

The Telegraph Key

An NMRA Sunshine Region Monthly Publication

January 2026



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Editor's Message



Welcome to our **New Year** in the NMRA Sunshine Region!

I hope all of you are enjoying your holidays with family and friends. My wife was back from Norway for a couple weeks in December and we had a wonderful time together.

I'd like to get going on my little layout again. I probably need to make it one of my New Year resolutions... you know – add it to the giant list I already have. Several of the resolutions I made last year have reappeared on the 2026 list. I got some done, I didn't get some done. That's how it goes.

I'm still working on the upcoming **Western Division meet** in Tampa at **American Legion Post 139** on **Saturday, Feb 28th** so keep it on your calendars and join us for coffee, donuts, clinics, lunch, the CP&W Model Railroad Club Open House, and the camaraderie of your fellow railroaders. **Details are below in the Western Division section.**

I will be at Proto Rails in Cocoa Beach. If you see me, please introduce yourself and tell me what's on your mind. I hope to meet many of you there.

Let's have a fantastic start to the New Year!

Mark Lewalski

Telegraph Key Editor



President's Message



Hello Sunshine Region!

As I write this, Christmas is nearly upon us, and my lovely bride and I are **in Hawaii for the holidays**, enjoying a little sunshine of a different sort as the year comes to a close.

By the time you read this, Christmas will have passed, so I hope your model railroading Christmas wishes all came true—whether that meant a long-awaited locomotive, a new module, time at the workbench, or simply time well spent with friends and family. Most of all, I hope 2026 is already shaping up to be a great year for you—and for the Sunshine Region.

And by every measure, it *is* shaping up to be a great year. Across the Region, our Divisions are becoming more engaged and more connected. Membership is improving, energy is high, and the momentum is real. Our most recent Regional Convention set a high bar, and it has us all looking ahead with excitement to the 2026 Convention in Ocala. Just as important, the Region is financially sound, giving us a strong foundation on which to build.

I'm especially pleased to share that the Northern Division is set to hold its first Division meet of 2026 on **January 31st in Tallahassee**. This is an important milestone and a great opportunity to reconnect, share ideas, and set the tone for the year ahead. Be sure to look for **Allen Scott's segment** for full details on the Northern Division and what's coming next.

What excites me most is the bigger picture: the Sunshine Region is growing, getting connected, and coming together to create a more vibrant and robust NMRA community. This is *the* year to join in and participate. Get involved—leave the lone-wolfing to the wolves. Whether it's through a Division meet, a clinic, mentoring a newer member, or simply showing up and lending a hand, your participation matters.

As we head into 2026, I want to continue emphasizing the values that define who we are and where we're going: **Mentorship, Fellowship, and Community**. These are not just words; they are the engines that drive a healthy, welcoming, and forward-looking Region.

You will also begin to hear more about NMRA rebranding efforts. I'll keep this high level for now, but know this: changes are coming, and they are intended to strengthen the NMRA—from the Division level all the way to National. The goal is clarity, connection, and a stronger organization that better serves its members and the hobby we all love.

Thank you for your support, your involvement, and your passion for model railroading. I wish each of you a **fantastic New Year**, and I look forward to all we will accomplish together in 2026.

Until then—Aloha from Hawaii, and best wishes for smooth running rails in the year ahead.

Andy Zimmerman

President



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Treasurer's Message



Happy New Year!!

I hope everyone had a fantastic holiday and had the opportunity to spend time with family and friends (and maybe an op session or two).

As we move into 2026 preparations for our October convention are underway. If there are clinics, how-to's, historical, or any topic you would like to know more about ORRRR you want to share your knowledge on a subject please email us (there are never enough clinicians – we would be glad to add you to the clinician family). Our email is: nmra_sunshineregionmail@yahoo.com

Next month's issue will contain our financials just as we did last year. We will need to shore up our financials to offset falling interest rates and reduced donations. 2026 will be the last year my company, New York Life Insurance, will donate over \$1000 to us. This stipend has allowed us to offset higher costs we are all feeling. We all can help with this by getting additional clubs, businesses to advertise with us. These ads are a great way to keep your and my dollars in our wallets. Without them, our pricing to participate will need to go up. Let's try to mitigate this by letting the folks you know about advertising with us. It's really inexpensive to them and helps us out a lot!!! (Info on ads is on our website).

