

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for October 2, 2016. September morphed into October this week again proving that time, like your MOW Team, is moving at an accelerated rate. So, let's slow things down and take look back at the week that was...

Monday, yes, that's right, Monday, Heather Kearns spent the day contacting railroad product suppliers from Stockton to Salt Lake City seeking switch-ties for project on which we are toiling at Switch 1 just south of the turntable. Switch-ties are not easy to find. But, Heather persevered and managed to find a supplier who, not only gave us an outstand price but, promised delivery by Friday. Great job, Heather!

Tuesday, Heather, Pat Scholzen, Weston Snyder, Joe Margucci, Anthony Filamor, Cliff Hayes, Gene Peck, and Harry Voss showed up at the Shops looking for some MOW fun. Our trusty track inspectors had identified a couple issues in the Old Sacramento Yard to clear up so, Joe, Weston, and Anthony hopped in the MOW Team's trusty Chevy Truck for the short journey to Old Sac. On the track into the Central Pacific Passenger Station, a majority of the spikes holding the north-most frog in place were missing. Weston and Joe made quick work of replacing the spikes while being careful to make sure the correct guard-check and guard-face measurements were maintained. The Switch 2 frog (House Track) was also missing several spikes. Two of the plates under the frog had slipped free. So, Anthony plugged and re-spiked the plates in place. Then, the Team headed over to the Switch 1 project and dug-out the ends of the ties and along the sides of the ties to loosen the grip of the ground. This would make it easier for the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger to pull them out on Saturday. With early darkness descending, the Team returned to the Shops where Joe completed work on the A-4 motorcar. He deemed it ready to roll.

The Weed Team assembled on Thursday to take on the old oak trees infringing upon the right-of-way through Miller Park. Mike Taylor, Anthony, Heather, Dave Megeath, Steve Wilson, and Ed Kottal loaded the truck and sent the man-lift down the line. With gas-powered-chainsaw-on-a-stick in hand, Dave, in the man-lift bucket, flew over Miller Park like a purple martin in spring time. His targets were the very large limbs above the SSRR Mainline that could come crashing down in a violent windstorm. Before that could happen (and threaten Polar Express), they fell subject to Dave's gas-powered-chainsaw-on-a-stick. At ground level, Mike T., Anthony, Heather, Steve, and Ed collected the green debris and chopped them to tiny bits with the chipper. The mighty Weed Team had saved the day before the day needed saving!

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Ed, Joe, Mike Harris, Anthony, Heather, and Chris Carlson got things ready for Saturday. Chris and Heather took care of things at the Shops like finding a bundle of nine-foot ties from our re-lay pile for the Switch 1 project. Mike H. Anthony, Ed, and Joe headed over to Old Sac. to get all the track-mounted equipment in the right order. The Jackson 125 was buried behind the tamper and scarifier-inserter so, Mike H. and Anthony moved the tamper and Ed moved the scarifier-inserter so that they could switch positions with Joe on the 125. At the Shops, the Team loaded the truck with the essential accruements which would guarantee a quick departure on Saturday morning – or so they thought. But, it's the thought that counts and they felt ready to roll with replacing switch ties at Switch 1.

