

Greetings! This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 18, 2015. So much happened this week that it's a challenge to fit this update all on one page. So, let's get this thing started before we have to shrink the font to miniscule, unreadable, tiny sizes!

On both Tuesday and Friday, the Mighty Weed Team was on guard and out on the Hood Line. Weed Team Captain, Mike Taylor, and Weedies Heather Kearns, Dave Megeath, Dale Parker, and Joe Galipeau had intended to begin eradicating blackberry vines along the line on Tuesday. Alas, mechanical difficulties curtailed this plan. The Hood motorcar died and there was no way to pull the spray rig. So, to make blackberry jam out of blackberries, they removed several hundred seedlings and saplings that were popping up within the right-of-way instead. Also, a large, old walnut tree had fallen over blocking the truck's access to the line. Fortunately, they brought their big chain-saws with them. Friday, Alan Hardy joined the Weed Team to help repair the Hood motorcar. With it fully functional once again, a trip up the line to the fourth trestle served as a test of the machine. On the way they removed several wind thrown limbs from the track. Dave interrupted the run by stopping for a rafter of wild turkeys foraging along the line proving that the Weedies are nothing if not sensitive to the environment. These folks deserve our gratitude for all they do for our railroad and keeping the Hood dream alive.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops on Tuesday, Chris Carlson, Frederick Carr, Mike Harris, Scott Morrison, Harry Voss, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, and Gene Peck were burning the midnight oil – well, 5 to 8 o'clock hydraulic oil – keeping the MOW Team moving. Pat and Gene took on the issues plaguing the Green Machine's brakes. This was child's play for Gene and Pat. They fixed the brakes then solved its high-idle problem. Then, they set their sights on the front-end loader's hydraulic leaks. They diagnosed the problem and installed new o-rings on the swivel joint. Chris, Scott, and Fred continued rebuilding the tie shear. Mike H. jumped down into the pit under the Kalamazoo to remove decades of grease and dirt from its turntable which has not worked in years. Then, he cranked the engine and engaged the turntable lifting the Kalamazoo up in the air for the first time in anyone's memory. Alan, Harry, and Cliff assisted and, after a bit of cajoling, managed to get the machine to turn. Chalk up another big success to the determination of our dedicated MOW Team!

Thursday, Fred, Mike H., Scott, Heather, Cliff, and Alan were on hand. Cliff modified a railroad skate by adding a "tongue" to make it easier for us to use. Scott, Fred, Mike H., and Alan continued work on the tie-shear and Kalamazoo. Heather did amazing work by completely reorganizing our paint cabinets. Heather deserves great kudos for taking on that less than enviable task.

Saturday, members of the MOW Team were in Old Sacramento well before sun-up – or the arrival of doughnuts. In the dark, we had to set-up and get our track equipment ready to roll out of town before 8 a.m. because a "cyclocross" bicycle race had been authorized to run in Old Sacramento. We learned that, "cyclocross" is a quaint form of "extreme" bicycle racing that includes dismounting and carrying the bicycle over obstacles (a.k.a. our tracks). As a result, "cyclocross-racers" had been given exclusive track occupancy. So, we'd be out of luck if we didn't get out of town early. Gathering over in the Shops were Alan, Clem Meier, Michael Florentine, Fred, Frank Werry, Pam Tatro, Dave, Heather, Darlene Mathias, and Harry who quickly scoffed down the doughnuts in order to enact the plan of the day – to continue changing-out ties between Broadway and Front Street. Mike F. jumped on the Big Green Machine. Harry piloted the MOW Truck, Frank the Tamper, Alan the Sacrifer, and Dave the Motorcar. Pam, Clem, Heather, Darlene, and Fred dug-out the rock around the ties to loosen their grip. Regrettably, the first couple of ties simply disintegrated as they dug around them. Nonetheless, the section-gang machine was deployed and managed to grab several ties without completely mangling them. Alan brought in the Scarifer, dug out the cribs, and pulled the new ties into position with the inserter function. Pam, Fred, Dave, Mike, and Frank plated and set spikes then brought in the pneumatic spiker to drive the spikes. We were going great guns. By noon, we had replaced seven ties. After lunch, we returned to the job-site to continue with the effort. An additional five ties were changed. The Team was encouraged and having a good time out there as everything was going so well. Then, some idiot, and I won't mention my name, jinxed the operation by saying out loud, "Things are going swell! We're having no mechanical problems at all today!" Well, no sooner were those words spoken than a steel pivot pin for the jaws on the section-gang machine sheared right off rendering the machine inoperable. This brought our work out on the line to an end. So, Harry, Mike F., and Darlene took the machine back to the Shops to effect repairs. Frank tamped the new ties as well as other areas that had settled. The rest of the Team headed back to town with all the equipment but, because of the cyclocross event, were precluded from entering Old Sac prior to 4 o'clock. So we took the opportunity to make minor repairs to the Old Main south of the Garbage Crossing. All in all, we had a good day. We ended up changing out only 12 ties. But, the best part of the day was camaraderie between great group of folks who enjoy working together with the goal of building a better railroad in mind.

