

## Abo Canyon Workshop at Ntrak Swiss Division

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Photos: Felix Gaehler and Rainer Kurth

At the Club General Meeting in March 2010 it was decided, that a sequence of Modules with the subject "Abo Canyon" was to be built by members of Ntrak Swiss Division. The idea came from Rony Aeberhard, who had built an Ntrak Module of Keddie Wye and had introduced a material for rock formation, which we had never before used – the green foam stuff used by florists to setup flower arrangements. However, the results were stunning. After a lengthy planning session it was decided, that it had to be 7 oNetrak modules, of which 1 was to be straight and the rest were curved modules of 30° each. Therefore they could be set up as an S-curve or a 180° corner. The radius was to be identical to a 4ft corner module.

Two club members, Sylvia Jenzer and Felix Gaehler volunteered to build 3 modules each and the straight module was built by Rony himself.

We planned for 4 Saturdays always a month apart and prepared the detailed building plan. The module base was a lightweight construction of ½" baseplate and end pieces and a ¼" fascia, which should cover all 4 sides. We had the plywood pieces precut at a friends carpenter shop.

On the first Saturday we assembled the module base. We started at 10 AM and worked until 5 PM with a lunch break of approx. 1 hour. This schedule was to be applied for all sessions if we were to complete the task within the intended time.

The second Saturday's plan was the construction of the roadbed, track work and the wiring. It went as planned. There were always at least 5 members present and hard at work.

The third session was the real adventure – working with a material nobody with the exception of Rony



*The first public show of the new modules. To the right is the Ntrak layout with a junction off a 4ft corner module to a oNetrak branch. To the left, part of the new Abo Canyon modules is visible.*



*After the first working session, the completed woodworking gives an idea, what the Abo Canyon section is going to look like. The fascia is already cut to shape.*

had any experience with. We filled the space inside the fascia with the green blocks. The foam blocks, which measure approx. 9 x 4 x 3

### Abo Canyon, New Mexico

To the south and east of Albuquerque, NM and on the BNSF main line from Los Angeles to Chicago is a 5.5 mile stretch of single track following the Abo River. Some 80 to 100 trains a day go through this bottleneck. Many trains are containers from the Orient and on their way all over the country.

There are seven bridges on the 1.5% grade east bound. Areas of rock slides keep the track crews busy. Currently, a double tracking project is well under way. The Swiss modules in this article model the single track going through the Abo River canyon before the new construction started.

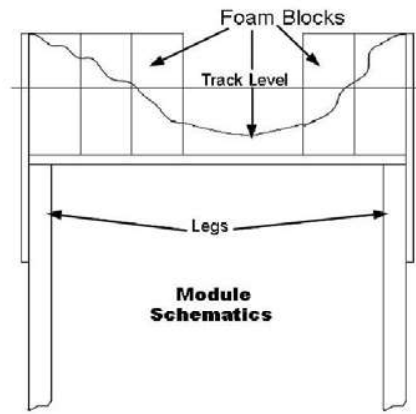
inches, were inserted into the module. The top of the blocks were cut with a large kitchen knife. When the contours seemed satisfactory, the blocks were glued together with





*This picture shows Sylvia Jenzer fitting the green foam blocks into one of her modules. She built 3 of the 6 corner elements.*

