

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 22, 2017. Trouble punctuated the Team's week. And, when there's trouble out on the line, your MOW Team gets the call. Let's keep out of trouble here and get you updated on the trouble out on the line.

Trouble at Hood: Tuesday, the levy, on which the Hood Line runs, sprung a leak between Stoney Lakes to the east and farm fields to the west. There was a serious threat that the farms as well as nearby structures would be inundated from the leak. State Parks called on the MOW Team for help. Alan Hardy, Matt McCracken, and Chris Carlson raced to the rescue. At Hood, they met up with Mike Taylor, Heather Kearns, and Ed Kottal, who were at Hood already doing Weed Team work, as well as a crew from the California Conservation Corps (CCC) which State Parks had called in. The combined forces used the Weed Team's motorcar, flatcar, and Nolan track-cart to ferry sandbags up and down the line to the spot where the water was intruding. When darkness fell, the operation was suspended at which point the State Parks folks and CCC crew took off leaving the MOW Team to clean up and put away all the equipment. But the evening didn't end there. The road to the MOW container at Hood had become a saturated bog. Deep water-filled mud-ruts had formed during the day from multiple State Parks and CCC vehicles making it impassable. So, the Team cut branches from a nearby eucalyptus which were laid in the road to provide some traction. About 200 feet away where the road is paved, Ed noticed that it was covered with gravel. Mike T. organized a bucket-brigade to fill in the ruts. Heather and Matt spread the gravel. Although it took a couple of hours, the trucks were extracted. The entire Team deserves extra credit and five gold stars each for going *above and beyond* on a troubled Tuesday.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Frank Werry, Joe Margucci, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, and Cliff Hayes held down the fort. Joe and Frank finished installing the new vibrating motors on the tamper. Once installed, they fired it up and tested its operation. All eight work-heads shook like a Chihuahua on the Fourth of July! Because of our recent spate of battery issues, we're looking to reduce the electrical load on all MOW machines. So, Joe installed LED headlights on the tamper. Now, the tamper is ready to roll. No trouble in the Shops. Only successes.

Wednesday and Thursday, the Team continued its efforts on the Hood Line. Alan spent all day in the wind and the rain on Wednesday piloting the Weed Team's motorcar ferrying sandbags, CCC, and State Parks crews to the site of the levy leak. Thursday, Michael Florentine and Ed joined Alan for one more day of work on the Hood Line. This leak in the levy had the potential of flooding adjacent farm fields and structures. The only way to access the leaky area was via the Hood Line tracks. Because of the fantastic work of the Weed Team, the track is passable making it possible to get the people and supplies necessary to the area in order to plug the leak and end the threat of inundation. Alan, Ed, and Mike F., as well as the State Parks and CCC crews did a fantastic job staving off a potential disaster.

But the trouble didn't end there. Thursday afternoon on his way back to the Shops, Mike F. noticed a large branch had fallen on the tracks near the south Miller Park switch (16). The branch was about 20-feet in length and standing upright on its many limbs. Mike F. and Paul Jansson gathered some of the Weed Team's implements, including the gas-powered chainsaw-on-a-stick, and made quick work of the offending branch. They piled the debris well off the side of the track to be retrieved at a later date. Matt, Joe, and Frank were at the Shops when Mike F. and Paul returned. The Team spent the rest of the evening installing the tie-shear's main shear cylinder, which had been rebuilt by a local hydraulics service shop. This cylinder weighs about 500 pounds and it took a delicate touch to get it back into the machine. Matt, Paul, Joe, Frank, and Mike F. did a fantastic job and, by the end of the evening, had the cylinder in place ready to be plumbed.