Saturday morning, Alan Hardy, Joe, Pam Tatro, Matt Blackburn, Anthony, Ed, Weston, Mike Miller, Andrew Storck, and Heather were in high spirits when Chris walked in with a large pink box of doughnut goodness. With doughnuts consumed and briefings completed, the Team was ready to roll. Alas, some of our machines weren't. A critical part of our plan included the use of the back-hoe which, at that particular moment, decided to blow its radiator. Then, the Kalamazoo tug, which was pulling the bundle of 14-foot ties over to Old Sac., felt that it was a fitting time to spring a major hydraulic leak right from the pump. Fortunately, we were able to keep the tug running. However, as you might guess, we were slightly delayed getting to the job site as a result. But, once there, the target ties were identified, spikes were pulled, and more dirt shifted. In some areas, the spikes had fused to plates. Pam and Mike M. used the "road master" tool to pry some spikes out. Chris and Andrew rolled ties off the flatcar. Joe on the 125 methodically started pulling ties. Because of the converging rails in the switch, the 125's jacks could not be deployed so, old-fashion track-jacks were used to lift the track slightly. Moving the massive hardwood ties about was a four-person job. Andrew, Matt, Ed, and Mike M. traded off with Weston, Anthony, Heather, and Joe to get these ties into position. Then Joe, on the 125, pulled the ties under the rails. Plating and spiking was next. Switches have a variety of specialty plates and getting them all set again took a little time. Each tie required 12 spikes to hold everything together. Matt nimbly managed the pneumatic spike-driver while Ed, Joe, Heather, and Anthony nipped-up the ties. The next trial came with the discovery that, when the switch was built, spikes were driven between the guard-rails and stock-rails. This required the removal of concrete and compacted dirt from this very narrow space to access the spikes. The challenge became how to get the spike out as the road-master was too big to fit in the space. Andrew and Weston used the thin ends of nipping-bars were used to pry-up the spikes for Chris to fit the road-master around them. Nonetheless, the Team persevered and removed these horribly stubborn spikes. With the ties free, the Team pulled, replaced, plated, and spiked additional ties. By now, it was getting late – really late – and the Team was spent. Despite the challenges the day presented, things are coming along nicely with this project. Your MOW Team worked incredibly hard engaged in back-breaking manual labor. They proved that they can adjust on the fly and handle out of normal situations quite well. They did, and are doing, excellent work in their quest to build a better railroad.

This coming week, the Team will gather for more MOW fun on Tuesday and Thursday at or before 5 o'clock in the Shops. The Weed Team will convene on Thursday and journey to Hood for more tree pruning around Mile Post 11.3. Saturday, the MOW Team will find doughnuts waiting for them by 8 o'clock a.m. There's no doubt, your MOW Team is a great group of folks. Thanks to everyone for all your efforts!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Weston and Joe spike-down the frog at the CPPS



Anthony spikes down the wayward plates at the Switch 2 frog



Steve assists Dave as he hones the blades of the chipper



Dave demonstrates the aerial acrobatics of a purple martin in flight!



Steve moves oak debris for "compressing"



Steve, Anthony, and Ed find food for the chipper...



Joe, Mike H., and Ed get the scarifier-inserter opened-up



Anthony opens-up the tamper



Patched-up, the tug pulls the ties over the UP Main



Pam uses the "road-master" to grab the spike while Mike M. pulls it with a claw-bar



Chris in the front-end loader, digs away more soil-cement



Pam, Matt, Mike M., Joe, Weston, and Alan all work to prepare ties for removal



Weston cranks on the track-jack to relieve downward pressure on the tie



Chris rolls a 14-foot hardwood tie off the flatcar





Andrew, Chris, and Mike M. get a track-jack placed to assist Joe's work with the Jackson 125



Chris directs Joe on the 125 as he pulls the first tie



And, it's out!



With all the converging rails, the scarifier won't work so Mike M., Heather, and Alan dig out the tie-cribs by hand



Joe, Mike M., Andrew, and Alan act as human scarifiers...