*The polyurethane foam is ready to be trimmed away, before it fully hardens.*

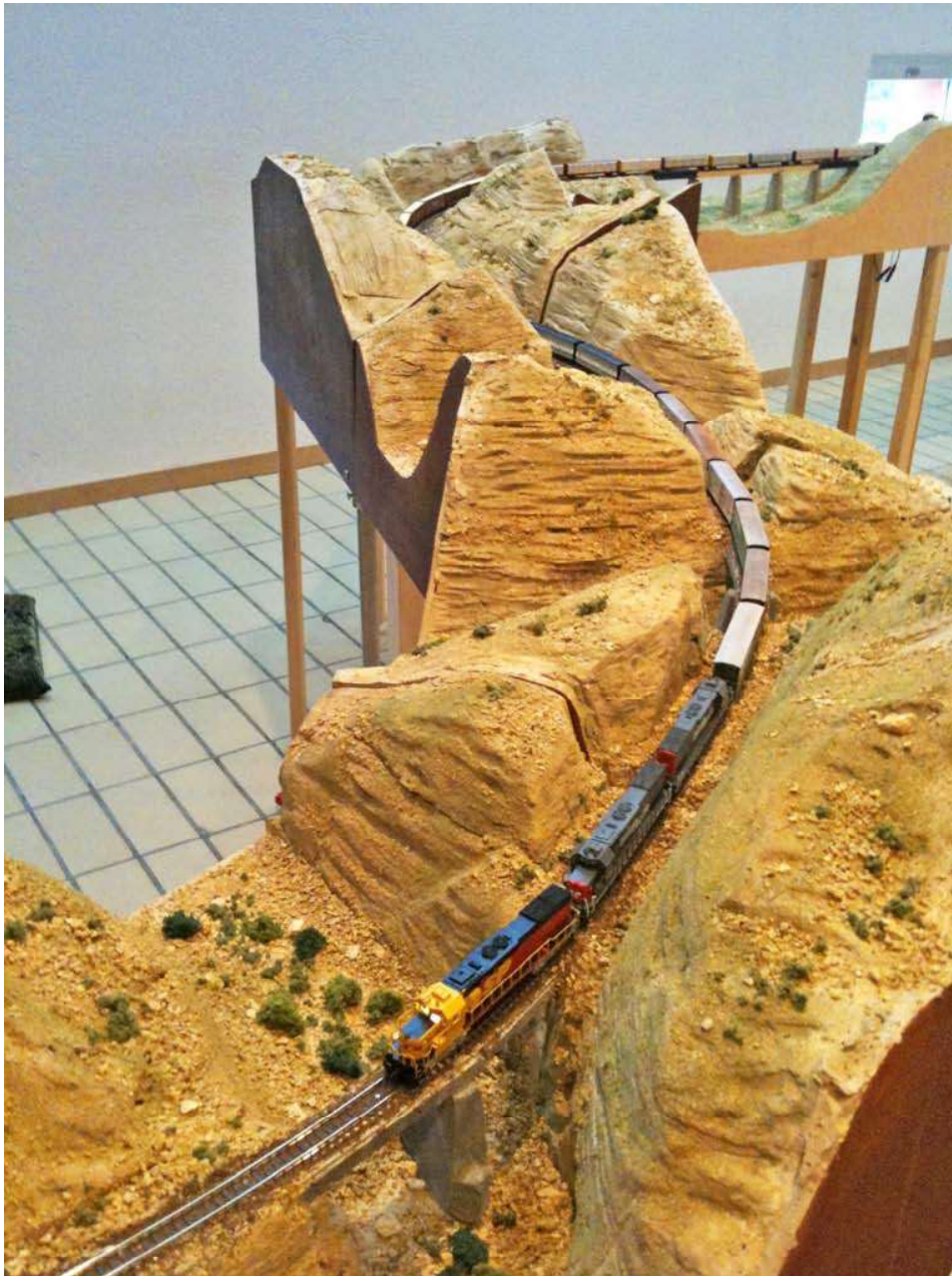


polyurethane foam, a rather messy task. Since the polyurethane foam has a strong tendency to expand, the surplus welts were cut away after a brief drying period, but before completely hardened. The module schematics provided shows the placement of the foam blocks. While the whole thing was setting, the bridge pillars, which have a particular shape in Abo Canyon, were formed and sanded. Care had to be taken, as the material is very soft and can easily be penetrated with a little thumb pressure. With the help of a toothbrush, the rock surface was brushed into the foam.

*Below, with the sculptered foam is Rainer Kurth, who has attended several N conventions and train shows in the USA and furnished photos for the newsletter several times and for this article.*







*The complete Abo Canyon as set up during the October operating session. In the background is the straight 4ft module with the largest bridge visible.*



*A view through the canyon. Note the the rock structure after painting and covering with fine and coarse sand gravel. The tracks have been ballasted but not cleaned yet.*



*A view through the canyon with the completely scenicked modules. Still missing are the Bridge girders and railings.*



*A view into a bridge element. Note in the lower center the specific bridge pillar shape particular to Abo Canyon.*

In order to make the landscape Ntrak proof, i.e. hard enough for transportation, the whole landscape was soaked with a glue / water solution. (1 part glue / 3 parts water). This made the foam surface hard enough for further processing. The foam is very porous and sucks up a lot of water. (It is the original purpose of the foam, to supply water to the inserted plants for a long time to keep the flower arrangement fresh). The whole landscape must be allowed to dry for several days and should not be touched until dry. Eventually it might be necessary to add more of this solution do fix some still soft spots.





The fourth and last session was the painting and detailing task. With a paintbrush, the entire surface was covered with a grayish/yellowish latex paint. While still wet, at some layers, a little red and brown and the ground texture, consisting of fine and coarse gravel was added with boulders interspersed.

Some woodland scenics foliage was added to the bottom of the canyon and this completed the work.

During the weekend of 15/17th of October we set up an Ntrak layout and appended the oNtrak branch with the new Abo Canyon modules integrated and it was a real show stopper.

More pictures can be viewed on our website: [www.ntrak.ch](http://www.ntrak.ch)

*The Hans Egli (left), who wrote this article, was on Sylvia's module building team for the three modules seen here.*



*The Keddie Wye module of Ronny Aeberhard, which stimulated the decision to the Abo Canyon project. In the foreground the yet incomplete trestle to the left. The Keddie Wye is a 6ft. Ntrak module, of which the yellow and blue line run behind the scene. The module is acting as a junction to a oNtrak branch, running off the red line.*