Saturday was trouble-free for Alan, Joe, Mike F., Matt, Ed, Pam Tatro, John Rexroth, Harry Voss, Chris Carlson, Steve Nemeth, and Heather Kearns. A bright pink box of fresh doughnuts always makes for a good start to the day. The plan for the day was to continue dismantling the switch at the east portal of the Setzer Tunnel. This time, the Team brought the hydraulic spike puller to ease our spike-pulling burden. Harry handled the back-hoe and Steve ran the Big Green Machine. At the work-site, the Team used the pneumatic impact-wrench in the effort to gather additional 136-pound joint-bars. Heather, Matt, and Joe dug around buried rail-joints in order to access the bolts for removal. Harry on the back-hoe sped-up things up by using the hoe to dig them out in one scoop. Steve on Big Green lifted spike-puller off the truck and set it on the rails. Pam fired it up and pulled dozens of spikes on rails that needed to be moved in order to free the frog. What a difference a little hydraulic power makes! With spikes pulled on rails leading into the frog, Matt, Ed, and Joe were able to pry them out of the frog. Harry attached a chain between the back-hoe and frog and dragged it into the tunnel. Then Steve brought Big Green into the tunnel and pulled-in the rails and switch-points. Unfortunately, the spike puller's hydraulic cylinder sprung a major leak and, despite triage efforts, it became unusable before all the spike removal was complete. This meant that Joe, Heather, Steve, Mike F., and Chris had to resort to pulling spikes by hand which slowed our progress. But, by the end of the day, we had achieved the goal of salvaging all the components of the switch, giving us a complete switch-kit to install elsewhere on the railroad. We'll gather-up the switch-ties at another time as well as any additional rail we're able to grab. With the goal realized, the Team packed up the equipment and tools it had brought to Setzer along with the loose switch-components and joint bars. Indeed, it was a good day by an outstanding crew!

This coming week will be trouble free (famous last words...). Tuesday and Thursday, the Team will gather at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop. Saturday is the Railroad's General Meeting, at which MOW will make a presentation. Also, the Team will participate in the annual crew photo. But we will be working out on the line, as well. Meet at the Shops at 8 o'clock a.m. Many thanks to all the great folks of the MOW Team who go above and beyond when trouble arises as well as working with us to build a better railroad.

See you out on the Line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.





Mike F. with the CCC Crew on the trestle near the spot of the levy leak



The CCC Crew unloading sandbags off the Nolan track-cart





Alan and Mike F. with the motorcar on the Hood line



Ed with the CCC crew deploying sandbags





Ed and Alan ferry the CCC crew and sandbags down the Hood Line



Meanwhile, up on the SSRR Mainline, Mike F. and Paul prepare to remove a broken branch fouling the line





