

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 19, 2017. Thanksgiving week and Polar Express are upon us, already (doesn't it seem like just ended?). Yep, this year is flying by. So, let's get this update started before another Polar Express comes and goes...

Tuesday was training day for Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Heather Kearns, Art Fluter, Chris Howard, Anthony Filamor, Eric Baugher, Mike Willis, Joe Margucci, Frank Werry, Harry Voss, Gene Peck, and Mike Harris. Recently, the old Southern Pacific Shops were inspected by the county's toxics control department. Needless to say, your MOW Team received no citations for violation of the toxics control laws as a result of the inspection. Nonetheless, Chief Mechanical Officer Al DiPaolo arranged for formalized toxics remediation training for both Shops and MOW personnel. It proved an interesting evening learning the differences between universal waste and toxic waste and how to dispose of both safely. At MOW, we take safety very seriously. In fact, safety is our number one priority whether in the Shops or out on the line. We're all volunteers there to have a good time and it makes no sense to take risks. The training did raise our awareness of certain issues with regards to the disposal of the toxic substances we do encounter, such as oil, hydraulic fluid, and paint in particular. The training ended about a quarter past 7 o'clock and, at that point, it didn't seem productive to try to start in on Shops projects. So, the Team debriefed a bit and headed out into the night now better educated on toxics remediation. Our thanks to Al Dipaolo for arranging this valuable training regime.

Thursday, the mighty Weed Team was overcome with Holiday spirit and, in anticipation the Polar Express dress rehearsal on Friday, gathered several piles of "reindeer moss" for Santa's hungry reindeer and placed them near Switch 20, the south switch at Baths. Mike Taylor, Ed Kottal, and Dave Megeath, took on the trees and bushes around the switch which were encroaching on the right of way. Now, nice large piles of evergreen branches were left in strategic places as a treat for the reindeer as the big-man, himself, chows down on cookies and hot chocolate at the Baths annex of Santa's Village. Any remaining "moss" will be chipped this coming Tuesday when the Weedies next deploy. Many thanks to this mighty Team for their sensitivity to, not only keeping the line free of vegetation defects but, also, Santa's reindeer – who are akin to Santa's railroad track. Always remember, no reindeer, no first bell of Christmas...

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Frank, Mike H., Kyle Blackburn, Joe, and Chris Carlson made brought joviality to the Shops. Kyle's new metallurgic project is making several new draw-bars. They are used to connect track-equipment together for hauling down the line. Somewhere out in the ether, there is a multitude of our draw-bars floating around. But, we just can't find them (concealed by dark-matter, no doubt). Joe, Frank, and Mike headed over to the dark Boiler Shop to fire-up the light-plant and get it working now that the season of darkness is upon us. Once it was running (sort of), they headed out to our materials yard west of the Boiler Shop to find tie-plates for 90-pound rail. In order to complete spiking of the Zoo Line, we needed 42 such tie-plates. It was quite an endeavor to hunt through everything in the dark but, by evening's end, sufficient tie-plates had been recovered. They were loaded on a pallet and were ready to roll Saturday morning.

