



Prairie Ponderings

For the enjoyment and edification of model railroad operators

Twin Cities and Western Railroad up and running on schedule Initial January ops session follows eight month planning effort

Operations on the Twin Cities and Western Railroad began in earnest this month as eight members responded to the crew call. Below are the assignments and responsibilities:

Glencoe Turn. Crew of two operate the Hopkins Yard where Minnesota Commercial and ICE interchange cars. Glencoe turn also builds westbound trains, performing switching duties along the route at Cologne, Bongards (interchange point with Minnesota Prairie Line), and Plato.

Granite Falls Turn. Crew of two perform switching of local industries in Glencoe, then head west to Granite Falls to pick up eastbound and drop westbound cars. Works Buffalo Lake as trailing point move on return trip.

West End Switch. Crew of two work from Renville. Perform switching duties west from there and at Reubel, Granite Falls, and Montevideo before interchanging with BNSF and dropping westbound cars for Milbank SD at Appleton, Job returns, dropping eastbound cars at Granite Falls..



The Southern Minnesota Sugar Beet Cooperative in Reubel provided plenty of outbound molasses, beet pulp, and sugar loads plus a few empty Soo Line limestone hoppers. A BNSF unit train brought coal to fire the plant this month during a "C" session.



Morefield and Southern EMD GP40 #5534 and EMDX GP 38 #758, both units leased to the TCWR, return to the engine house following the trip to Granite Falls. Both locos are decorated (and **owned**) by **Eric Carlson's Crooks**-based Dakota Branch. TCWR road power is expected from Smith Engine Works this year.

Extra board. Single crew member: 1. **During "C" session**, operates unit coal train with BNSF power from Twin Cities west to Sugar Beet plant in Reubel. Returns light.
2. Operates ICE unit grain and ethanol trains from the Twin Cities west to Granite Falls Energy and returns.
3. **During "C" (coal and container load) session this month**, operates North Star Intermodal container train from Montevideo to Twin Cities. Returns with empties **during alternate "A" session next month**.
4. Operates westbound (empty) Dakota and Iowa aggregate train to Appleton during "C" session. **Will return with granite loads to Twin Cities during next "A" session**.
5. Responsible for Minnesota Prairie Line local turn job from Redwood Falls with work at Winthrop. Crosses TCWR main near Cologne before interchanging with TCWR at Bongards for return trip, working Arlington Seneca plant as a trailing point move on return trip.

Dispatcher. Keeps it all flowing (mostly) in order.

Longer (but fewer) trains, plenty of switching, and two person crews (mostly) mark new proto layout

What's different? Two person crews, 12-15 car consists, seven or eight trains (not 19 like the WisDak)—these are a few of the operating highlights on the new prototype model TCWR.



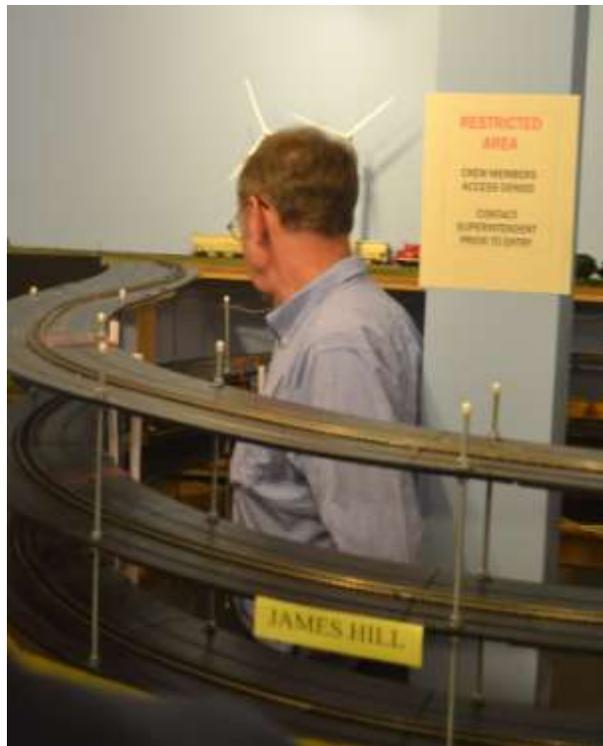
Eric and Eric (Carlson and Wollan that is) return power with a single boxcar from Medallion Cabinetry east of the yard at Glencoe. **Modelers' license allows combining the prototype Utility Job and Reubel Turn as one, renamed the Granite Falls Turn (due to the long passing siding at Granite Falls).**

For the first time track is painted and ballasted, layout landscaped (except for the visible staging areas located in Twin Cities, Hopkins, and Appleton). Skills learned during the past four year odyssey toward becoming a Master Model Railroader helped immensely, from scratchbuilding structures such as the conveyor shown below (left) as well as larger structures, including building flats found at the west end of the Granite Falls Energy ethanol plant and decorating freight cars (see image on page three).

The superintendent (and only the superintendent!) occupies the now restricted area to check traffic within the helix (dubbed James Hill these past two years)



The scratchbuilt conveyor and auger, plus a semi truck, await arrival of a shipment of oat hulls via rail at Stockman Transfer in Plato.



