NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION - MARCH 2026

WHEEL REPORT

From the Desk of the Superintendent:

By Dan Mulhearn

The South Mountain Division February meeting was unfortunately called due to snow. Parking at the meeting location would have been difficult; Bob made a wise decision in cancelling.

The March Division event will be hosted by Pete and Jane C. on Sunday, 08 March at 2:00 PM. I will not be able to attend the meeting as I will be out of town.

A very good friend, back in southern West Virginia, has received devastating health news. I was a regular operator on his layout for many years. On Saturday, March 7, there will be a last op session on the layout. I feel I must attend with many other old friends. I am hoping Bob Johnson will sit in for me.

The MER Annual Convention handbook has landed in my mailbox. It is quite detailed and extensive, spelling out what exactly the MER Convention Committee will do and what the Division is required to do. Our first priority is to locate a suitable venue for the event. I have heard from Alan Mende at Susquehanna Division and he feels that Division would have no objection to us considering Gettysburg. Alan feels that would be an excellent venue, however we need to be certain the time of our convention does not conflict with an annual motorcycle enthusiast's gathering at Gettysburg.

The members of the Division need to be considering officers for the 2026-2027 program year. I am willing to take on another term as superintendent; although I am dealing with slowly increasing symptoms from my Parkinson's. The time may come when I will have to stop driving and that will be that. We need a paymaster (treasurer) and a clerk (secretary) as well. Our current treasurer may be willing to continue; but we know the current volunteer as secretary would like to be relieved of that responsibility possibly. I do feel that we should have an assistant superintendent for situations where the superintendent may be absent or otherwise require assistance.

Spring is ready to arrive with it's outdoor chores and activities. But, keep enjoying our wonderful hobby also.

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION - MARCH 2026

WHEEL REPORT

March Meeting:

The March SMD meeting will be hosted by Jane & Pete C. in Damascus, MD. Contact southmountaindiv@gmail.com for their address and directions.

We model the East Broad Top Railroad in 1926. The EBT was a narrow-gauge line that ran from coal mines in the Robertsdale area of the mountains to an iron furnace in Orbisonia/ Rockhill Furnace and then up to Mount Union where there was a coal cleaning plant, refractory brick plants, and an interchange with the Pennsylvania Railroad.

By 1926 the iron furnace was long gone, but on our version, it has been re-opened by the current owners, the Madeira Hill Co. The furnace consumes large amounts of coal (which needs to be coked first), limestone, and iron ore. Its output is pig iron which is then taken to Mt. Union. This has added a great deal of operational interest to the railroad. The fact that the iron furnace has reopened created a renewed need for iron ore and limestone. Both those had been mined along the Shade Gap branch of the EBT. So, the Shade Gap branch, which had fallen on hard times since the furnace closed in 1908, has been rebuilt. In Shade Gap this line serves limestone and iron ore mines. In Neelyton (the end of the Shade Gap branch) it serves the ganister mine for the refractory brick plants in Mt. Union and a lumber mill. Both towns also get miscellaneous freight and have coal dealers for home heating.

The layout is in a 20' x 26' basement and is fully scenicked. It's early fall, so it's still warm in the valley but cold on the mountain. Both of us work on models. Jane scratch built the Orbisonia station and roundhouse, Pete the company store and houses in Robertsdale. The excellent models of Ewings Mill and Neelyton station were built by Frank Benenati. Other structures are kits (many by White Ground) or kit bashed. There are still models to be done, but there's at least a stand-in for every structure so the layout looks complete.

All trains are powered by steam engines (by Hallmark and one Blackstone), all but two have sound. The gas-electric M-1 (with sound) handles a portion of the mail train run.

Trains run on TT/TO with a 4:1 fast clock. Control is Digitrax DCC (Simplex) using radio throttles. Car cards, timetable, instructions, and an operator's guide let guest operators know how to run trains. The EBT is a heavy-duty, busy railroad. Only the Shade Gap branch runs with a more relaxed narrow gauge feel. All trains do their own switching, so all operators should expect plenty of work to do. While the passenger train does not have much switching of cars, that operator is required to record the sacks of mail picked up and dropped off in each town. There is one yard operator, we call that job the furnace shifter. Please let us know if you'd like to get on the crew call list!

After the meeting, Pete & Jane will discuss the ongoing rebuilding of the EBT (12 inch to the foot version).
As usual, the meeting starts at 2:00 p.m.

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SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION - MARCH 2025

WHEEL REPORT

Reminder:

SMD membership meetings are always the 2nd Sunday of the month at 2 p.m. The only exception is due to Mother's Day in May, which will take place one week later, on the 3rd Sunday.
Please consider hosting a meeting sometime during the 2025 - 2026 program year. Email southmountaindiv@gmail.com. We try to avoid back-to-back repeat visits so if you have never hosted, or it has been a year or so since you did, give it a thought.

Meeting Hosts Needed:

As of this writing we do have a tentative meeting host signed up for April of 2026. We need volunteers to step up as hosts. Your layout doesn't need to be large, or finished, or even operational. Without hosts we cannot hold our meetings. Repeat hosts (within the past year) are okay but we really would like to see some layouts that we have not visited for a couple of year or never seen at all.
If you would like to host, or have any questions concerning hosting please contact your Division superintendent at southmountaindiv@gmail.com.

