



# THE TRAIN SHEET

News from the Feather River Rail Society



## Preserving "THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE"

Issue - 200

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### President's Pin

- Greg Elems

Here we are, in the middle of March already. We had some snow accumulation at the museum in late February and early March, as you can see on the Around the Museum 2024 Gallery web page. The warm temperatures have started to melt the snow. Work has started on the SP 2873 again with it getting a test run on Saint Patrick's Day. The 2873 was warmed up and ran for over 90 minutes. Then adjustments to the fuel injectors were made and I was told that it sounds better and has very little smoke now. So kudos to the crew doing the mechanical work.



We have some events coming our way with the "Celebration of Life for Norman and Barbra Holmes" on May 25, 2024. I'm hoping we can get some volunteers to help with the cleanup of the museum grounds and shop area. I'm also hoping we have a good turn out to celebrate Norm and Barbra's work and dedication to the museum. We'll be making a list of things to do and hope to have that completed before the end of March.

Thinking about the year ahead, work on the WP 165 is going to start this April. With luck, Roger Stabler will be able to have 165 steaming for July. Steam means more opportunities for Special steam RALs and steam powered caboose trains. Sound of the steam whistle echoing of the mountains is an exciting proposition and has been missed. Again, more help for Roger and museum is greatly needed.

Come by the museum this summer, say hi, and enjoy the memories of the WP.

### Open Up Those Cabs!

- Nicholas Manos

I remember when I used to bring my kids to the museum. They loved the place. It was so special in that they were free to board any locomotive they wanted.... No ropes, no barricades and not a single 'do not touch' sign in sight. They were always especially eager to enter the cabs, which at that time were almost always open. A brief scuffle might ensue over who got there first to sit in the engineer's seat.

As many of you know, the museum had to lock the cabs up some years back due to increasing vandalism. As well built as these locomotives were, they were never intended to be abused from the operator's seat. The decision to secure the cabs is understandable, but it hasn't been popular. We've had quite a bit of feedback from both the public and the membership requesting more cab access.



We believe we have a solution, but we need your help to make it happen.

An 'open cab days' event has been planned. We are looking to display a number of the popular locomotives up front and prominent in the east yard on June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. The idea is to have the cabs open 10 AM to 5 PM on both days. The event will be used to draw visitors to the museum and promote the Run-A-Locomotive (RAL) program. Caboose trains will also run, so those visitors who want to explore the cab in operation will have an opportunity to do so.

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How many locomotives will be open? Well, that is up to you, the member volunteer. As mentioned earlier, we can't just open the cabs and hope for the best. We're looking for docents in every cab to interact with our visitors and answer their questions, as well as monitor the locomotives. You don't need to be in the Operating or Mechanical Department to participate. If you aren't familiar with a particular locomotive, we can provide the basic information (it's all there on the equipment roster.) We'd be thrilled to have your help both days, but extremely thankful for one if that works best for you.

We need to have three qualified Operating Department personnel to run the caboose train, but all volunteers beyond that can be locomotive docents. For example, if we have 5-7 additional volunteers, we can open at least five locomotives.



I know there are some kids out there, young and old alike, that would love to explore these locomotive cabs, taking turns imagining they were engineer in control of the train. Let's allow them more than just a look through the window.... I ask you to join me so we can open up those cabs!

If you are able to help, please email us at [volunteer@wplives.org](mailto:volunteer@wplives.org) with your name, which day(s) you can attend and a phone number so we can confirm your attendance prior to the event. Thank you so much for your consideration.

*Photos by the author.*

## Train Schedule Changes

- Nicholas Manos

We've made some changes to the schedules for both the caboose trains and the Run-A-Locomotive (RAL) program.

### Caboose Trains

The caboose trains will continue to run on Memorial Day, Labor Day and each Saturday and Sunday during the 2024 operating season (May 25 through September 2).

There will be three changes made to the caboose train departure schedule.

First, departures will start one half hour earlier at 11:00. This is an effort to offer a more attractive time for the significant number of customers who arrive at or near museum opening.

Second, the caboose schedule will now be the same for every operating day. There will no longer be a different schedule for Saturdays, Sundays or holidays. This change will remove one departure from Saturday and add one departure to Sunday, so there will be no change in the overall total of scheduled departures. The new departure schedule is as follows:

**11:00, 11:30, 12:00, 13:00, 13:30, 14:00**

- Same schedule Saturday, Sunday and holidays
- Beans to be called at the completion of the 12:00 run

The third change is procedural and impacts the 12:00 run. This single run will always be push-pull, even if there is a full crew and 'full operations' are in effect. The purpose of this change is to allow the crew more time for lunch. Even though the current schedule allows 30 minutes for lunch, in practice this time is rarely available without pushing the next departure back since the crew must return from lunch early to assemble and test the train.

It is expected that running push-pull will reduce the 12:00 run by 5-10 minutes. Leaving the locomotive attached to the train during lunch will result in a quicker recovery for the 13:00 run, saving another 5-10 minutes over current opera-

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tions. Combined, these time savings should allow all crew members a full 30 minutes for lunch.

#### **RAL Schedule**

Changes focus on consolidation and improving the compatibility of the RAL and caboose train schedules.