Mike F. uses the gas-powered chainsaw-on-a-stick to cut down the downed branch

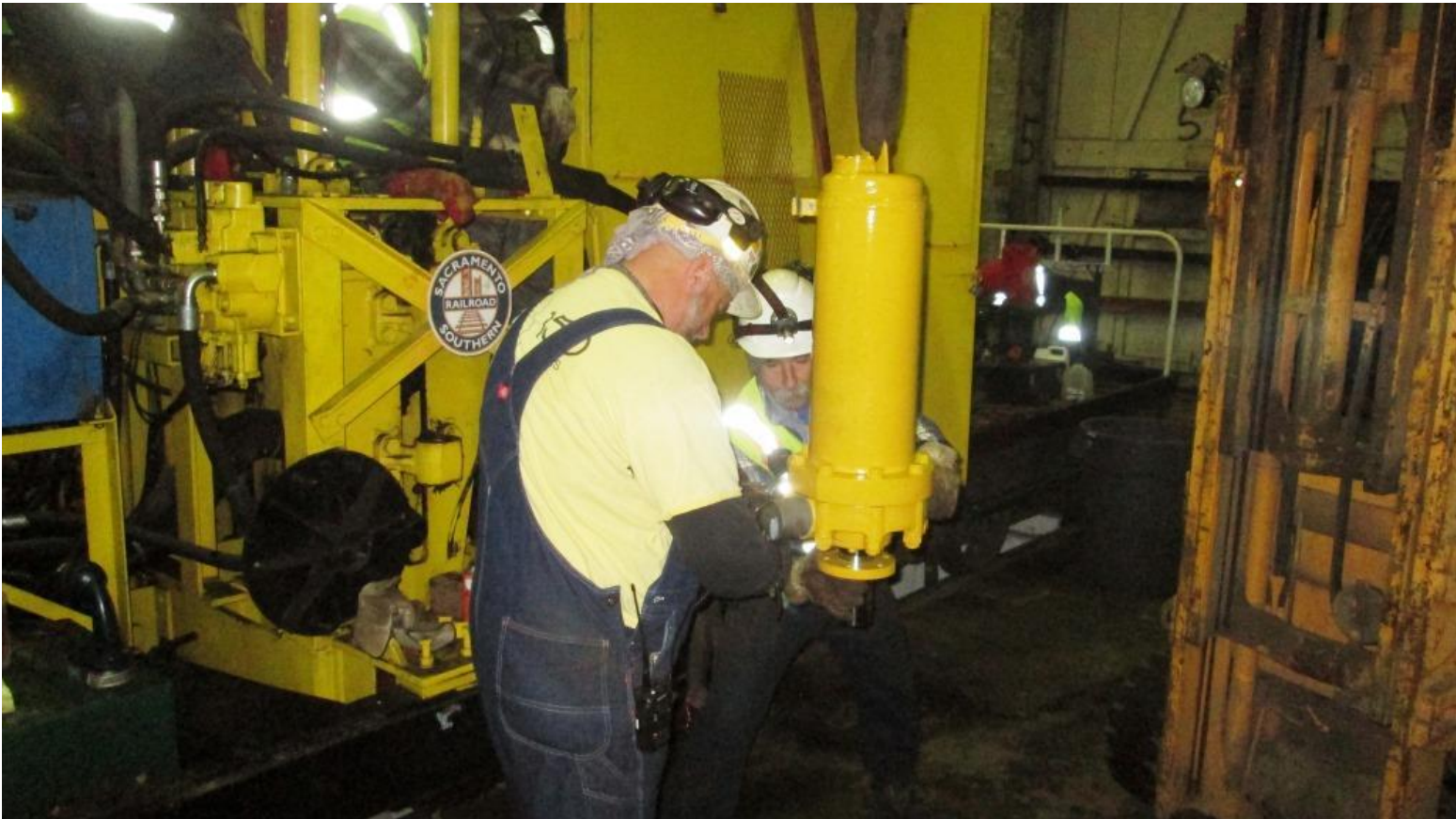


Mike F. and Paul clear away the debris





The new LED headlight on the tamper



Mike F. and Joe get the shear cylinder ready to install



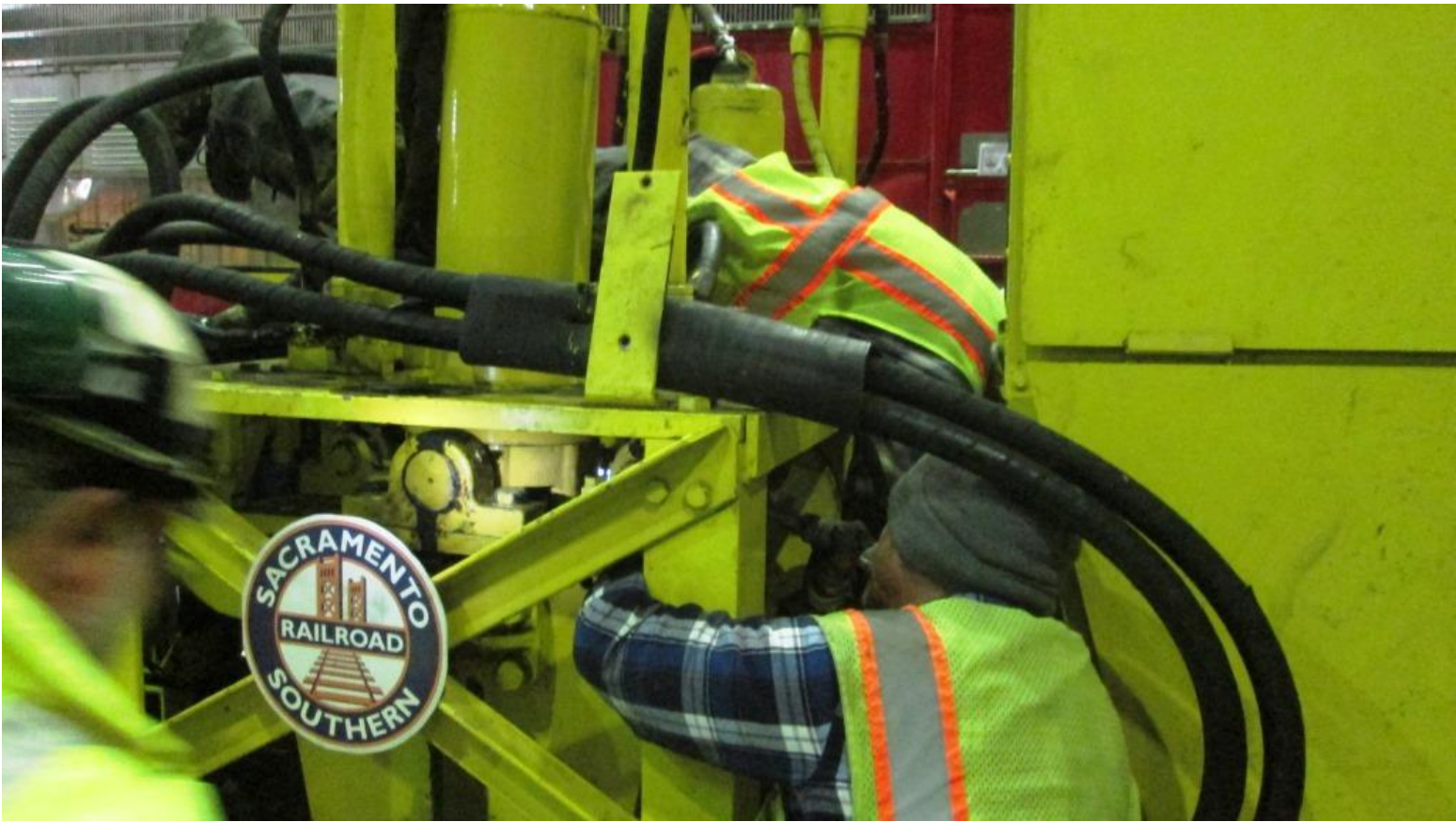


Paul and Matt on top of the shear guide the cylinder into place which is suspended by the forklift under Frank's skillful touch



Paul and Matt reach deep into the machine to secure the cylinder





Matt and Joe work to secure the cylinder



Matt digs out a rail-joint at Setzer





Harry on the back-hoe digs out a rail-joint to make space for the impact wrench to take to remove bolts



Steve on Big Green retrieves the spike-puller from the truck and sets it on the rails





Pam uses the spike puller to pull spikes



Pam races down the track pulling spikes at a record pace





Heather keeps digs out the gauge-side of the rail so that the spike puller can access the spikes



Mike F. and Alan use the pneumatic impact wrench to remove the bolts





Joe holds the bolt-head with his foot as Steve unwinds the nut



Alan shouts, "Hey! I need more hose!"





So, Steve grabbed the air-compressor with Big Green and brought it closer as Matt guides the hose – that’s one way to do it...



Ed takes a turn on the back-hoe





Chris, John, and Matt push ahead pulling spikes with the spike puller despite it slowly dying from a hydraulic leak



Ed and Joe pry the un-spiked rails out from the frog





Heather and Harry fight with a particularly stubborn spike along the rail leading into the frog



Ed uses a track-chisel to break an old bond-wire welded between the frog and rail





Steve on Big Green starts pulling rails into the tunnel



Matt prys the wing-rails off of the frog





Harry on the back-hoe pulls the frog into the tunnel



Chris and John secure the spike-puller on the truck





Steve on Big Green hauls a barrel containing switch-parts over to the truck



There's not much left of the switch...