A special thank you to Eric Carlson and Richard Dahl for their photography contributions as well as loan of road power. I appreciate your support helping make the TCWR model railroad and this issue of Prairie Ponderings. And thanks to Tim Smith for all his work on locos and loan of spine cars for NSI.
editor Alan Saatkamp MMR



Scratchbuilt building flats representing the loading shed and dry distilled grain storage facility each contribute to the overall realism seen at the west end of the ethanol plant



An assembled eastbound cut of cars, set out by the West End turn, awaits arrival for pickup. The cars occupy the arrival departure track adjacent the ethanol plant spurs

What's next?

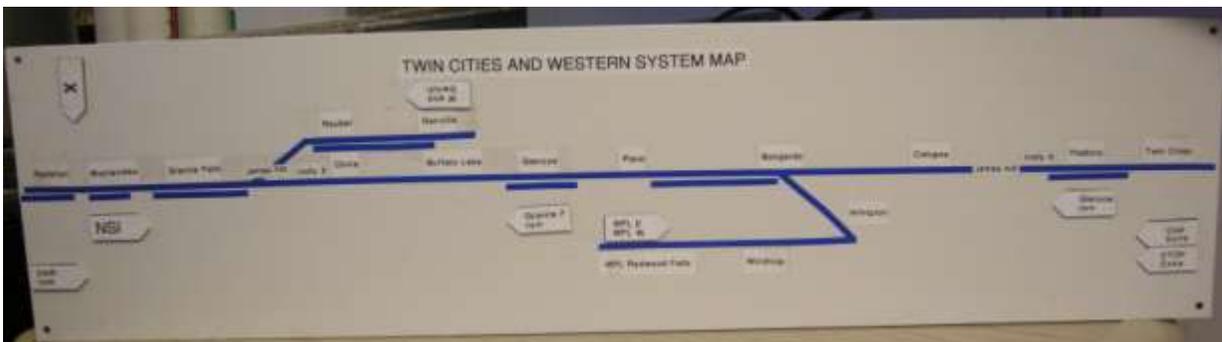
Following a number of wheel gauge adjustments; track repairs noted during the January session; new waybills for the multi-car blocks to clarify routing; and additional weathering and tagging (per prototype images) of a half dozen freight cars, the TCWR nears readiness for the February operating session with several new operators invited to participate. More folks can expect an offer in March.

Smith Engine Works has several units, including final details on a pair of TCWR GP39-2s, #2300 and #2301 nearing completion. Also, MPLI GP10 #406 (sound unit) is expected to debut early this year. It will join Richard Dahl's BNSF sound six axle coal train power. Smith Engine Works also has detail parts for several custom GP 20C and 30C in TCWR, MPLI, and RRVW schemes. Look for them later this year.

SiouxRail2013?

Several factors give me reason to start thinking about another episode of Sioux Rail. The last one was in **2010, so we're "due" is one. Second, the prospect of a revamped TCWR layout with more new equipment (and the bugs worked out) this spring, adds a favorable slant on things. Third, there are a couple possible new area candidates to host operating sessions on their layouts this summer. Finally, several friends from the Twin Cities area expressed interest in operating here.**

What all that adds up to is this: if you and/or someone you know enjoys (or would like to learn) operations, give me a call or email me. My contact information is 605 214 1469 and saatkamp@iw.net. If/when **we get a critical mass, I'll start working with other potential co-hosts to see what we can develop for a weekend this summer.**



The new system map, far more linear than on the former WisDak (but still with Cody's Crossing and James Hill featured) tracks movements of the seven (or eight) session trains on the Twin Cities and Western Railroad layout. Adding variety are BNSF, DAIR, ICE, and MPLI road power.



Young train fans at Sanford Children's Hospital enjoyed switching on the portable layout during a couple recent visits. Above and below photos published with permission of the parents and Sanford.



Jay Manning's popular hands-on scenery making clinic returns this winter at both the Canton Public Library as well as another new venue, Sioux Falls Caille Branch Library.

DSED Division Doings

Upcoming events and activities involving the Dakota Southeastern Division

February 2-3 The Great Train Expo in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The DSED modular layout will make its second appearance at this annual event, which was a big success last year.



February 21 DSED monthly meeting at Harrisburg High School, 7:00 p.m. See dakotasoutheastern.org website for details. Agenda includes a clinic on scratchbuilding freight cars by the editor (see above model, which earned first place in model judging during the TLR convention last May.)

March 2 Canton Public Library 225 N. Broadway, Canton, SD. Our usual fare of library clinics and displays (see left), with one addition—**Gary Johnson's** seven year old granddaughter Erin shows her creative skills and demonstrates how to build good-looking scenery. Corporate sponsorship of this event by Frieberg Nelson and Ask, attorneys at law, Canton.

March 23 Siouxland library Caille Branch on west 49th street and Carriage Circle. DSED adds to **its success with clinics (including Erin's scenery clinic) and displaying the club layout. This time we're going to the west side library branch for the first time, adding another site and following five successful Septembers at the Ronning Branch on east 49th and Southeastern Blvd.** Expected times are the same as prior years, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The library will also allow us to display model train items in (locked) **glass showcases leading to the children's section of this railroad-themed branch several weeks before the event.** DSED monthly business meeting to follow.