Speaking of Saturday, Chris C., Alan Hardy, Heather, Joe, Chris H., Anthony, Clem Meier, Bill Hastings, Mike H., Pam Tatro, Michael Florentine, Art, Mike T., and Jose Gomez arrived at the Shops with great anticipation of doughnuts, which, of course, were on hand. Joe arrived early to bring the Kalamazoo tug pulling two flatcars over to the Shops from Old Sacramento onto which track materials were loaded. Conductor Heather secured a smooth crossing of the UP Main. The Team would split into two groups. Heather, Joe, Chris H., Clem, Bill, Pam, Art, Mike T., and Jose would head to the Zoo Line to continue plating and spiking. Alan, Chris C., Anthony, and Mike H. remained in Old Sac. to deploy the ballast regulator and ballast hoppers. Mike H. took the front-end loader to Setzer, where our supply of ballast-rock is kept, and filled the hoppers with rock. On the Zoo Line, Mike T. and Pam distributed tie-plates to the ties that needed them. Chris H., Joe, Bill, Art, Anthony, and Clem set spikes. Joe brought the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger to use its rail-clamps and track-lifting capabilities for easy insertion of tie-plates without having to hand-nip the rail. The hydraulic power units were brought on line and the Team went spike-driving crazy! Mike F. skillfully piloted the Kalamazoo by slowly shoving the consist up the hill following the progress of the crazy-spikers. Meanwhile, with the hoppers now filled, Chris C. pulled them with the regulator to the job site. Alan, Anthony, and Mike H. disgorged rock from the side-dump hopper to fill-in an undercut section of the track near the bridge. After lunch, the machines were rearranged so the regulator and ballast cars could head to the south end of the line to start ballasting work down there and plow the track. Up north, Jose, Chris H., Art, Anthony, Bill, Mike T., Heather, and Joe kept plating and spiking, until they reached the last tie was reached. A ceremonial spike was painted orange (the only color we had with us) and Chris H. got the honor of driving it down, by hand. What remains to be done now is lots ballast work and tie-replacement up on the bridge. Nonetheless, principal construction on the Zoo Line is done! But, our day was not over. In Old Sac., the Team needed to clear space off the 150 Track in order to make room for the equipment spotted on the North Turntable Lead. During Polar, the South Turntable lead is "frogged" by the Polar consist. The tie-shear and scarifier would head to the Shops but, this meant lots and lots of switching of machines around to get to them. Plus, our two MOW flatcars had to be cleared to be used as the conveyances for the generators that power Santa's Village during Polar. All this took about two hours to accomplish but, by 6 o'clock, the Team had secured the equipment and returned to the Shops. It had been quite an eventful day, indeed. This incredible Team of volunteers has done an amazing job refurbishing the track to the Zoo. We faced many impediments and challenges but, this Team overcame them all and can now look at the Zoo Line with pride and say, "We built that."

