trains. Afterwards, our discussion got around to making suggestions for improvements and we mentioned to Steve that adding a staging yard would be a good idea. So, when we returned

in the spring of 2024, by golly there was a new staging yard! So once more, when we finished running the trains we had another brain-storming session.



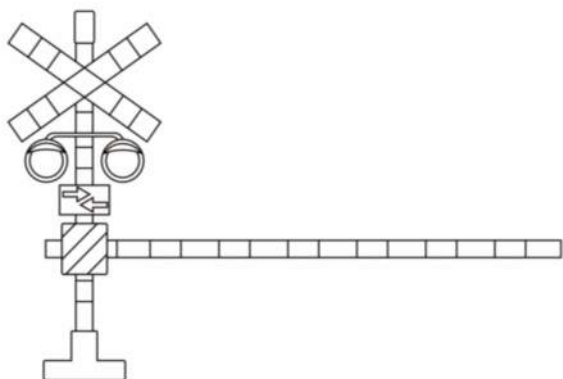
The Stevens, New Mexico layout.

We have now been to Steve's layout two additional times. Steve kept expanding his layout and the operating possibilities just kept getting better.

Steve has become very active with FROGS and TOADS and the WLD. Plus, he tells us he has now hosted several other op sessions with the Door County Modelers and keeps finding more interested people in the area via word of mouth.

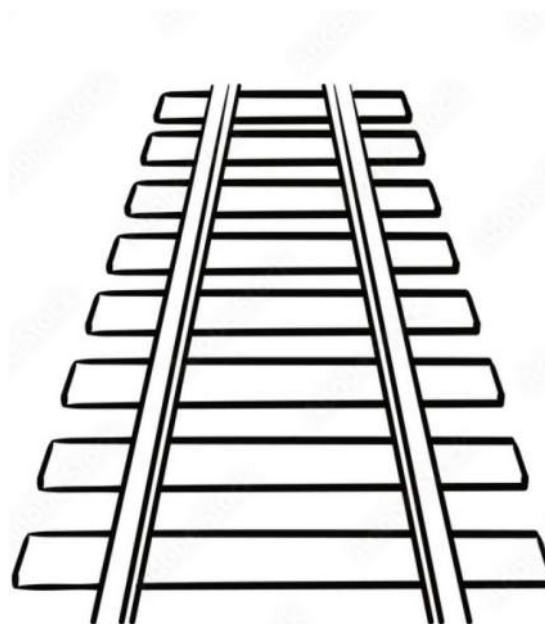
My point is it is always good to run ideas past others. And always good to listen to suggestions. If you are not sure where to start with operating schemes? Reach out to others.

One does not have to have a huge layout to create an operating scheme. In a couple years, Steve has created a layout that can now keep 2 or 3 one- or two-man crews and a dispatcher busy for a couple hours. We sure have fun running the BNSF in the high desert of New Mexico.



James Rybski performing dispatcher duties.

1. Layout Name: Stevens, New Mexico
2. Owner: Steve Hellmann
3. Size and Location: Basement layout 20 feet by 15 feet U shape.
4. Theme: The layout represents BNSF territory in New Mexico in the 2000s. The city of Stevens is a fictitious city between Albuquerque New Mexico and La Junta Colorado with the BNSF running thru it. It is freelanced and based upon typical scenery and railroad activity in the Southwestern United States.
5. Type of car forwarding used: Micro-Mart Car cards and Waybills plus a printed switch list based on the car cards.

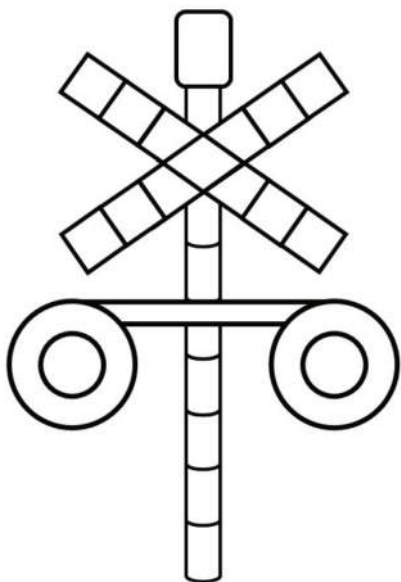




Car cards and waybills.

6. How long been hosting operating sessions? Two years.

7. Thoughts on operating? Operating sessions bring the layout to life and provide enjoyment for your friends. The sessions also provide ideas on how to improve your layout when you find how things work in practice and by listening to feedback from guest operators.



Off the Bench

By Gerry Ring

Track dirt is defined as any contaminant that adheres to the rail surface and results in decreased transmission of the DCC signal through the rail to a locomotive. Track dirt can also be defined as a contaminant that is removed through various cleaning methods. The effect of track dirt on a DCC locomotive's performance is obvious. A locomotive will demonstrate faltering motion and stop moving. Because the accumulation of track dirt is an ongoing phenomenon, it is recommended to clean a layout's rails prior to an operating session.

The following photo of a Peco Insulfrog turnout was taken during a rail cleaning exercise on a well-maintained layout. The preferred method of rail cleaning on this layout was to use an abrasive rubber block. As can be seen, a dirt layer was accumulating around the frog in addition to considerable rail head abrasion from the abrasive cleaner.



During this cleaning session the idea occurred to me that it would be more effective to concentrate efforts where the dirt was occurring. In other words, perform spot cleaning and preserve most of the rail surfaces from undue abrasion. A possible method of selecting where track needed to be

cleaned and where it didn't was to observe the flickering of a locomotive's headlight which corresponds to its faltering motion.

