

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for January 4, 2015. The MOW Team straddled two years this last week. We had our final meeting of 2014 on Tuesday and ushered in the New Year on Saturday with a good old-fashioned tie change-out party. So, with all these festivities to celebrate, let's get this update going before another year passes us by.

It was cold in the Erecting Shop on Tuesday evening but that didn't stop Alan Hardy, Scott Morrison, Frederick Carr, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, and Harry Voss from warming up the place with good productivity and cheerful spirits. The restoration of the tie-shear has become the highest priority project and Scott and Fred are going great guns on the rebuild of its hydraulic system. With so many components, it's like a jigsaw puzzle putting this machine back together. But, their efforts will pay off and the tie-shear should be ready for action early in 2015. The final MOW evening of 2014 concluded with a good chat in the MOW Lounge about the past year as well as our optimism for 2015. We were unanimous in the conclusion that there are many reasons to believe that 2015 will be a good year for the MOW Team!

On Saturday, Alan, John Rexroth, Heather Kearns, Steve Nemeth, Frank Werry, Harry, DJ Chapman, Fred, Pam Tatro, and Chris Carlson commenced the MOW Team's 2015 season with a large pink box of doughnuts. Who would have guessed? The plan for the day was to continue with the tie change-out project. A second project was to move the big rock-shaking-cleaning machine, fondly known as the "Grizzly," at Setzer in order to make room for a possible delivery of ballast-rock. So, following the job briefing, John got the Team fired-up and we headed down the line to "Oleander Alley" between Broadway and Front Street to begin replacing rotten ties. Steve took the Green Machine and Frank brought the front-end loader. DJ and Heather got the motorcar consist out the container. Alan opened up the scarifer/inserter and Fred manned the tamper.

As the Team headed down the line, a CalTrans crew was working on the underside of the Pioneer Bridge. The large man-lift they were using was fouling the track. We gave them a quick refresher in federal law and Part 214 "Roadway Worker Safety." They promptly moved their machine and we were soon on our way. At Broadway, Steve used Big Green to retrieve the section-gang machine from the truck. Pam, DJ, Frank, began digging-out around the ties to loosen the ground's grip on them. John and Harry pulled spikes. Heather removed tie plates. Fred brought in the section-gang machine which unfortunately crushed the first tie it tried to remove. As a result, we had to use chains to pull the tie from behind in order to get it out fairly intact. Steve used an adze to cut away at the top of the tie to keep it from binding on the base of the rail. Because of these complications, it took about 25 minutes to remove the first tie. Fortunately, the next several came out a little easier. With a half-dozen ties out of the ground, Alan brought in the scarifer-inserter to dig out the tie-cribs and insert the new ties. Then Pam placed the tie plates, Heather set the spikes, Frank nipped the ties while DJ drove the spikes.

In the afternoon, Steve took Big Green and Frank the front-end loader down to Setzer with Alan to move the massive "Grizzly" rock-shaker. This would take a very coordinated effort between two highly skilled machine operators. The Grizzly taxes the capacities of both machines despite working in tandem. Of course, they were successful and made plenty of space for a delivery of ballast that we hope will be arriving soon. Meanwhile, the rest of the Team continued changing ties. Unfortunately, we again faced the problem of disintegrating ties requiring us to spend upwards of a half-hour per tie to remove. By the end of the day, we replaced nine ties. Admittedly, progress was slow but, it was a good day nonetheless. No machines broke down and everyone seemed to have a good time working together out on the line.

The MOW Team would like to send a special "shout-out" to Paul Helman and Jim Coviello of the Signals Department. They deactivated and reactivated the grade-crossing warning systems at Broadway and Front Street so that we could operate rail-mounted equipment in the area without constantly setting off the "ding, ding, dings," of the crossing signals. Many thanks to Jim and Paul as well as to all our friends in the Signals Department who do tremendous work for our Railroad.

This coming week, the Team will gather again on Tuesday and Thursday in the Erecting Shop starting no later than 5 o'clock. On Saturday, we'll meet for doughnuts starting at 8 o'clock a.m. as usual. The Railroad's annual General Meeting and crew photo takes place on Saturday as well and your MOW Team will participate. To all our noble volunteers and friends, many thanks for your dedication and support. Happy New Year one and all. It will be a good one for your MOW Team!

We'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.