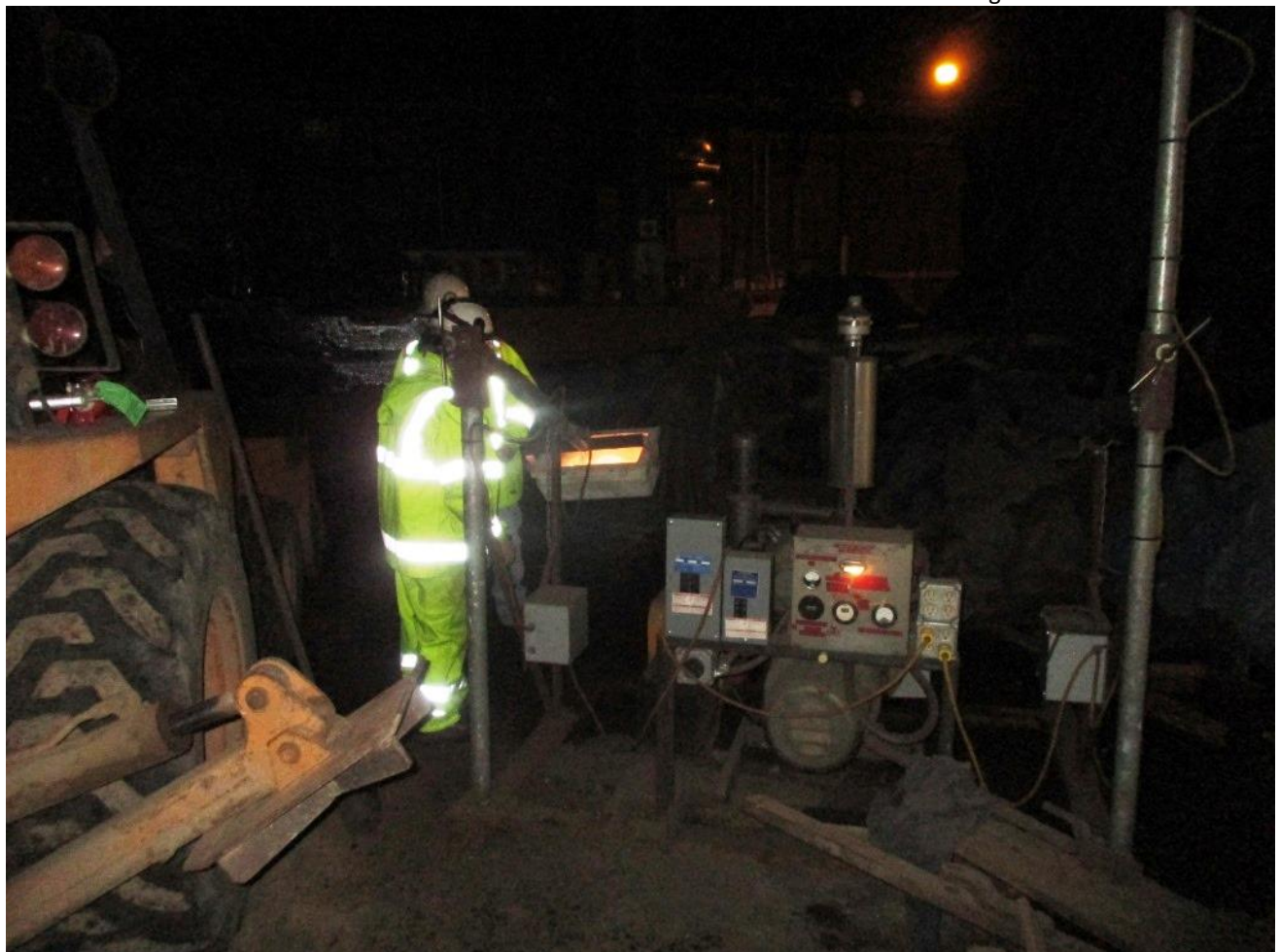
This coming week will be a short one for the MOW Team. Tuesday, the Weed Team will head down the line for some chipping good fun. Meet at the Shops at 8:30. In the evening, the MOW Team will meet at or before 5 o'clock in the Shops. NO MOW ON THURSDAY and SATURDAY in commemoration of Thanksgiving weekend and a well-earned day off. From all of us at MOW Team Central, Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris C., and Richard