The All Aboard Desk published a list of new hour-bar recipients for the last quarter of 2014. Several MOW Team members earned new hour bars: DJ Chapman and Josh Ilac – 250; Matt Blackburn and Fred Carr – 500; Ed Moriarty – 2,500; Darlene Mathias – 3,000; Jeff Allen, Joe Galipeau, and Kevin Hecteman – 3,500; Mike Harris – 4,000; Ron Cox and Frank Werry – 5,000; Dave Megeath – 6,000; Myrletta Downes – 9,000; Heather Kearns – 11,000; Dale Parker – 16,000; Alan Hardy – a whoppin' 24,000! What a dedicated crew!

This week, the Weed Team will be spraying blackberry vines at Hood. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday. The Tuesday and Thursday evening crews will meet as usual at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop. 100 tons of ballast rock is being delivered this week so on Saturday, we'll be spreading ballast and preparing for a track raise. Doughnuts will be served promptly at 8 o'clock a.m. Thanks to the MOW Team volunteers who, despite rain, or cold, or heat, or cyclocross races, always get the job done! Amazing!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



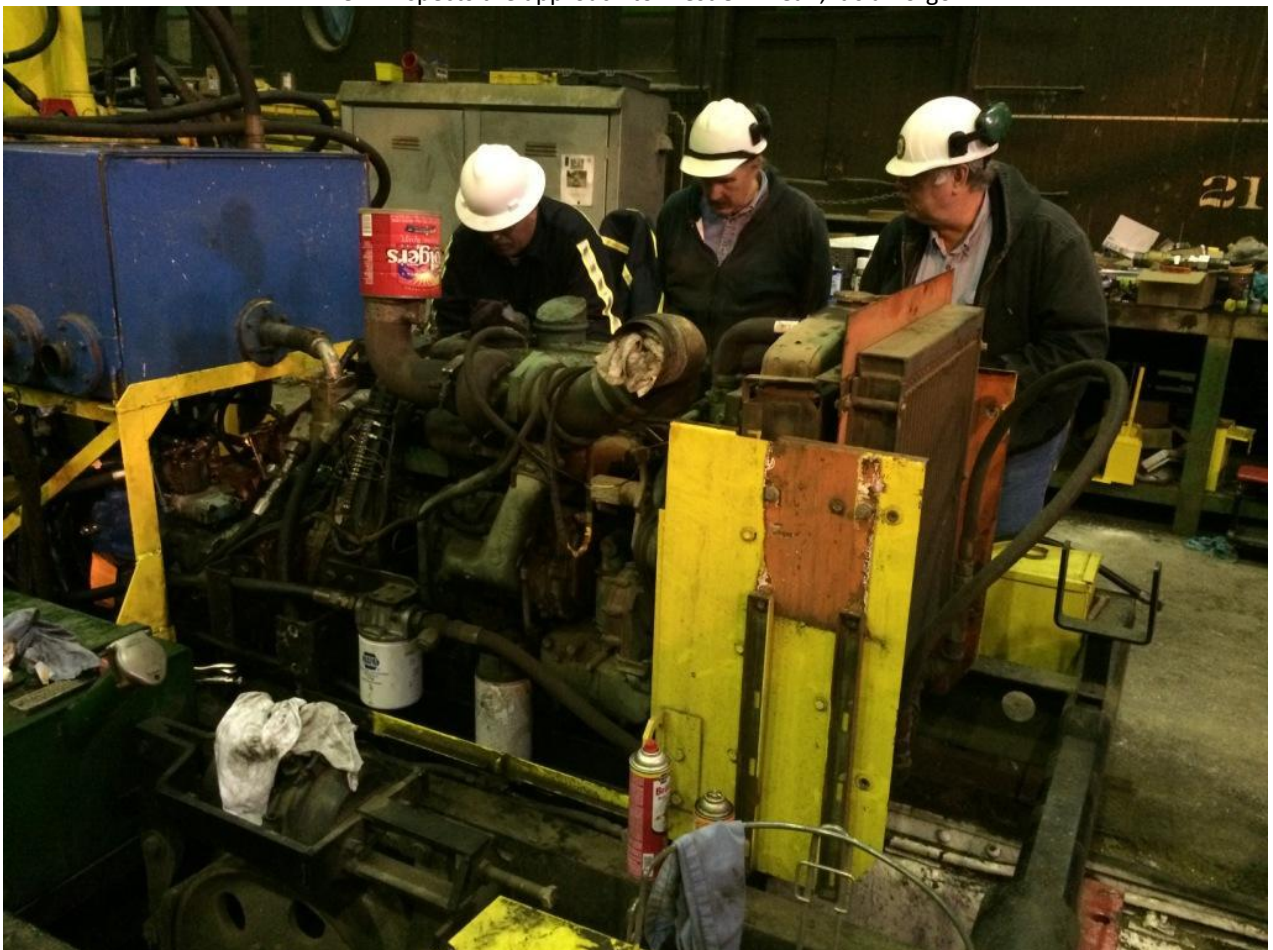
Fortunately, the Weed Team brought their big chainsaw with them...



