

Kenneth L. Douglas/Louis A. Marre collection

WESTERN PACIFIC SW1500s

Diesel Era staff

As with most buyers of SW1500 switching locomotives, Western Pacific Railroad intended for the units to replace aging minority-make switchers, in this case, Alco and Baldwin units. While the carrier initially placed an order for eight of Electro-Motive Division's premier 1,500-horsepower end-cab switchers in 1970, the

order was changed to 10 GP40s – moving freight across the system was obviously more important than lowly yard switching. But two years later, three SW1500s were purchased for the sum of \$207,134 each.

Delivered in May 1973, the trio displaced the carrier's remaining two Baldwin VO-1000s, 581 and 583,* and Alco S-4 563

top, Built after Southern Pacific's final SW1500 order, Western Pacific's three units were similarly equipped – Flexicoil trucks, multiple-unit connections, 1,100-gallon fuel tank, and frame-mounted handrails. Two-year-old 1501 is shown at Oakland, Calif., on December 28, 1975. below, Unlike SP, WP opted for a more standard light package, as seen in this view of 1503 at Oakland on January 26, 1977. Note the addition of a five-chime horn.



Vic Reyna/Louis A. Marre collection



George R. Cockle/Kenneth M. Ardinger collection

Assigned to work the car-ferry operation in San Francisco in this December 13, 1975, view, 1501 displays a feature with which all three SW1500s were built – footboards – but that they would soon loose. Although they were equipped with MU connections, rarely were the SW1500s mated – 1,500 horsepower was adequate for their typical assignments.

WP 1502 was the last SW1500 to be fitted with a five-chime horn. Shown at Oakland, Calif., on September 9, 1979, the unit has lost its footboards and the coupler pin lift bar has been modified for use from the corner steps.



E.G. Waish/Vincent J. Porreca collection

below, Unlike the case with their Southern Pacific cousins, Western Pacific rarely used its SW1500s in road service. WP 1503 is at Oakland, Calif., on March 12, 1977.



Vic Reyna/Arnold Lebosky collection

from Stockton, Calif., yard service.

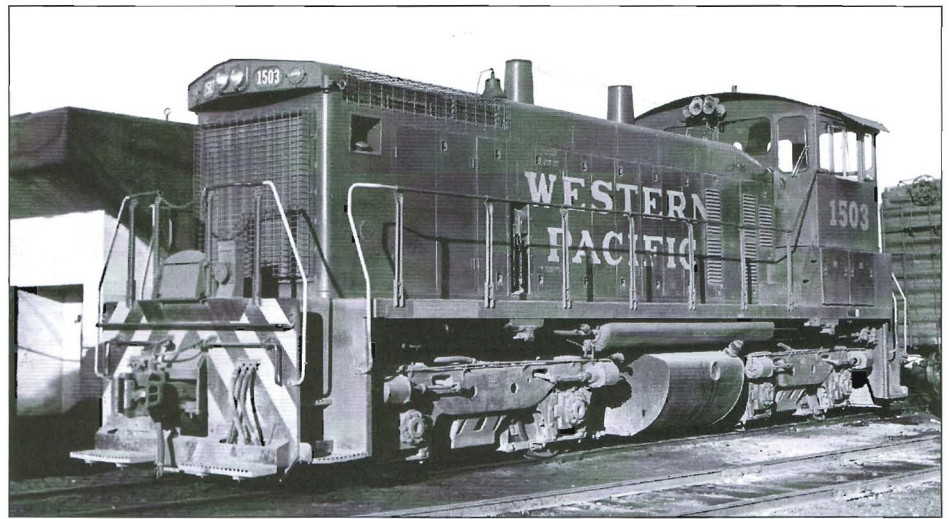
This assignment would be short-lived and they soon migrated to the San Francisco Bay area, where they remained for their careers on the WP. Two units were assigned to Oakland, while one unit worked the San Francisco side of the bay serving the car-ferry operation. When this ended, all three units worked at Oakland.

In December 1982, WP was merged into Union Pacific. The SW1500s remained at Oakland, but in April and May 1984, the units exchanged their dark green coats for an Armour yellow and Harbor Mist gray attire, retaining their 1500-series road numbers.