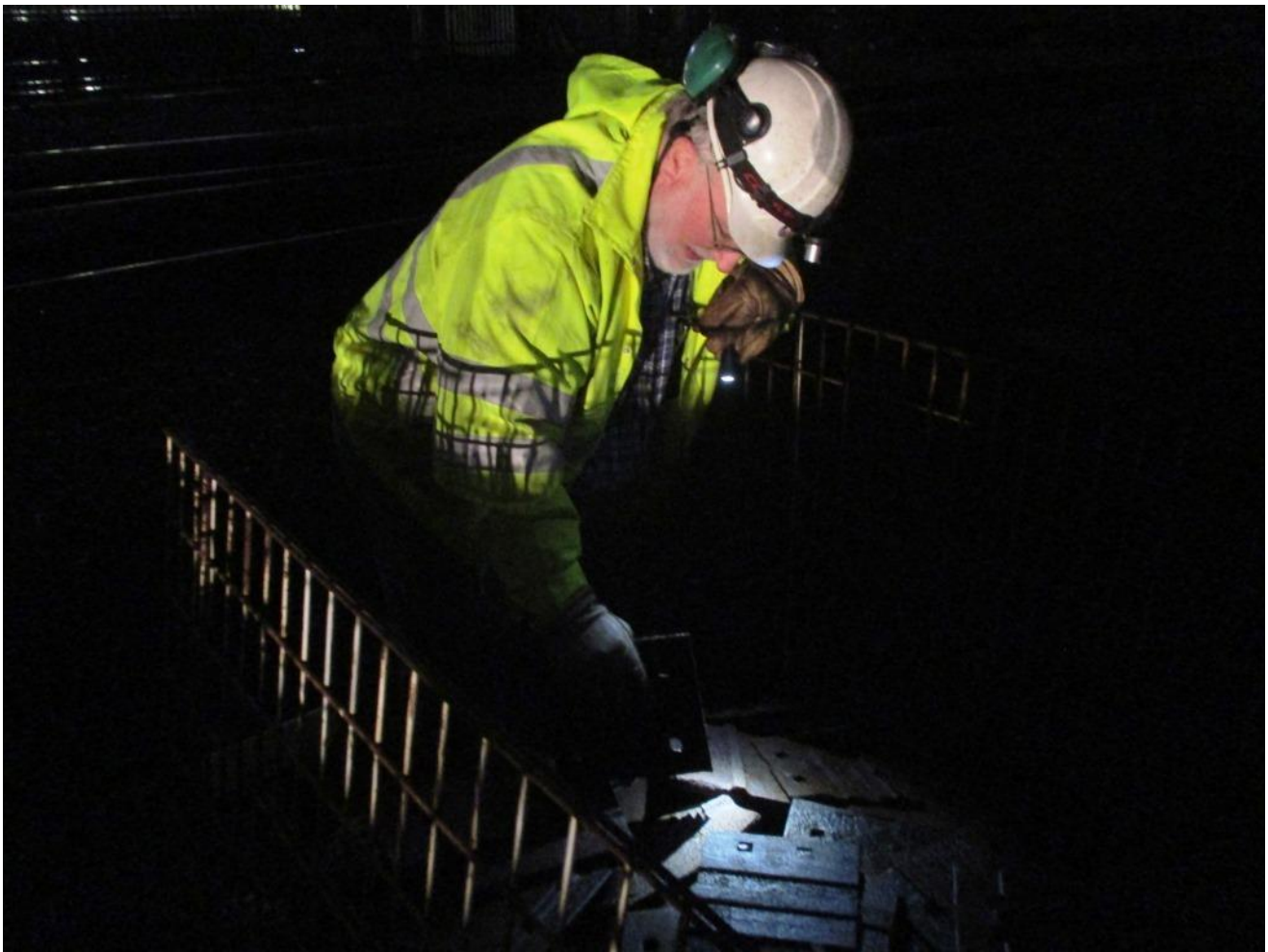


Class in session: the MOW Team receives toxics remediation training



Joe and Mike H. get the light-plant started for the first time during this season of darkness





Frank digs around in the materials yard for the proper sized tie-plates



Joe arrives early to retrieve the flatcars





Clem and Bill load a few extra ties on the flatcar that Mike F. brought over on Green Machine 2



Ready to roll: with no impediments, the MOW Team work-train waits (and waits, and waits) for a green light





On the Zoo Line, Chris H. gets right to work setting spikes



Mike T. and Pam distribute tie-plates to needy ties





Art and Chris H. add fuel to the hydraulic power unit



Art was first-up with the hydraulic spike-driver





Mike F. slowly shoves the track machines following the progress of the crazy spikers



Chris H. is next up on the hydraulic spiker as Joe sets a spike and Mike F. nips-up the tie





Chris C. arrives on site with the ballast regulator and hopper cars



Anthony and Alan discharge rock from the side-dump car to fill in an undercut area





Joe uses the Jackson 125's track-lifting ability to allow Clem and Mike T. insert tie-plates with ease



Heather traveled all the way back to the Shops to retrieve bundle of tie-plugs (which we forgot to bring with us). Thank you Heather!





Chris C. keeps a close eye on the ballasting operation as he slowly pulls the rock-cars south