Thanks,

Glenn Kopriva

Treasurer

Achievement Program



First off, I would like to wish everyone a belated Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year because when you read this it will be the new year. We have one (1) Achievement Program Achievement this month and it is a big one. It is for Richard Segall from Hawthorne, Florida of the Northern Division and it is for MASTER MODEL RAILROADER. Richard has completed seven (7) of the required Achievements plus his Golden Spike Award and they are Master Builder Cars, Master builder Structures, Master Builder Scenery, Model Railroad Engineer Civil, Model Railroad Engineer Electrical, Chief Dispatcher and, Association Official. I would like to thank Richard for a really good job on his accomplishment of his goal to become a MASTER MODEL RAILROADER. I would like to thank Richard for allowing me the chance to be along with him by allowing me to evaluate a lot of his Achievements on his way to his goal. THANK YOU RICHARD FOR A JOB VERY WELL DONE!

That is all I have for this time.

Thank you,

Ken Hoot

Achievement Program Chair

Northern Division



Happy New Year!

I would like to thank all that have supported me as the Northern Division Superintendent in 2025. There are two Northern Division Workshops planned in the first quarter of 2026.

I would like to see at least three and possibly four Northern Division events in 2026. We will need Membership support to make this happen. Locations will include Tallahassee, Lake City and possibly Stark and Jacksonville. Contact me at alco54@hotmail.com if you would like to participate in any of these events.

January 2026 Events...

Prototype Rails January 8th 9th and 10th in Cocoa Beach Florida. Great information, Manufactures and vendors. If you have never been to this event, it is well worth experiencing!

Golden Spike Enterprises January 10th and 11th at the Volusia County Fair Grounds Deland Florida. This two day show has many vendors and layouts to see.

Northern Division Work Shop will be held at the Miccosukee Community Center 15011 Cromartie Road Tallahassee Florida, Saturday January 31st starting at 9:00am. Donations accepted for Breakfast and lunch. This event is sponsored by Andy Zimmerman and the Big Bend Model Railroad Association.

Allen Scott

Northern Division Superintendent

Eastern Division



I'm posting some info for the Eastern Division membership.

Chip Pecere is putting together a meet for mid-March.

The Eastern Division will be having a gathering with clinics on **March 16th** at the main library in **Vero Beach**. This is a **Monday from 10 to 5**. A chance to get together, say hello and share some ideas. There are 4 in person and hopefully one virtual clinic. We will have a T-Track module setup. Let me know if you're interested and have modules to include. I'll have more information coming. For registration contact Chip Pecere

chippecere@gmail.com

516-852-9234

Mark Lewalski

Telegraph Key Editor

Western Division Superintendent

Western Division



Hey Westerner's, Happy New Year!

I'm happy to announce our upcoming Western Division Meet!

I've worked with members of the **CP&W Model Railroad Club** and together, we have organized this coming event.

Save the Date!

WHAT: Western Division Meet

WHERE: American Legion Post 139, 3818 W. Bay Vista Blvd., Tampa, Florida 33611

WHEN: 9:30am – 4pm(ish), Saturday, Feb 28th

CLINICS: *Six Tips for Successful Weathering* – Jim Hopes

Ten Tips for Becoming a Better Modeler – Jon Addison

Making Realistic Deciduous Trees – Jim Hopes

COST: \$20 per person. Coffee, Donuts, and Boxed Lunch included.

After the meet at the American Legion, we can relocate to the CP&W Model Railroad Club. The members there will have an Open House which will include viewing and Op Session explanations of the large layout. This club was formed from the Chicago, Peoria & Western layout operators and friends of John Brennan, after his passing. The 30' x 45' layout is housed in a stand-alone building and will be featured in a spring Model Railroader issue. Registration details will follow soon.

State Events

- **Jan 8-10 – Prototype Rails 2026 – Cocoa Beach** (Cocoa Beach Hilton Oceanfront) – Prototype Modeling Meet – NMRA sanctioned event.
- **Jan 10-11 – Florida Rail Fair – Deland (Volusia County Fairgrounds)** – Train Show/Swap Meet

Events in the Western Division

- **Jan 17th – FREE Clinic at Zitnik Trains.** Jon Addison will present **Making Trees 101**. Hours: 9-10am (before the store opens for business) Please RSVP.
- **Feb 7-8 – The Villages Model RR Clubs - The Villages (Savannah Center)** – Train Show/Swap Meet
- **Feb 15 – Zitnik Trains Spring Parking Lot Swap Meet – Pinellas Park (Zitnik Trains)** – Swap Meet/Open House
- **Feb 21-22 – RealRail RR Club – Venice (Community Center [new venue])** – Train Show/Swap Meet.

If you'd like to email me, please do so at vwtrainsailor@gmail.com

I hope to see many of you out and around. Please work with me to do great things for all of us.