Mini-Clinics:

It has long been the policy of the SMD to present mini-clinics at each meeting. In some cases clinics are conducted by the host. However, not every host is in a position to do so. We are asking for members to volunteer to develop and present mini-clinics at meetings to fill these gaps.
If you can to do a mini-clinic please contact your Division superintendent at southmountaindiv@gmail.com.

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION - MARCH 2026

WHEEL REPORT

Elections:

Hard to believe but it is time to be thinking about our Division officers for the next program year. We need to vote on new officers at the April meeting, which means the slate needs to be introduced at the March meeting. We are seeking nominations for all positions: Superintendent (president) and Clerk/Paymaster (secretary/treasurer). This link https://portal.smdnmra.org/2024/12/08/division-job-board/ provides a list and description of Division leadership roles, as complied by Alex P (who will not be able to continue as acting clerk during the coming program year).

If you want to lead or nominate someone please contact your Division leadership at southmountaindiv@gmail.com.

2027 MER Convention:

We are supposed to host the 2027 MER convention in October of that year. The exploratory committee has identified possible host hotels in Hagerstown and Gettysburg, PA.

While Gettysburg has nice facilities, it is both outside of our division area and a long distance from most of our members, which would create an issue with layout tours.

We are taking a survey to determine what layouts would be available for convention tours and operations. If you would be willing to open your layout please contact your Division leadership at southmountaindiv@gmail.com.

- Yes – Hagerstown only
- Yes – Gettysburg only
- Yes – Either location

Renew On Line:

You can renew your NMRA membership on line at the following link;
https://www.nmra.org/store/membership

Remember that your National membership automatically includes membership in both the Mid-Eastern Region and the South Mountain Division and you will receive the NMRA Bulletin electronically on a regular basis. Membership is a requirement for insurance purposes but guests can attend one or two meetings without joining. There is also a trial membership category available at a reduced cost.

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION - MARCH 2026

WHEEL REPORT

Notes from the Editor:

By Ron Polimeni

Elections will be coming up shortly and we could use a few volunteers to run for office. The South Mountain Division of the NMRA has done a great deal to promote our hobby and to provide a meeting place for model railroaders in our area. To keep going however, we need to have members willing to devote a few hours a month for the benefit of the organization. None of the tasks are all consuming and can usually be dispatched without upsetting one's life.

Dan Mulhearn has offered to continue as Superintendent but this will likely be his last term. Ray Price will continue as Paymaster but Alex would like very much to be relieved as Secretary. He took over the task at least two years ago and served as Super for, I believe, four years before that. He's done his part. Any takers? C'mon folks, your Division needs you.

While I'm on my soapbox, I'll give a heads up that I'll be looking for articles for the WR. I know each and every one of you has something to contribute. We're looking for articles wherein members share their experiences and enthusiasm for trains, prototype or model. Whatever you've been up to at your model bench or on your layout (if you have one), share it. If it interests you, it will interest others.

I will also be contacting members who participated in our "show and tell" clinics at the Mini-Con. My proposal is to assemble a traveling show for the promotion of the hobby. One which can be set up at various venues to show the public what model railroading has to offer.

We have the Mideast Region Convention coming up and the SMD will be responsible for hosting this year. We have less than a year to prepare for this. Again, volunteers would be appreciated. Let's not drop the ball.

Contact Ron and Bob through the Division email, southmountaindiv@gmail.com.

Wheel Report Content:

We are always looking for Wheel Report content from the membership. Articles addressing prototype railroading (including your experiences while visiting a prototype location) and model railroading (how you designed / built your layout, modeling structures, model railroad operations, etc. All of this adds interest to your Wheel Report and builds membership enthusiasm.

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION - FEBRUARY 2026

WHEEL REPORT

Wheel Report Submission Guidelines:

If you would like to submit an article please email southmountaindiv@gmail.com. Wheel Report editor Ron Polimeni would like articles formatted in a Microsoft Word compatible file or pasted into the body of the email. Please do not submit PDF files. Pictures for articles should be attached to the email, with their corresponding captions clearly labeled with each picture's file name so they can be matched to each image. Do not paste images into a Word document. All submissions and pictures must be the property of the author to be considered for publication.

SMD Officers and Officials:

Superintendent:	Dan Mulhearn
Clerk/Paymaster:	Ray Price
Webmaster/Digital Assets Manager:	Tom Fedor
Wheel Report Publisher:	Bob Johnson
Wheel Report Editor:	Ron Polimeni
Wheel Report Assistant Editor:	Andrew Dodge, MMR
Division Achievement Program Coordinator:	Jane Clarke

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION - MARCH 2026

WHEEL REPORT

ReRailer:

From time-to-time various members of the Division have been asked "how do I do that" questions by other members. The purpose of this new column is to provide a forum where members can ask questions of the entire Division. Submitted questions will be published and any Division member can respond. The answers will be published in the following month's Wheel Report and at SMDNMRA.org for the edification of the entire Division.
It is asked that both questions and answers be submitted not later than the 15th of each month. Questions/answers submitted later than that date may not be printed until the following month. When the staff was discussing the concept of the "Rerailer" a couple of questions that they had been asked were brought up, so we are presenting them here to get things started.

1. How does one make smooth transitions from a grade to a flat surface and vice versa so that cars and engines stay coupled and on the track?
2. I live in an apartment, so what is a good ground cover material that does not make a mess like plaster?
3. Do all H0 scale couplers work with each other?

If you can help answer any of these questions please submit your responses to southmountaindiv@gmail.com. We all have questions and this is your opportunity to help your fellow Division members.