The next change to the former WP SW1500s came in 1987-1988 when the trio was renumbered 1315-1317 (1315 renumbered November 24, 1988; 1316 renumbered June 1, 1988; and 1317 renumbered August 20, 1987). Originally leased, the trio was formally purchased by UP on January 3, 1989, after the original lease expired on January 1. The units remained in California until 1990, when they were reassigned to a former Missouri Pacific yard, Centennial Yard, in Fort Worth, Texas.

Currently, the three units have been assigned road numbers Y1040-Y1042 (Y1040 renumbered September 17, 2004; Y1041 renumbered, date unknown; and Y1042 renumbered August 10, 2001). The units were working at Houston and Los Angeles as of mid-August 2005. ★

*Sold to Purdy (dealer), later resold to Auto-Train and renumbered 623 and 624.



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J. Harlen Wilson

top, WP 1503 is shown at San Francisco on December 13, 1975.

above, Back in its home territory after repainting, former Western Pacific 1502, now UP 1502, continued to work in the Oakland area for eight more years. Note that 1502 has lost its fixed cab-side windows. Oakland, Calif., October 19, 1984.

left, To reduce costs, various WP maintenance facilities were either closed or their work scopes reduced. As a result, the ex-WP SW1500s traveled to Salt Lake City instead of Stockton, Calif., for major work, as seen in this January 29, 1985, view. Note that the five-chime horn has been replaced with a more standard UP three-chime honker.



Ryan Ballard/Diesel Era collection

In 1987, UP began renumbering its switchers into the 1200 and 1300 series. The three ex-WP SW1500s were numbered in number slots after 15 former Pittsburgh & Lake Erie MP15DCs acquired by the UP, 1315-1317. Shown at Centennial Yard in Fort Worth, Texas, on March 21, 1996.



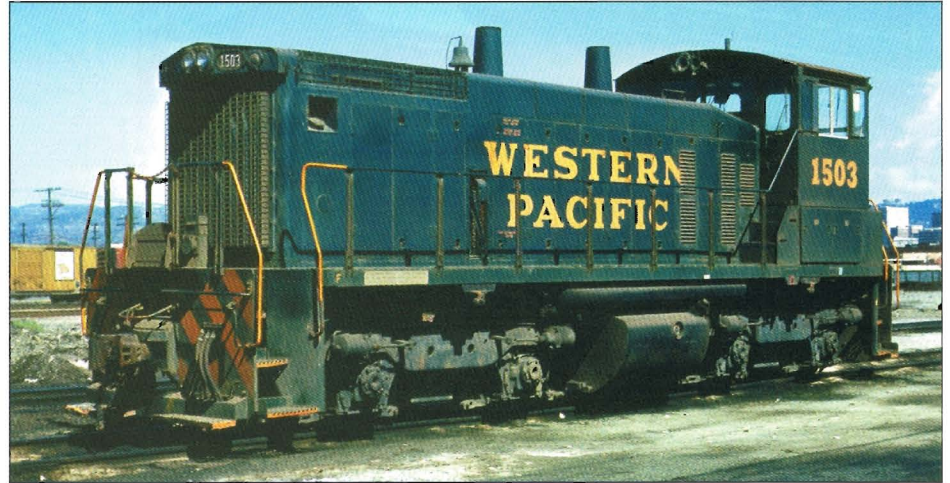
J. Harlen Wilson



E. Forrest Hadley/Kenneth M. Ardinger collection

Still sporting that factory shine, three-month-old Western Pacific 1501 was being attended to at Oakland, Calif., on August 18, 1973. The SW1500s were numbered according to horsepower, WP's then-current numbering system.

The SW1500s were delivered in WP's dark green paint scheme with orange trim, pilot striping, and lettering. When it came time to repaint the units, merger talks were under way, so painting was delayed, with the units' first repainting coming after the Union Pacific merger. WP 1503 is shown at Oakland, Calif., on September 24, 1977.



Vincent J. Porreca collection



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WP opted for the full window package that included two fixed cab-side windows per side. The sand and batteries were housed in the compartment that also served as the back cab exit step on the SW1500. WP 1501 is shown at Oakland, Calif., on April 6, 1974.

Two years after the merger, the three WP SW1500s headed east to Union Pacific's Salt Lake City shops for repainting. Shown fresh out of the paint booth, former WP 1502, now UP 1502, is shown on May 22, 1984. The units initially kept their five-chime horns, and someone in the paint booth even took the time to paint the inside of the bells red.



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