Thanks,

Mark Lewalski

Western Division Superintendent

Southern Division



Happy New Year, everyone! Hopefully you all received the hobby-related gifts that were on your wish lists. If some of them are still in the process of shipping, I'd recommend that you keep careful watch on the tracking numbers, as the sheer volume of shipments inevitably results in cases of mis-routing. The good news is that our hobby is still thriving, with product announcements for 2026 already arriving via e-mail. Don't hesitate to let your favorite manufacturers know the products you would definitely purchase if they produce them, as they rely on that kind of feedback in their market research.

In model railroad club news:

The Florida Citrus Model Train Society (FCMTS) annual holiday display at the Southwest Regional Library, located at 16835 Sheridan Street, Pembroke Pines, FL 33331 continues through January 3rd, 2026, so if interested this is your last chance to attend. The library display is open from Noon to 4 PM Monday-Thursday and Saturday and admission is free. Please contact Ken Sargeant at (954) 253-0413 for any additional information. Their web site is found at www.fcmts.org.

The East Coast HO Exhibitors Society (ECHOES) club will be operating every weekend in January at the Gold Coast Railroad Museum located at 12450 SW 152nd Street, Maimi, FL 33177. They are running at the museum from 10 AM to 4 PM, but remember that there is an entrance fee to the museum (see the Gold Coast Railroad Museum web site). If you are interested, ask about their operating sessions. For additional information on ECHOES events, please contact Rick Diaz, rickdiaz@att.net or Tracey Sanders, tassailor@mac.com.

The Palm Beach Model Railroaders (PMBRR) is located at the South Florida Fairgrounds, 9067 Southern Blvd, West Palm Beach, 33411. Their biggest annual event starts on January 16th during the Palm Beach County Fair and continues through February 1st. During the fair the layout is open all day, every day. This is the best time to see the layout even if you are sharing with the fairground crowds. They can be contacted at PBMRRclub@gmail.com for additional information. The club's web site is www.pbmrr.org.

The South Florida Railway Museum (SFRM) at the Deerfield Amtrak and Tri-Rail station at 1300 West Hillsboro Boulevard plans their next open house on Saturday, January 10th with visitors welcomed from 11 AM through 4 PM. Both N scale and HO scale layouts are open and on display. There are wooden trains set out on the outdoor deck to keep the small children happy, as the "look but don't touch" rules do not apply to the extremely rugged wood trains and track. The HO layout team is currently finishing up their locomotive terminal and additional scenery upgrades are also in progress. The N scale group plans to begin revamping the N scale layout in late January, so this is your last opportunity to see the current version before demolition begins. Part of the layout will remain open as long as possible, but at least half of it will be gone by February. The club currently maintains a Facebook page in addition to the web site www.sfrm.org. For additional information, contact Bob Leonard, leonardstrait@gmail.com.

While certainly not in Florida, the massive Amherst train show in West Springfield Massachusetts occurs on January 24th-25th. It's the largest show of the year, with multiple buildings of displays including huge layouts, many vendors, and even the product manufacturers in attendance. While quite a trek and of course colder than our Florida winters, it's definitely worth the trip.

On a personal note, I will be traveling the next couple of months, so my predecessor, Bob Leonard, will be filling in until I return. Thanks in advance, Bob!

For any inquiries, my contact info is rwberger@comcast.net.

That's all for now. Have a wonderful holiday season and we'll be back in January..

Richard Berger

Southern Division Superintendent

South Florida Railway Museum

Happy New Year Sunshine Region

The Museum is Open on the 2nd Saturday of the month, the following dates are for our 1st quarter

01-10, 02-14, 03-14

from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Follow us on our website www.sfrm.org and our Facebook page

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E.C.H.O.E.S is a modular model railroad club located in Miami-Dade, Florida, dedicated to building and displaying our HO scale model railroad layout. Our purpose is to enjoy and promote the hobby of model railroading and preserve the history of railroading in South Florida. The club was started in the summer of 1985, with the goal of presenting a HO scale modular model railroad layout for display at "The Harvest Festival". Throughout the years, the layout has been displayed at regional conventions, four NMRA National Train Shows (Atlanta twice, Ft. Lauderdale, FL and Orlando), and other events in Miami Dade and Broward counties. We do running/operating sessions several times a year and welcome guests to join us. Membership is open and we welcome anyone who shares an interest and passion for Model railroading.

For more information, please contact:

Rick Diaz	rickdiaz@att.net	305 496 9266
Tracey Sanders	tassailor@mac.com	786 514 5667
Herb Ford	ehf640@gmail.com	786 375 1424



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