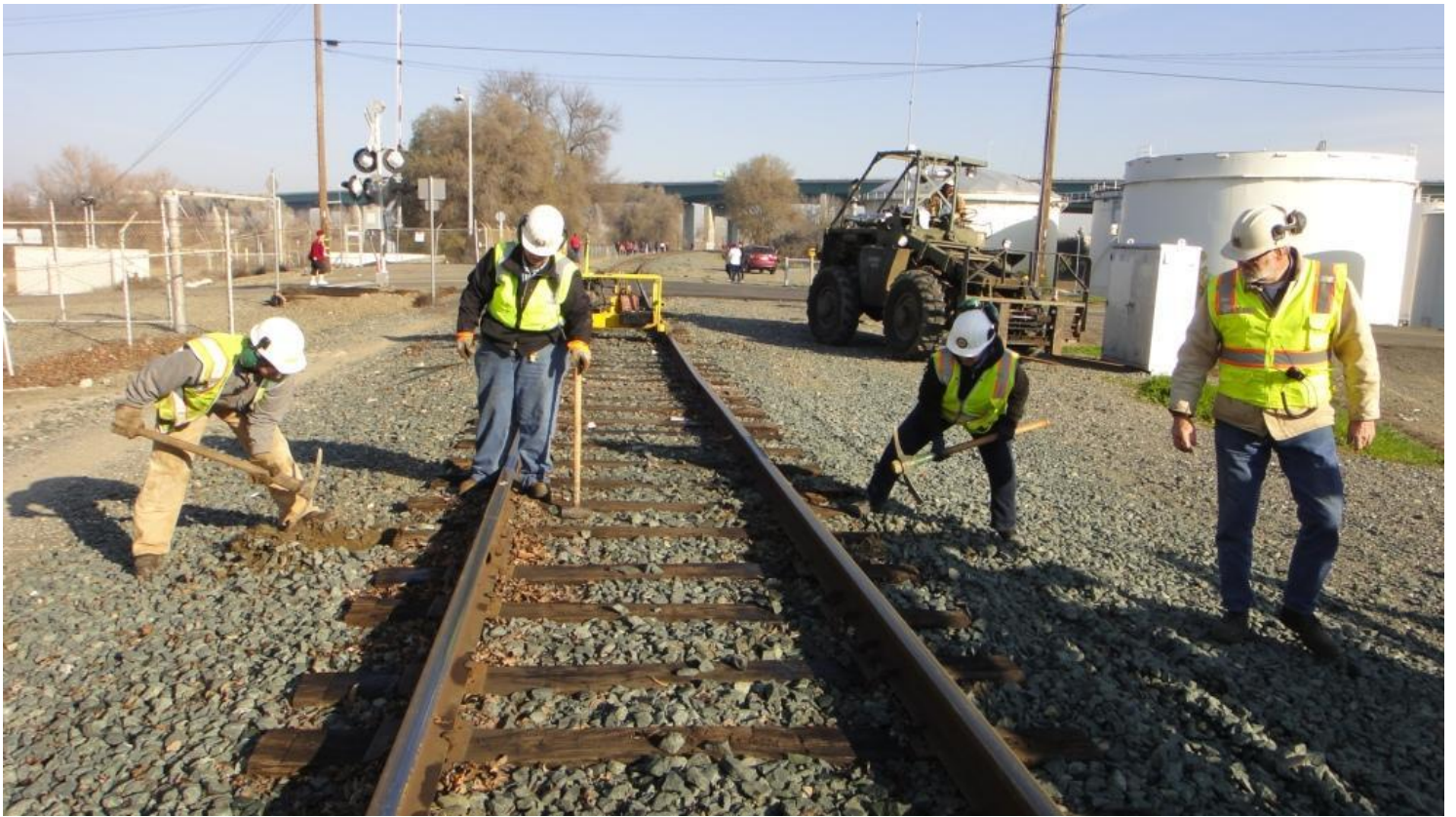


It's a stand-off! Fortunately the MOW Team was able to give this CalTrans crew a refresher in Part 214...



Steve on Big Green deploys the section-gang machine





The Team gets right to work. DJ and Pam dig around the tie to loosen the ground's grip on it while Heather prepares to pound out the tie-plate with a sledge hammer.

