

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for October 25, 2015. Well, adult supervision returned this week which meant playtime was over for the MOW Team monkeys. So, before anyone accuses us of playing around here, let's get this update underway.

The Weed Team was busy this week, working both on Tuesday and Thursday. Mike Taylor and Heather Kearns arrived at Old Sacramento early on Tuesday for the annual inspection of the man lift. Of course, it passed inspection with flying colors. Crane inspectors (technically, it is a crane) are always amazed by our man-lift which was custom built in our shops. It is incredibly well balanced, has more than ample lifting capacity, and redundant emergency systems. Later in the day, the chipper was taken over to the Shops to have its blades replaced.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Cliff Hayes, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Frederick Carr, Harry Voss, Heather, Mike T., and Frank Werry made up the evening crew. During the previous week, a rail had shifted on the turntable during a freight move. So, Cliff, the MOW Team's master welder, headed over to Old Sacramento first to survey the rail to determine an appropriate fix to the slipped rail. While in Old Sac., Heather, Harry, and Mike T. prepared to take the chipper over to the Shops. It needed to be re-positioned and pulled over the UP Main by the Kalamazoo Tug. With Conductor Heather conducting the operation, the tug and chipper were outside the south door of the Boiler Shop in no time. The Chipper would need to be brought inside the Boiler Shop blade replacement which proved an interesting experience. But, the Big Green Machine was able to lift it using a chain-rig specially designed for the purpose by Mike Harris. Over in the Erecting Shop, Gene, Pat, and Fred took on the A-4 motorcar which was brought over from the Boiler Shop last week. They began devising the clutch replacement plan for this four-wheel drive motorcar which has been on our "to-do" list for about two years.

Thursday, Weedies Mike T. and Dave Megeath spent the day working on the chipper replacing the blades. Unfortunately, they ran into a bit of a problem. The blades had been sharpened to the point where they no longer fit in the machine. But, Heather is on the case and will be obtaining a new set of blades. Then, Mike T. and Dave took the man-lift out on the line and cut limbs that were interfering with the normal operation of the crossing gates at Front Street. In the evening, Alan Hardy, Frank, Cliff, Mike T., and Heather headed down Setzer way to "string-line" the curve on the Setzer Grade in order to determine the degree of curvature in the track. A 62-foot string is placed between two points in the curve. At the mid-point, the distance between the string and the inside of the rail is measured. That distance equals the degree of curvature between those two points. We repeated this process 14 times. The average of all those measurements provides the total degree of curvature. This is important information to have as this line leads to the Railroad's freight customer, Setzer Forest Products, and there is a concern that the curve may be too tight certain types of rail equipment with rigid wheel bases. At this point, the Team had to concede to the tilt of the earth on its axis and relative position to the sun. In other words, darkness descended on us and we returned the friendly confines of the Erecting Shop to finish up a very interesting evening studying track geometry.

It's always a good day when the MOW Team can welcome a new member. Saturday, Jose Gomez, from the recent docent class, joined Alan, Michael Florentine, Clem Meier, Frank Werry, John Rexroth, Heather Kearns, and Harry Voss. In celebration of Jose joining the Team, the order was issued, "Doughnuts for everybody!" Welcome aboard, Jose! Back to Mile Post 2.6 to continue raising the west rail was the plan of the day. Harry in the back-hoe and Frank in the front-end loader along with Mike F. headed to Setzer to load a couple ballast hoppers with rock. Clem, Jose, John, and Heather headed to the work site and set jacks. Alan brought in the tamper. Using the track-level for reference, the Team jacked the west rail upwards of three inches in some locations. Needless to say, we've gotten pretty good at this process so, we were moving fast and needed more rock. The Kalamazoo tug came scooting down the line pulling the ballast hoppers. Frank and Jose spread the rock in all the right places. Alas, "train-time" was upon us and once trains start running, we cannot be jacking the track. So, the Team packed up and headed south out onto the I-5 Bridge while run-around took place at Baths. The Team followed the train into town and went to lunch. The good news is that the brakeman on Sunday's train reported that the work we did made a significant difference in reducing the lean of the train through the area. We'll be back out there next Saturday to continue the efforts.

In the afternoon, the team once again headed to Old Sacramento to continue switch work. Alan, Jose, Clem, Mike F., Heather, and John took apart Switch 8, the Business Car Spur switch. It was over-adjusted to the Spur making it nearly impossible to throw. Frank worked on Switch 101, the switch between the Old Main and 560 Interchange Track, where there was an improper fit between the switch points and stock-rail. Once Switch 8 was fixed, the rest of the Team helped Frank as it appeared the only solution to this problem was to move the head-block about an inch south so that it would no longer contact the control rod. The south side of the head-block was dug out and track-jacks placed horizontally provided enough "umph" to push the head-block the requisite distance south. With this, the entire switch mechanism moved just enough so that everything would pop into place perfectly. Heather then inaugurated the Team's new leaf-blower (fondly known as the "huff-and-puff" machine) to clear out organic debris from the switch. With that, the Team packed up and returned to the Erecting Shop. Conductor Heather conducted Alan in the tamper back to the Shops. Indeed, it was a good day.