Dave, Alan, and Mike T. get the Hood motorcar working again



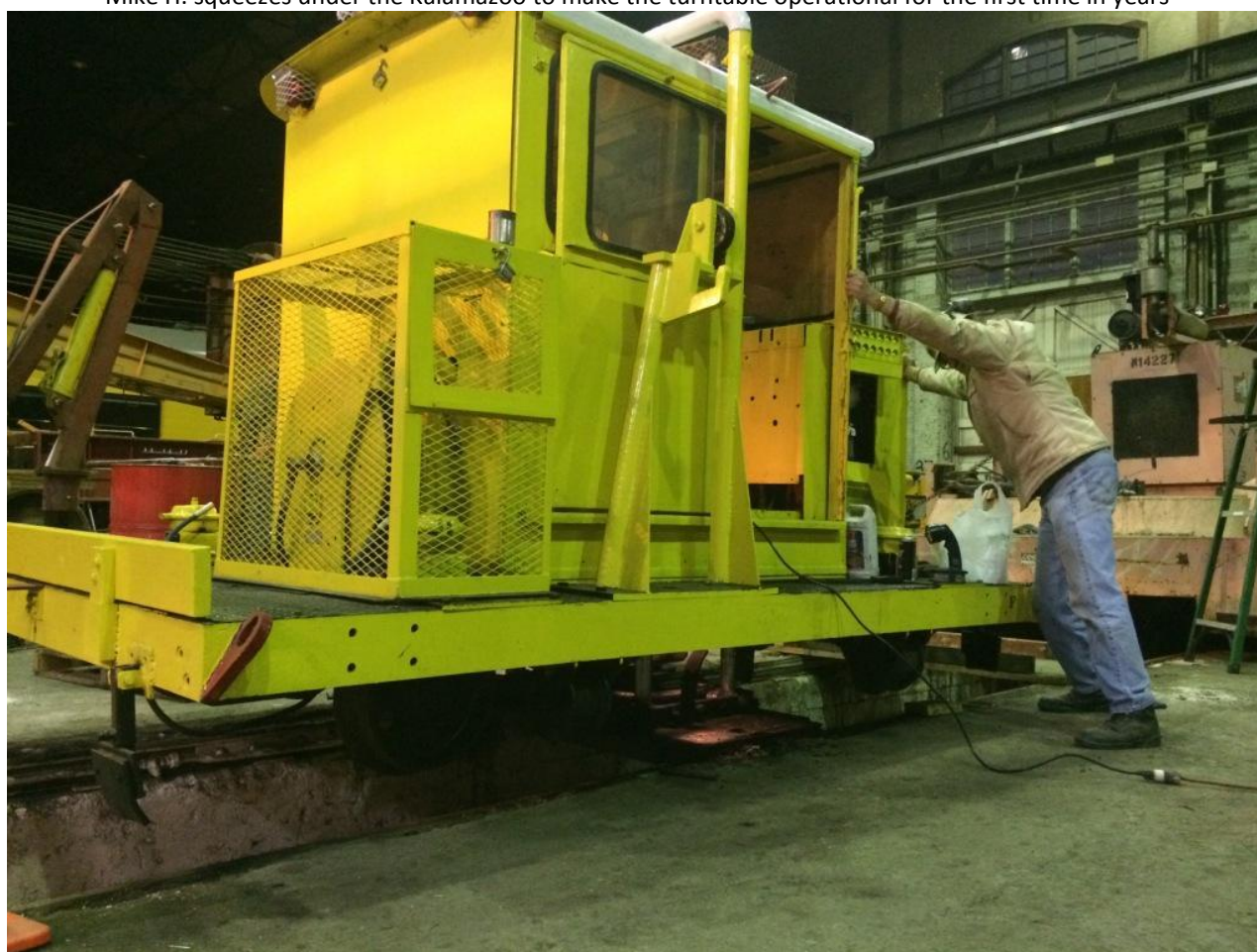
Mike T. inspects the approach to Trestle 4. Yeah, it's a no-go...



Scott, Fred, and Chris work on bringing the tie-shear back to life



Mike H. squeezes under the Kalamazoo to make the turntable operational for the first time in years



Thanks to Mike H., with the turntable working, it lifted the Kalamazoo and Alan attempts to spin it



Cliff and Fred show off their handiwork on the skate



So Heather, what you're telling me is, that was a tie?



Mike F. on Big Green deploys the section-gang machine while the Team preps the ties for pulling



Yeah, that's not going to work. There's really nothing for the section-gang machine to grab ahold of and pull here...



...So, we bring in Mike F. – the human tie-shear...



On the next tie, Frank, Mike F., Clem, Harry, Dave, and Alan try the chain method



With the old tie removed, Clem spots a new tie for insertion



Mike F. guides a new tie into place as Alan in the scarifer uses the inserter function to pull it into the crib





Frank nips-up the new tie while Pam uses the maddox to shove some rock under it for support



What is this? A steam-powered spiker?



Darlene and Heather dig out another tie



Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Mike F., Harry, and Darlene repair the jinxed section-gang machine