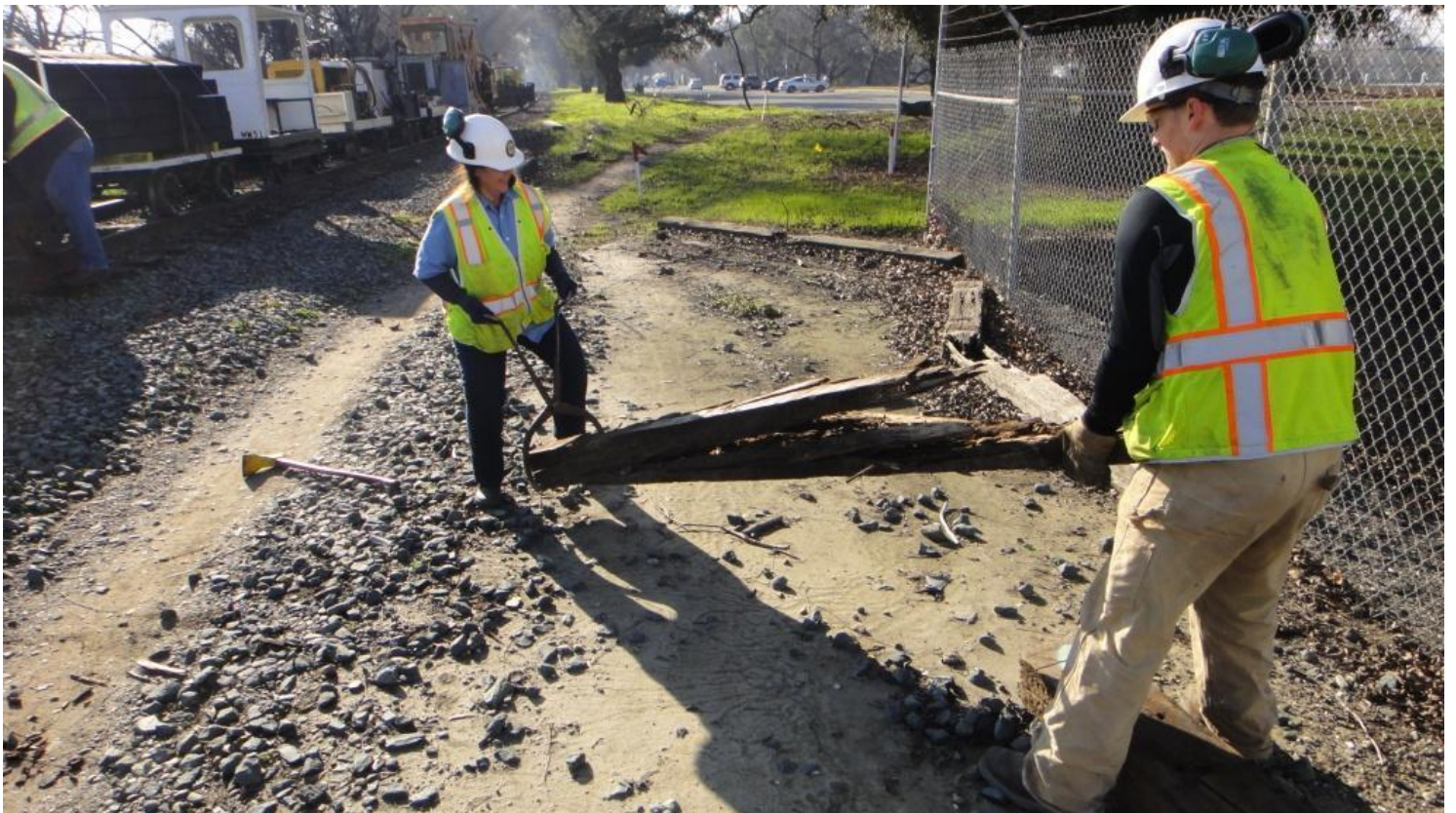


Alan supervises as Steve uses the adze to shave off the top of the tie that was binding on the base of the rail.





This rotten tie just disintegrated under the hydraulic power of the section-gang machine. So, we implemented the chain method of pulling the tie out from behind. Alan and Steve adjust the chains as Fred operates the machine.

