

FEBRUARY 1, 2000

Volume 1, Issue 3

Price \$3.00

The newsletter of the non-profit WI&MRyHPG. Organized for railroad historians, enthusiasts, and modelers interested in the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway, from its origins in 1905 through it's ownership of today.

Inside this issue:

- Into The 21st Century-- From WI&M to PR&CC** 1
- HPG Spring Fever— Lets Roll on New Projects** 2
- HPG Schedules— —The Classifieds** 2
- The Potlatch Lumber Company Snow Plows** 4
- BENX Blue—Bennett Thrall Car All-Doors** 5
- WI&MRyHPG Addresses & Membership Application** 6

THE WHITE PINE ROUTE QUARTERLY

The Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway History Preservation Group, Inc.



PR&CC 2353 and 2268 await their crew and a run to Palouse after spending the evening with the lone BENX car behind the Potlatch depot. *T. Hillebrant photo 7/99*

The “White Pine Route” At the Dawn of the 21st Century By Thomas Hillebrant

Mission Statement of the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway History Preservation Group:

“To locate, preserve, and archive all items of a historical nature relating to the history of the WI&MRy; to issue publications on this and related subjects; to encourage public interest in the history of the WI&M and the Potlatch Lumber Company; and, to acquire objects and property appropriate for a museum and/or any of the purposes listed above.”

The WI&M has had many “final runs”. For some fans, the last run occurred in March of 1962, as the Milwaukee Road assumed control of the WI&M. For others, the end came in 1981 when Burlington Northern acquired the line outright. Still others regard 1996 as the “final run” when BNSF finally sold off its weather-beaten WI&M subdivision. But, the fact remains that trains still polish several miles of the WI&M’s rails on a regular basis; and they should continue to do so for some time yet.

As late as February 1996, all 49 miles of WI&M tracks were still in operation, doing what they were built to do: carry raw timber out of North Idaho forests. A stand of timber near Fernwood was being cut for shipment to the Scott Paper mill at Everett, WA. Potlatch Corp.’s St. Maries River Railroad (STMA) was loading nearly 70 flatcar loads of these logs each week, and moving them south from Fernwood to the BN interchange at Bovill. This run covered two WI&M miles

between Purdue and Bovill. BN’s WI&M Local would then haul the cut timber over the remaining 47 miles to Palouse to be forwarded to Spokane by BN’s “Highball”. Up until this time, the future seemed bright for the WI&M line. But dark clouds were forming on the horizon. Literally.

In late February, heavy rainfall and warm temperatures combined to send record quantities of water rushing down the Potlatch and Palouse Rivers and their tributaries. The St. Maries River Railroad suffered several washouts north of Bovill, and the WI&M suffered a major washout where it crossed Corral Creek. Also, the Palouse River bridge at Kennedy Ford was severely damaged, stranding the WI&M Local’s locomotive and caboose at Potlatch. With the Bovill interchange cut off for both railroads, the St. Maries River Railroad was forced to route its log traffic via the Union Pacific at Plummer, ID. BNSF rebuilt the Kennedy Ford bridge and restored service to the west end of the line, but service east