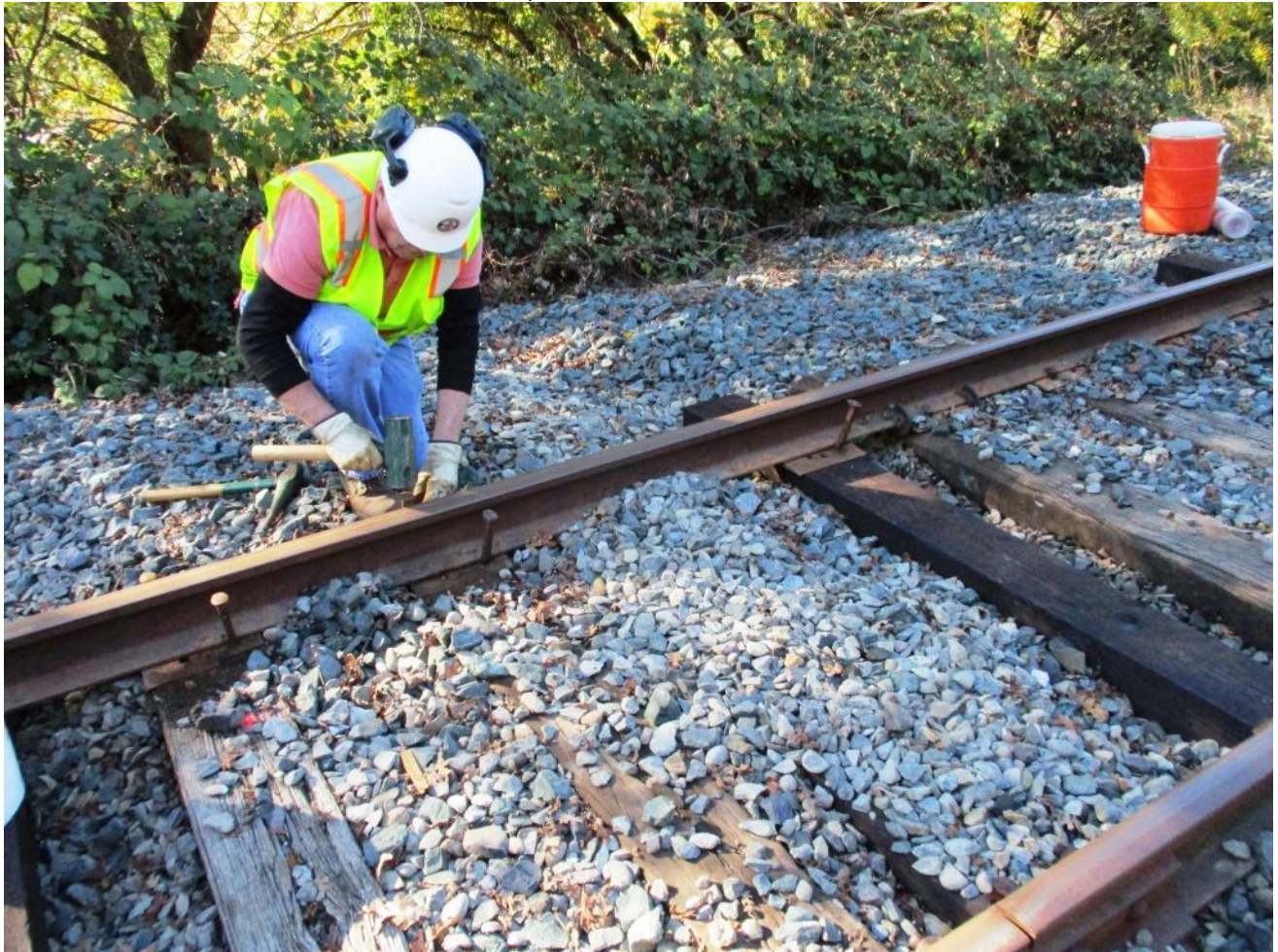


Anthony and Alan make another pass over the area being filled-in





Next stop, Sutterville Road and lunch!