The existing 10:15 appointment had high usage, but its end time of 11:15 could result in delays to the first caboose train departure. Analysis showed little usage of the 09:00 appointment. The new schedule replaces both with a 09:30 start time, which should be more attractive and allow for a 30 minute gap between the RAL and the first caboose train departure. Minor overruns in this RAL slot should not cascade into multiple delays.

With the exception of Memorial Day and Labor Day, RALs will no longer be advertised for Monday or Tuesday. This will allow for a full museum closure of two days each week and should provide reliable days off for most museum staff and crew.

#### The new RAL schedule is as follows:

2024 RAL Season: May 25 to October 12  
Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, all season

Available Appointments (5):

09:30-10:30, 10:45-11:45, 12:00-13:00,  
13:30-14:30, 14:45-15:45

Saturdays and Sundays, May 25 through September 1

Available Appointments (3):

09:30-10:30, 14:45-15:45, 16:00-17:00  
(this schedule is also used for Memorial Day and Labor Day)

Saturdays and Sundays, September 7 through October 12

Available Appointments (6):

09:30-10:30, 10:45-11:45, 12:00-13:00,  
13:30-14:30, 14:45-15:45, 16:00-17:00

## **My First Locomotive Inspection**

- Nicholas Manos

I spent most of the 2023 operating season attempting to convince the Chief Mechanical Officer (CMO), David Elems, that I did indeed know which end of the wrench to use as a hammer. Finally, toward the end of the season, he relented and asked if I wanted to assist with an inspection of the WP 1503. I'm not sure if he needed help or just needed me to stop bugging him, but the result is the same either way.... Success!

Step one - wash the locomotive. David made a strange concoction of soap like products in the wash bucket and directed me to the top of the locomotive. He handed me a stick with a scrub brush on one end and we began the long effort of removing oil residue from all surfaces. A few hours later, we had the entire locomotive resembling clean. Imagine scrubbing a small house exterior.

Next, we used the locomotive to do a bit of switching so we could place it in the shop over the pit. Once over the pit, we opened a number of hatches on the trucks and proceeded to inspect the traction motors, gearing and axles. We checked the supply cabling and the various oil routing hoses, along with the sanding system. Brakes were inspected all the way around. David added crater compound, a pre-sized pack of gear lubricant, to the motor-axle case before we replaced the hatches and finished the pit inspection.

We moved the locomotive out and performed some more switching to open up the other side of the shop, where we parked the locomotive. At this point, David brought out the vacuum and we proceeded to clean out the cab base of dirt and sand, along with several other portions of the locomotive. Once the vacuuming was complete, inspection was made of the cab electronics, where David found a damaged high voltage relay. Repairs were made and we moved onto the engine block.

Lots of cleaning was on tap for the engine block, too. We used solvents and rags to clean the ex-





terior of the block, as well as the interior surfaces of the air box. On a two-stroke supercharged diesel engine, the air intake is not just charged for compression, the pressure is also used to clear out the combustion gasses from the power stroke. This process isn't completely smooth, so some of those combustion products end up flowing back into the air box and it makes for quite a mess.



We then removed all the inspection covers in the engine block and opened up the top deck. Inspections were performed on camshaft lobes, rocker arms, valves, injectors, various bolt and nut torque, coolant pipes and connections, piston skirts, piston rings, connecting rods, oil passages, oil lines and various bearings. It was gearhead heaven, at least until it was time to replace all the covers and clean everything again.

We changed all the disposable air, fuel and oil filter elements on the locomotive. We topped off the oil, which was a new thing for me because I had never 'added' oil from a pallet of 55 gallon drums moved in by forklift. At full capacity, this beast requires 165 gallons of lube oil.

Inspections were conducted on the main and auxiliary generators to verify brush condition and wear transfer patterns. The batteries were serviced with water and then charged to capacity.

There were several other inspections and tests performed, in addition to a number of runs to perform some tests under load, but that should provide a general idea of the amount of work that goes into a yearly inspection for these locomotives.

This process took us just over a week, which included a lot of explanation from David as he trained me on these tasks. We also made a number of repairs along the way, including adjustment of the rear cab door so it shuts without slamming, replacement of the sticking isolation switch and replacing the engine lube oil pressure gauge with a model that accurately indicates the oil pressure at all RPMs.

I used a few early mornings to troubleshoot an issue the locomotive had with its rear headlights. I know how to read electrical schematics, but I quickly found out that didn't mean I knew how to read railroad electrical schematics. After a few hours and some experimenting with the voltmeter I had things under reasonable control. The problems were identified, repair and replacement made and the headlights now burn your hat as you enter or exit the cab. I haven't timed the duration until actual hat combustion, but I believe it is well within factory specification.

I wasn't so fortunate at repairing the broken speed indicator. That system remains filled with mystery and will require some repeat visits. In addition, we still have a leaky but serviceable brake cylinder on the rear truck to rebuild and David found the cooling fan shaft bearing is... well the race seems to rotate more readily than the bearing itself. Not ideal. We have a few other small inspections and adjustments to perform that we weren't able to get to during our last session, but we will be back at it soon.

Things are looking good for the WP 1503.