Because a locomotive's headlight is sometimes difficult to observe, an additional idea of magnifying the headlight's flickering evolved. Many solutions were considered but using the Proses track voltage tester seemed to be the easiest since it could be mounted on a flat car as shown below.



To connect the voltage tester to the tracks, Kadee's electrical pickup trucks were used, and a mini SQ23 WIFI security camera (see The Whistle V57 n3 page 4) was mounted behind the tester to allow remote observation of the flickering when it was in a tunnel or anywhere else that was out of reach. Cradles were 3D printed to consolidate both components on the flat car as shown below.



Does this dirt detection device work? The answer is surprisingly yes!

As a prototype, I expected the detector to be plagued with problems. Principally, I surmised that the signal noise created by the pickup trucks would mask any disruption created by track dirt. Furthermore, I thought that achieving the correct

car weight would be a lengthy process even though the car was weighted according to NMRA recommended practices. At first my assumption appeared to be correct as the voltage tester flickered constantly when the car was moved along an apparently clean length of track. But, when that track was simply wiped using an electrical contact cleaner, the voltage tester's LEDs stopped flickering thus indicating that the detector was operating successfully.

The detector can be used in two ways. First, with the assistance of a locomotive to push or pull the car around the layout. And second, simply used as a track tool without the locomotive to ensure that the proper degree of track cleaning has occurred.

Interestingly, my notion that track only needs spot cleaning has been replaced with the realization that track is much dirtier than I originally thought. In upcoming issues of "Off the Bench" I will review the various methods of track cleaning and which is the best.

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 06/2026)

Division Officers (above) PLUS:

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

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

<http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=onTheReadyTrack>

October 3-4, 2025:

WLD Fall Meet - Marinette, WI. - More information to follow.

October 18-19, 2025:

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

October 22, 2025:

Workshop Wednesday - 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

November 1-2, 2025:

Trainfest - Baird Center - Milwaukee, WI.

November 8, 2025:

WLD 2025 Annual Operating Day - Appleton, WI.

December 19, 2025:

Workshop Wednesday - 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

January 24, 2026:

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

January 24-25, 2026:

Arctic Run Train Show - Holiday Inn Convention Center - Stevens Point, WI.

February 18, 2026:

Workshop Wednesday - 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

February 21-22, 2026:

Mad City Train Show - Alliant Energy Center - Madison, WI.

March 14-15, 2026:

La Crosse Train Show - Omni Center - Onalaska, WI.

April 22, 2026:

Workshop Wednesday - 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

May 2, 2026:

WLD Spring Meet - Waupaca, WI. - More information to follow.

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.com.



2025 NMRA



Winnebago
Division

2025 NMRA

WLD Fall Meet October 3-4th, 2025
Holy Family Parish Social Center
2715 Taylor St . Marinette, WI 54143

2025 Fall Meet Timetable

Friday, Oct. 3rd

6:00 pm Operating Sessions (pre-registration required)

Saturday, Oct. 4th

8:00 – 10:00 am Registration

8:00 – 10:30 Model & Photo Contest Entry

9:00 am – Noon Clinics

9 am Railroading in the Paper Industry – Phil Ogren

10 am Scenery Making Tips II – Joe Russ

11 am The Quincy and Torch Lake RR (history and modeling)
– John Leow and Pat Thoney

12:00 – 1:00 pm Lunch

1:00 pm Model-Photo Contest Awards

2:00pm – 6:00pm Layout Tours

**Bring
your
Photos of
1:1 trains
to 1:220!**

**Tour
Local
Layouts!!**

***Improve your
skills w/tips
from Clinics,
fellow
modelers and
judges!***

2025 Fall Meet Registration (Checks Payable to Winnebago Division)

NAME: _____ **NMRA#:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone #:** _____

OPS Session Friday ☐ **No. of Operators** ____

Meet Registration Fee

NMRA Member \$15 X ____ = \$ ____ **+ Non-Member \$20 X** ____ = \$ ____

Pizza and Salad = \$10 X ____ = \$ ____ **Total \$** ____

Registration at the Door : Members \$18 non-members \$23 Lunch Meal \$11.

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

Return this form and Payment **by 9/26/2025** to:
Paul Mastalir
135 Hillside Lane
Shawano, WI 54166

**30th annual WLD Fall Operating DAY
November 8th, 2025 Appleton, WI**



- 9:00am – 12:00 noon Morning Session
- 12:00 noon Break LUNCH TBD
- 1:00 – 4:00 pm Afternoon Session

Registration fee collected prior at the morning session: \$5. Proceeds to WLD.

Will email the info on where you are going am & pm week prior to op day.

Experience model railroad operations on layouts in Appleton.

This Years layouts are :

Joel Week's HO Scale Great Northern Willmar Division

Paul Hillmer's N Scale Badger Mid Western RR

Bill Moede's HO Scale Lakeshore & Beecher RR

Paul Alliet's HO Scale M&M Milwaukee Road

Spots are limited to 20, registration and due by: 10/31/2025.

To sign up E-mail treelisa@att.net or Mail registration to:

Paul Hillmer
4711 N Tanglewood Drive
Appleton WI 54913

Cut and mail below -----CUT

2025 Fall OPS Registration

NAME: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

NMRA # _____

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

**WLD Fall Operating Sessions November 8th, 2025
Appleton, WI**



- 9:00am – 12:00 noon Morning Session
- 12:00 noon Break
- 1:00 – 4:00 pm Afternoon Session

Registration fee collected prior at the morning session: \$5.