

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

DATE: March 2026
ITEM: New Business 1
SUBJECT: Plumas Museum Narrow Gauge Collection
FROM: Eugene Vicknair

CURRENT STATUS

Several years ago, the Plumas Museum decided to deaccess their small collection of narrow gauge equipment. This primarily consists of a wheelset believed to come from a Swayne Lumber caboose, some light rail and the following pieces of equipment:

- Spanish Peak Lumber Company 2 – a 2 axle Whitcomb diesel
- Swayne Lumber Company log car

Both Spanish Peak Lumber and Swayne Lumber were Western Pacific customers. Swayne was a major operation in Oroville that was switched by the Sacramento Northern and had an undercrossing of the WP mainline for their narrow gauge Butte and Plumas Railway. Spanish Peak Lumber operated just east of the Feather River Canyon with their trains bringing logs to a rough cut mill, then hauling the rough cut via aerial tramway over the east rim of the Canyon to the planing and finishing mill at Twain on the WP. SPLC 2, after the end of logging operations, was standard gauged and later used to scrap WP subsidiary Deep Creek Railroad in Utah.

The Plumas Museum acquired SPLC 2 and restored it to partial operation and narrow gauge condition. Reportedly it just needs brakes to be rebuilt and some final engine work. (Note: Steve Habeck worked on this locomotive and has better information on its condition than I do.)

When the offer was made to the FRRS, the thinking was that the SPLC 2 could function as an RAL engine on a short (1,000 feet or so) section of narrow gauge track. As both pieces working for WP customers, they would also tell a piece of the story we do not currently showcase. The offer was accepted and plans put in motion to move the equipment. However, COVID, turnover at the Plumas Museum and other factors kept delaying this.

There is now largely new management at the Plumas Museum and one of their directors recently contacted me about our interest in the equipment. They would still like it to go to us, but they have removed one restriction: that being that the equipment must always remain in Plumas County. This has opened an interesting opportunity.

Two narrow gauge organizations, the Nevada County Narrow Gauge and the Nevada-California-Oregon Railway, have offered to lease SPLC 2 for 3 to 5 years with an extension option. Their plans are similar, being that they would transport the SPLC 2 to their respective

facility, complete its restoration to operational service, use it for the duration of the lease and then, at the end, transport the locomotive to the WPRM. This would all be done at their expense.

Plumas Museum has asked if we are open to that option. If we approve, we would still need to move the Swayne Lumber car and rail material at some point, but this is easier and cheaper to move than the locomotive. And it would give us more time to plan what to do with the engine and give us a running engine at the end of the lease.

We should have received a letter from the N-C-O about this very recently. Plumas Museum is having a Board Meeting soon and would like our input on this. Details would be worked out depending on how everyone wants to proceed.

As I am a director with the N-C-O in addition to the FRRS, I will answer questions but will recuse myself from any decision.

Requested Action

Provide guidance to the Plumas Museum on possible lease of SPLC 2.

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