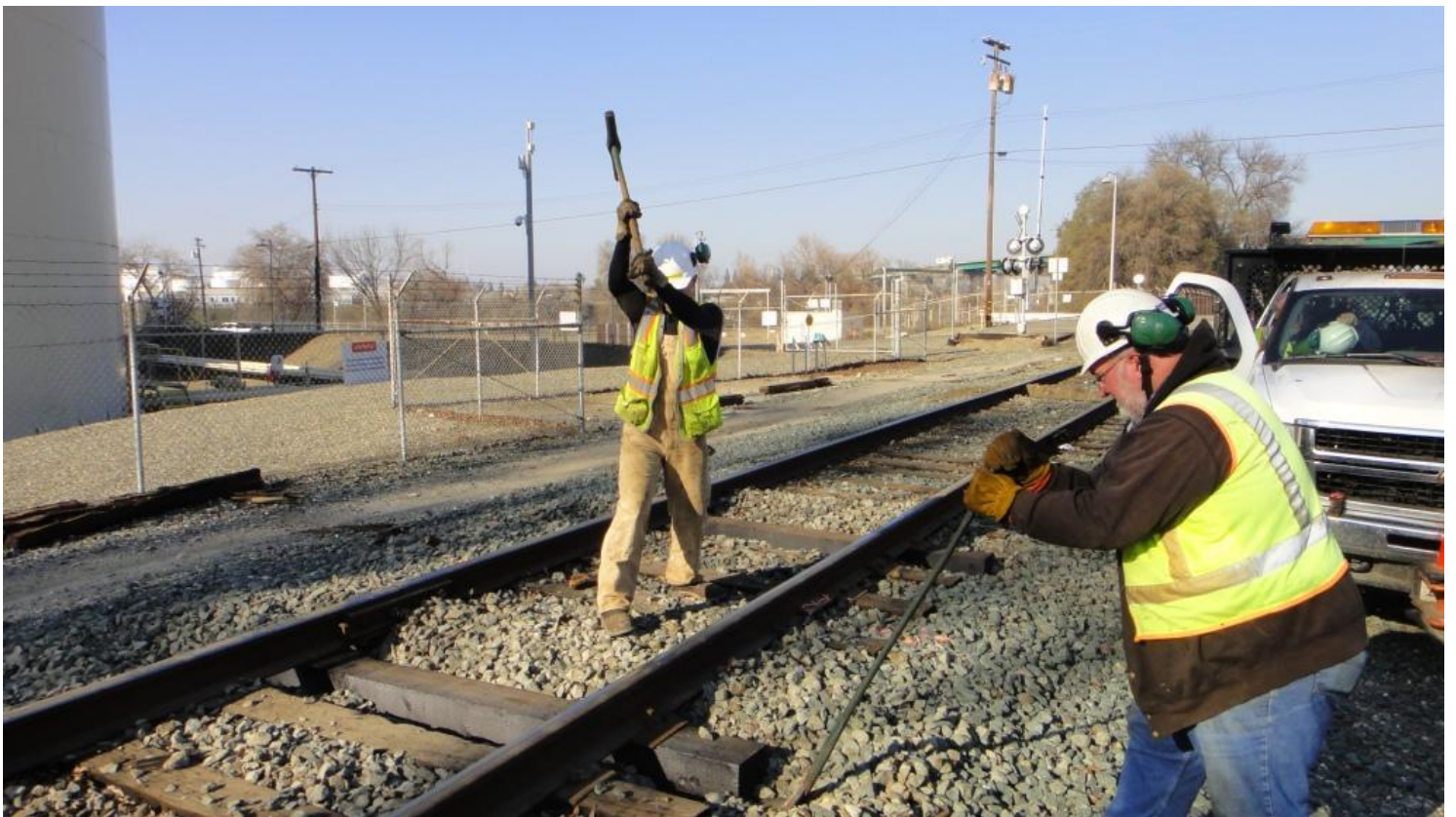


Pam and DJ remove the remnants of a once and mighty railroad tie...





Alan operates the scarifer's inserter function to install new ties while Heather and Steve guide it into place.



Frank nips the tie as DJ uses the "windmill" method of driving spikes – and you know, he hit the spike right on the head...





In the afternoon, more bad ties are pulled. Frank and John adjust the chains. DJ operates the section-gang machine while Harry and Steve take in all the action...



With all these guys standing around, somebody's got to step-up and get the work done. Good job, Heather!





Chris brings in the tamper!



Steve on Big Green helps the Weed Team by removing a few encroaching branches...





Meanwhile, down at Setzer, Steve on Big Green and Frank in the front-end loader in a skillfully coordinated mechanical dance to move the "Grizzly" rock-shaker to a new location.



Moonrise over the Rail Yards