Matt and Mike M. drag a 14-foot hardwood tie into position



Matt and Chris make sure the ties go in straight



Mike M, Ed, and Weston move the next tie into position



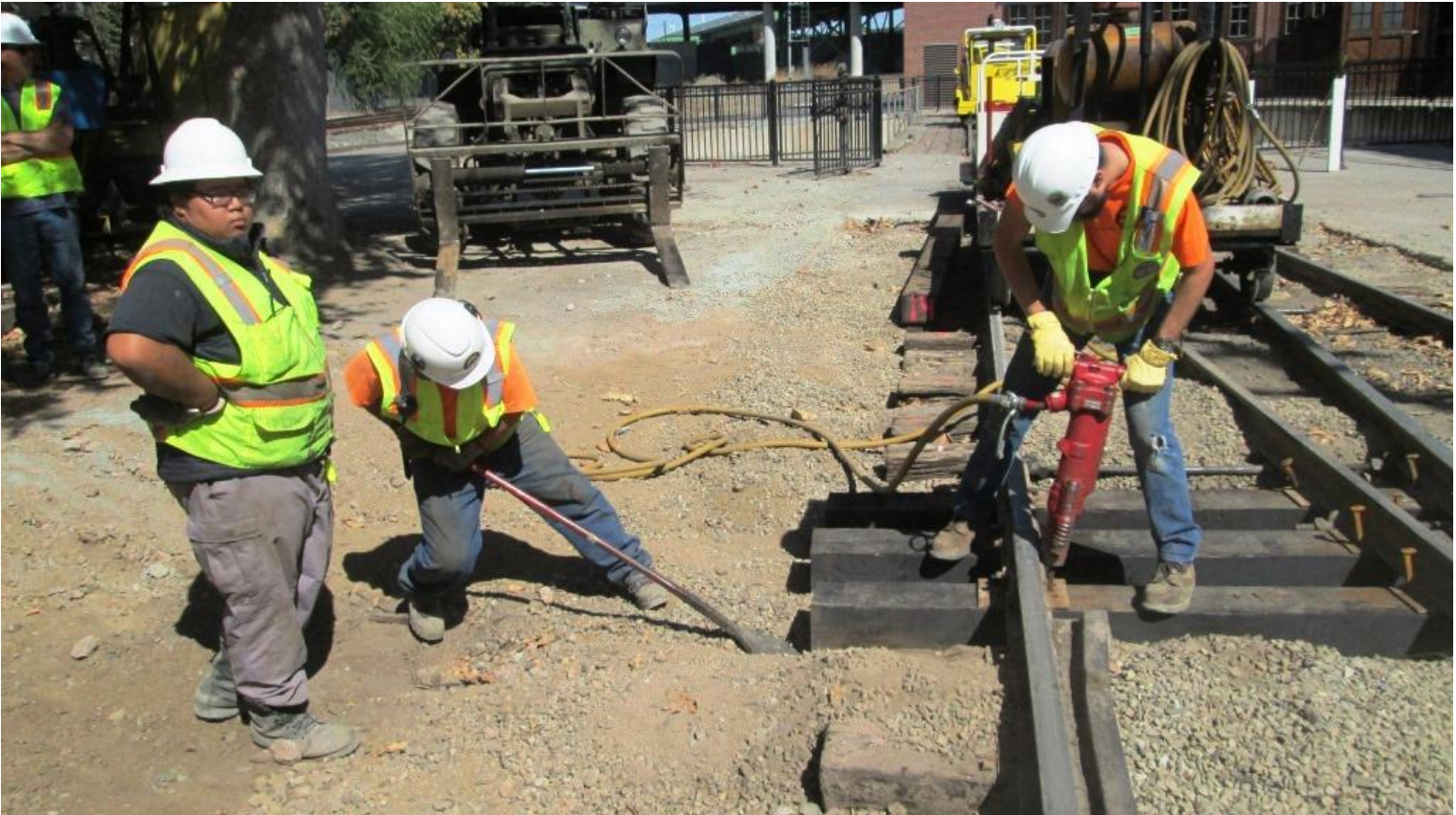
Mike M., Ed, Chris, and Pam shimmy the ties about to get them evenly spaced



Weston and Andrew set spikes as Joe, Mike M., Heather, and Ed nip the ties up against the base of the rail



Matt and Ed nip-up the tie as Joe shoves rock beneath it while Andrews sets spikes



Joe nips-up the tie as Matt employs the pneumatic spike-driver



Heather sets a spike as Matt stands by to drive it down with the pneumatic spike driver



Ed and Joe nip-up the tie as Matt drives the spikes



Alan uses the chipping hammer to break-up concrete and compacted dirt between the guard-rail and stock-rail



Anthony uses the air-wand to blast the debris from between the guard-rail and stock-rail





Andrew and Weston use the thin-ends of nippers and claw-bars to pry-up the spikes between the guard-rail and stock-rail



Andrew and Alan employ the spike-lifter to pry-up another corrosion-fused spike from a frog-plate



Andrew is able to get the claw-bar beneath the spike-lifter



Success! That stubborn spike finally released its grip!