This coming week, the Shops Crew will gather for MOW fun on Tuesday and Thursday, as usual, at or before 5 o'clock p.m. The Weed Team will likely head to Hood on Thursday. Saturday, more track-leveling fun is in store for the MOW Team. Doughnuts will be served at 8 o'clock a.m. Week by week, we're making progress. Many thanks to everyone who dedicates time and effort on behalf of our Track Programs!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Master welder, Cliff, surveys the rail on the turntable



Heather and Cliff put the long draw-bar onto the chipper





Mike T. standing on the chipper, holds the chain for the Green Machine's fork to grab



The Green Machine emerges from the south end of the Boiler Shop as Frank and Mike T. get the chain-rig in place





String-lining the curve: Frank hold one end of the string tight as Alan measures the distance between it and the rail at the string's midpoint



On the other side, Cliff holds the string tight while Mike T. observes Alan taking a measurement





Harry scoops-up a bucket full of ballast rock with the back-hoe...



...And deposits it into the a hopper car





Heather monitors the track-level as Jose jacks-up the west rail



Alan tamps the track to the new level while Frank pulls a jack and Mike F. nips a tie





John nips-up a tie while Jose hand-tamps some rock under it to hold it up against the base of the rail



Alan tamps the west rail in a spot where it was exceptionally low





Frank and Jose drop rock from the side-dump hopper



Three track-monkeys at work: Mike F., Jose, and Alan take apart Switch 8





Mike F. and Clem dig-out the south side of the head-block at Switch 101

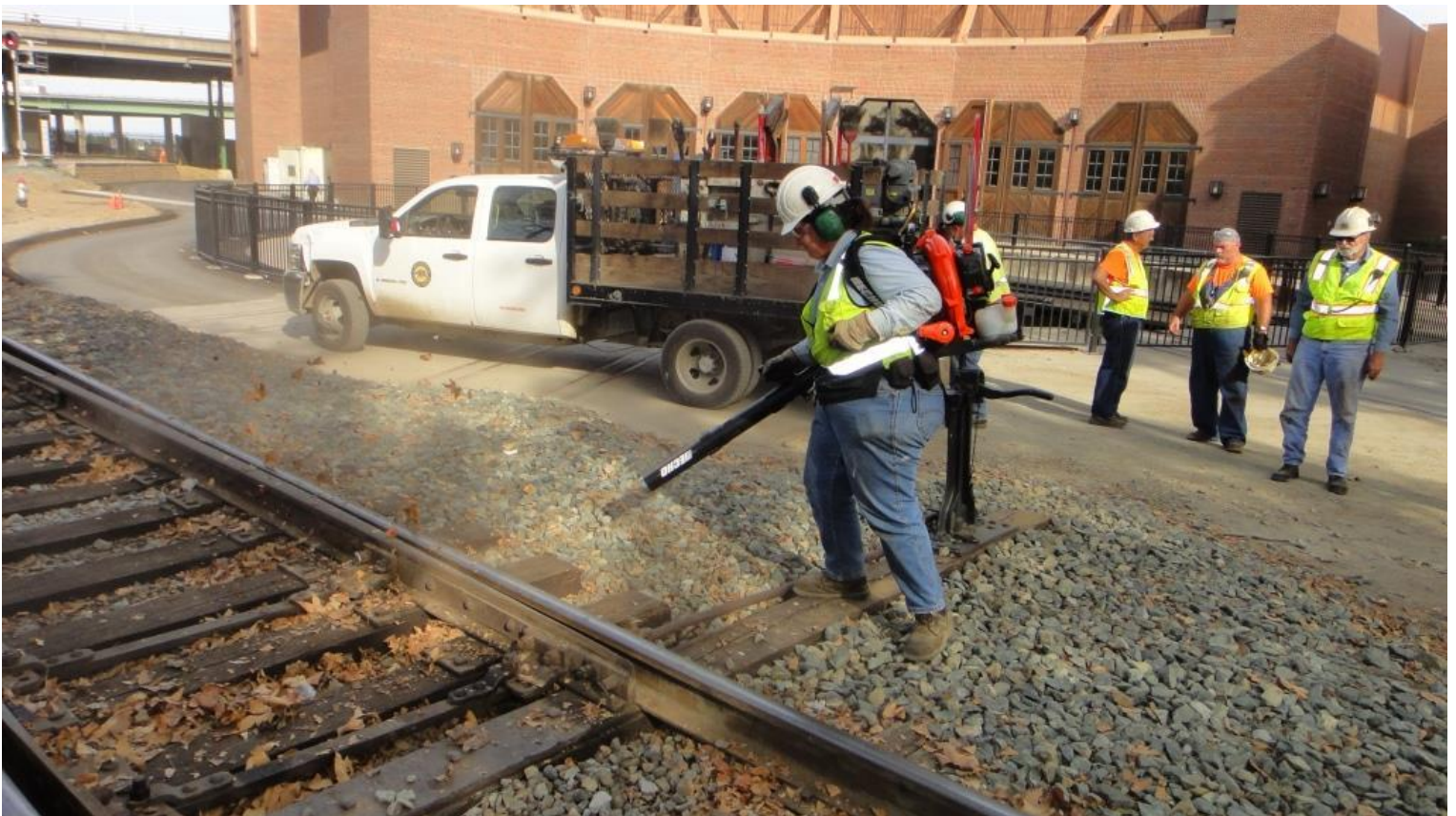


Clem uses a track-jack to push the head-block away from the next tie





Now, Mike F. move other ties within the switch to position everything properly



Heather inaugurates the new "huff-and-puff" machine