

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for October 18, 2014. There were zombies on the track this week. Zombies, I tell ya! And, judging by the way they were behaving with approaching trains in view, many were clearly brain dead. More on that later. Nonetheless, before we all become zombies, let's get this update a-staggering.

There are no zombies on the Weed Team, which met on Tuesday to slash their way through the overgrowth south of the I-5 bridge on the Sutterville Line. Mike Taylor, Dave Megeath, and Heather Kearns exercised all their "cutting-edge" equipment down along this track and "logged" tremendous progress. In fact, San Mateo Court, the street just below the tracks, can now be seen from the line. Although the Sutterville segment of our line is out of service, it is the Railroad's responsibility to maintain the right of way, which the mighty Weed Team does both here and at Hood. And they do an excellent job of it, too.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Cliff Hayes, Chris Carlson, Alan Hardy, Frederick Carr, Frank Werry, and Mike Harris made for a lively evening crew. Cliff has undertaken a major reengineering of the large ballast-hopper that we've acquired. Currently, it's a side-dump hopper and Cliff, through the artistry of his metalwork and engineering, is converting it to a center-dump. Pat and Gene are helping on this project, as well. The hopper will be mounted to the deck of the pre-historic tamper which Alan painted this week. Fred continued working on the re-build of the Tie-Shear's gear-box, parts for which are supposed to arrive this week. Chris rewired the dashboard of the Tie Shear then tested the newly installed squeeze cylinder of the section-gang machine. Mike H. and Frank pulled the filters from the hydraulic tank on the Kalamazoo. But first, they had to pump out all the remaining hydraulic fluid.

Thursday, Mike H., Heather, Frank, Cliff, and Alan kept the Shops' lights on well after dark. Cliff welded the re-worked ballast hopper together. Next, he'll install the clamshell mechanism that will provide for the controlled release of rock. The parts for swivel mechanism on the Man-lift arrived so the crew headed over to Old Sacramento to work on it. As it's getting dark early and, considering that some modifications to the Man-lift need to be made, it was decided to bring the Man-lift over to the Shops to complete the work. Conductor Frank and Engineer Heather took care of that on Friday.

Doughnuts were on hand bright and early to welcome Heather, Steve Nemeth, Harry Voss, Pam Tatro, Mike Florentine, Fred, Clem Meier, and Alan. The plan was to head down to the Broadway grade crossing and build up the ground around the south-west crossing gate. Fred operated the one-ton truck with the dump-bed and met Harry with the back-hoe behind the Museum to load dirt that would be transported to the site. Meanwhile, Mike F. headed down Setzer-way to grab some old ties to use as retainers around the base of the gate to hold in the dirt. That's when we ran into zombies. There was some sort of community event "Zombie Run/Walk" going on at Miller Park where participants dressed and were made-up to look like zombies. Instead of walking the designated route around Miller Park, they decided to take a short-cut along our tracks between Front Street and Broadway. They proved their zombie credentials by walking fearlessly through our work site, around and between operating machines. This became a bit of a concern as train-time beckoned. Fortunately, Heather and Mike F. were there to shoo them away – in the most polite terms possible, of course – especially those who jumped between the rails to snap "selfies" as the train approached behind them. Clearly, brain dead. Meanwhile, Steve, Clem, and Heather got the old ties in place and began digging and shifting soil to build a nice base around the crossing gate tower.

In the afternoon, the zombies had cleared out and the Team headed to Setzer to continue bringing order to the dwindling pile of old dead ties down there. The pile is a mish-mash of tie-splinters, pieces, and whole ties making it difficult to load in an organized fashion into a dumpster. Again, Fred was our "load-master" and guided the operation. With Alan on the back-hoe and Mike F. on Big Green, Fred, Heather, and Steve hooked up chains to the big pieces of tie debris to haul them out. This caused the tie-pile to loosen-up and shift in a direction that makes pieces easier grab. Next, they loaded broken ties pieces into the back-hoe's bucket by hand. We need to make room down there for more dead ties to be brought in as we prepare to commence our big tie change-out operation on November 1st. It was a very labor intensive day but a good one, nonetheless. No need to join a gym when you volunteer with the MOW Team!

As mentioned above, the big tie change-out push begins upon the conclusion of Spook-o-motive. In the intervening two weeks, the Team will be staging for this operation. This week, our Track Inspectors will be surveying the Mainline to determine which section requires the most attention. Next, we will organize and move materials into position. Then, we'll spend all day on November 1st pulling out old ties. We anticipate pulling dozens. In the following weeks, the Team will return to install the new ties. Train crews beware: there may be slow-orders placed on certain sections of the line during this period. But, the track will remain in service.

As for the week ahead, Tuesday, the Weed Team will gather again at the old Shops starting at 8:30 a.m. As the Man-lift is still out of service, the Weedies are headed back to Sutterville Line. For the evening crews on Tuesday and Thursday, the doors will be open by 5 o'clock p.m. Saturday, as usual, 8 o'clock a.m. is the call time for doughnuts. No zombie sightings are anticipated. Many thanks to the fantastic crew that takes on this heavy labor – both physical and shoeing zombies – to build a better railroad!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Cliff grinding away old paint and rust as he prepares to cut the side-dump "shoot" off the rock hopper that we're converting to a center-dump ballast hopper



Fred working on the rebuild of the gear-box of the Tie Shear



Chris fixing a wiring issue behind the dashboard of the Tie Shear



Chris testing the new squeeze-cylinder on the secondary section-gang machine that Frank and Josh installed last week



Cliff welding the reversed dump-shoot on the new center dump ballast hopper



Fred operating the lift mechanism of the dump-bed to lay fill dirt around the crossing gate tower at Broadway



Talk about a lone worker – Heather spreading the dirt to make an even surface



Steve handling the second load of dirt



After lunch, the Team headed down to Setzer to break apart the pile of dead ties



Steve and Fred attach chains to several ties which Alan will pull out with the back-hoe



Heather tosses a broken tie into the back-hoe bucket



Mike F. on Big Green and Steve arrange a pile of dead ties