With the tie free of all spikes, Joe on the 125 pulls it out



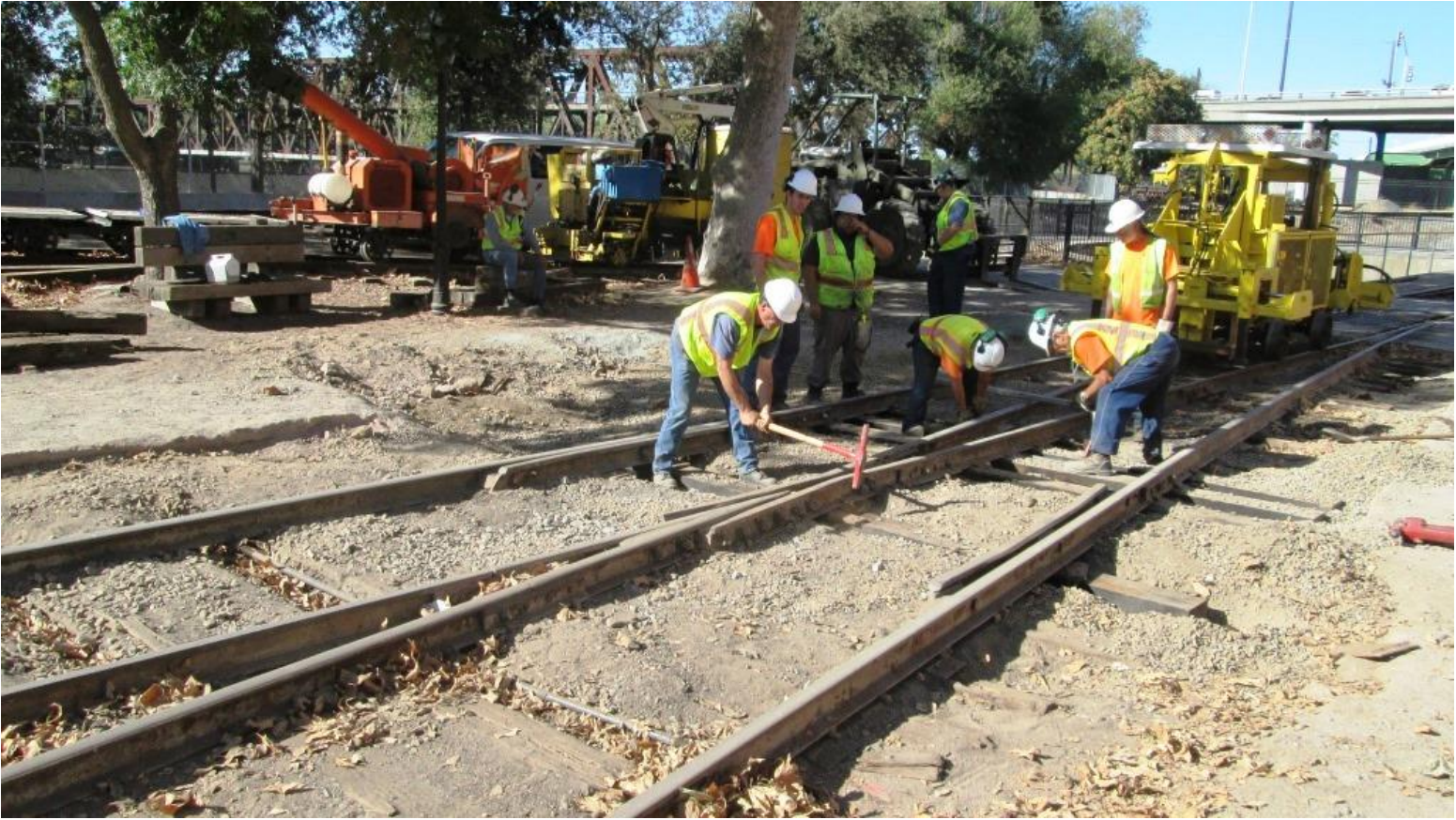
Weston, Andrew, Ed, and Anthony move the dead tie out of the way



Matt "photo-bombs" the moment Heather and Mike M. drag the 14-foot switch tie under the base of the rail...



...Which is then placed by Joe on the 125



The Team now sets and drives spikes



Green means GO! The tug limp across the UP Main back to the Shops