

## **Making Streambeds - April, 2015**

Streams look best near the front of a layout, where visitors can get a good look at them.

The first step is to survey the landscape to select a stream will look like it belongs in the scene.

I am a strong believer in using polyfoam (rather than plywood), for my track base. One inch of foam represents 6 feet of depth in HO scale and 13 feet in n scale and that one inch allows for a lot of below grade landscaping.

Dig enough of the polyfoam to provide room for sloping banks and the stones that a stream deposits along its route. Use an X-acto carving router (X135) for the stream bed and if you need scenic contours, mix a small batch of Sculptamold and use it to model them.

After the surface is thoroughly dry, prepare the polyfoam by coloring the bottom. You'll need acrylic paint in the color of choice, the edges of the stream should be painted in earth color and the deeper sections with mixed black, earth and a touch of cerulean blue. Mist where the colors overlap. Gently stipple the colors together with a clean china-bristle brush, then let everything dry overnight.

Collect several different small sizes from boulders down to coarse sand. These stones will line the stream bed, starting with the sand on the bottom and the boulders on the top.

Larger pebbles sifted from a bag of construction sand will make realistic streambed stones. Sprinkle fine construction sand into the streambed followed by coarser gravel, larger stones or boulders. Use a large, soft brush to move them around, Finish by sprinkling fine sand down the middle of the stream, along with the banks and wherever fast water would deposit it.

Also consider buying a bag of tube sand from the big hardware stores. This sand can be sifted into several different sizes and the fines from this source make an excellent, inexpensive ballast for your track bed.

Mist the stones with wet water until they change color and the sand absorbs the water and then use an eyedropper to flow on diluted white glue or matte medium bonding solution.

Let the stones dry overnight. If any of the pieces are loose, glue them individually using full strength white glue.

Finish up by lightly brushing black wash into the shadows.

Then you're ready to pour the water.

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