

Pipe Trains Running

Trackside Series #26-By Lloyd M. Palmer-July 2010

A recent trip to Lakeview, Oregon to take photographs of an ongoing operation on the Lake Railway is the subject for this next installment of the *Trackside Series*. The materials being moved over the company's tracks are unique enough that a "spur of the moment" trip to Alturas and Lakeview seemed warranted.

Lakeview has become a beehive of activity and the normally low key operations of the Lake Railway Co. have taken on a whole new life. The reason for all the excitement is the \$3 billion Ruby Pipeline project. This new natural gas pipeline will extend 675 miles from Wyoming, through Utah and Nevada, to a point near Malin, Oregon, which is located several miles southeast of Klamath Falls.



The 42-inch pipe, which comes in mostly 80-foot sections is being manufactured in Memphis, Tennessee and is being transported by rail. The Union Pacific Railroad delivers the pipe trains to their yards in Klamath Falls in trains of usually about seventy to eighty cars at a time. The UP then hauls them out the former Modoc Northern RR line to Perez where a crew from the Lake Railway boards the train for the final portion of the trip into Alturas, CA.



From Alturas, the Lake Rwy. uses its own GP-59 No.2809 to move the loaded cars north to Lakeview, sixteen cars at a time, where they're spotted at the unloading site in the Lake County Industrial Park at the south end of town. The reason for the sixteen car trains is that's the number of cars that the staging area can handle at one time.

Once spotted, a large excavator type piece of equipment, fitted with a large electromagnet, is used to remove the pipe from the flat cars. It places the section of pipe on the forks of a front end loader which then moves it to the piles of pipe that are being built in the yards.



Upon arriving in Lakeview, the locomotive spots the loaded pipe cars at the receiving yard and ties up for the day. Then, as before, the pipe is unloaded during the day and the whole process is again repeated later that afternoon.

Each evening about 6:00 PM the Lake Railway's locomotive hooks onto the sixteen flat cars that were unloaded that day, ties onto any other loads that need to be moved south, and heads for Alturas. The trip takes about five hours, at ten miles an hour over fifty-two miles of track, and arrives in Alturas about 10:00PM. It sets out the outbound cars, ties onto sixteen loads of pipe and any other cars needing to move to Lakeview and again heads north.

Unfortunately, since the loaded pipe trains between Alturas and Lakeview run at night, the only chance to shoot pictures of a movement of loaded pipe cars is to catch the train headed east from Klamath Falls. At this time, there is no set schedule for their arrival in K-Falls so catching one takes some special planning, and keeping your ear to the rail.



On our recent trip we were fortunate enough to catch a special Union Pacific locomotive on the point of the pipe train, even though we didn't get to chase the pipe train into Alturas. Union Pacific has painted one of its new GE built C45ACCTE locomotives to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America. It's numbered 2010, for the current year, and is adorned with numerous Boy Scout emblems and patches. The unit had been tied down in Alturas the night it arrived and we were able to photograph it in the morning light the next day. As an extra bonus we also caught it on the train returning to Klamath Falls later that same day and chased it as far as Ambrose before heading to Lakeview.

Anyone having the desire to take pictures of a unique operation on an Oregon shortline railroad should take this opportunity and head to Lakeview. We were told that somewhere between three and five more pipe trains would be delivered before there was enough pipe in Lakeview to complete the job.

As a result, this activity won't last too much longer so you better "Catch 'em while they're hot, boys!"