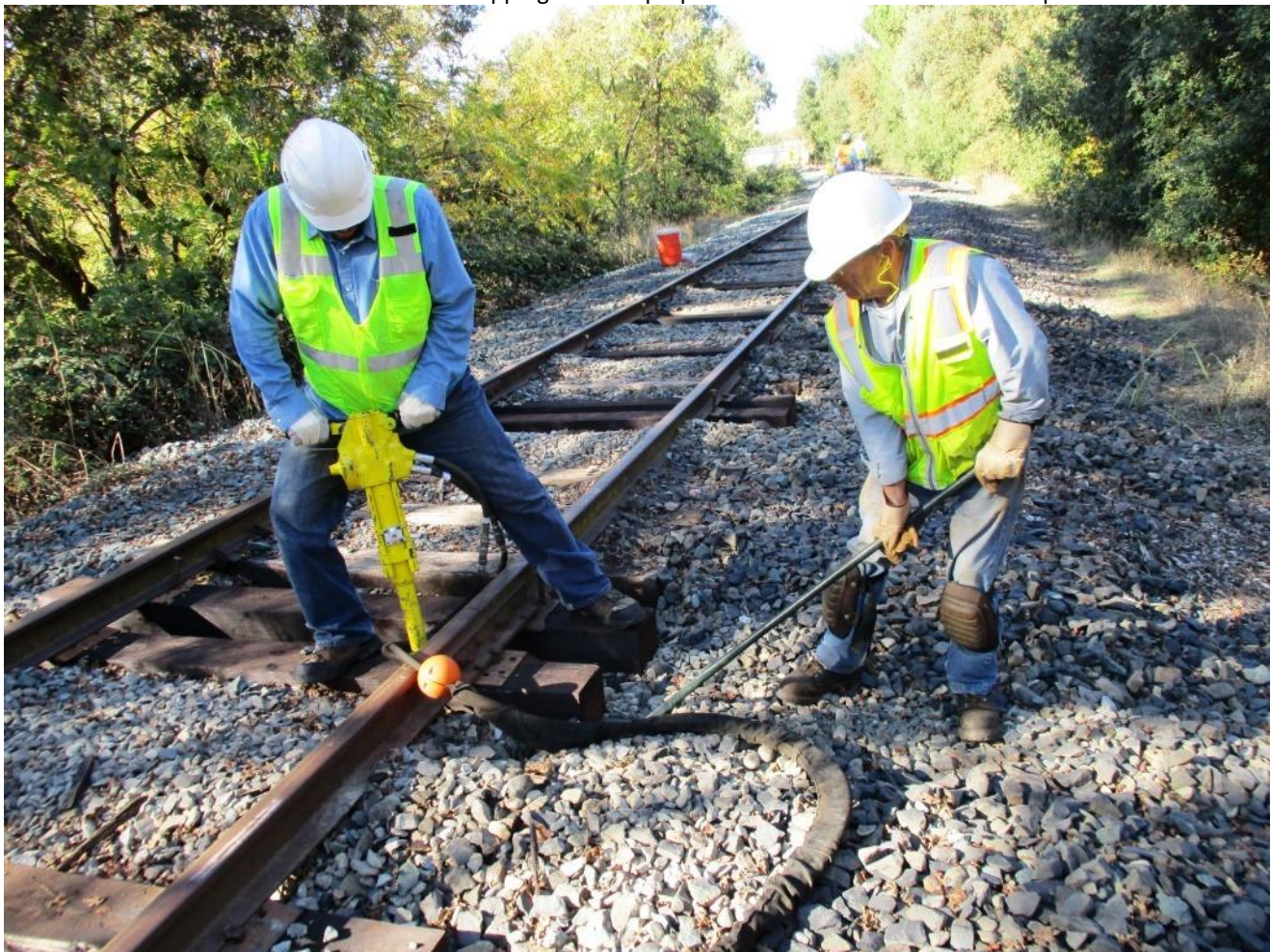


Bill maintains the pace by setting more spikes





Jose uses the narrow-end of the nipping-bar to nip-up a tie as Heather comes in to set spikes in it



Jose catches the spike-driving craziness and drive home a spike while Mike T. nips-up the tie





Mike H. guides Anthony as he disgorges rock from the center-dump car



That's a mighty fine looking stretch of track is I do say so myself...





Heather nips-up the tie as Chris H. drives spikes with the hydraulic spike-driver while Mike T. guides the hydraulic hoses



Jose uses the leverage from a claw-bar to unbend a bent spike





The spike-driving craziness is spreading! Now Anthony's caught it. Meanwhile Joe sets a spike



Bill nips-up the tie as Anthony drives the spike





Jose nips-up the tie as Anthony drives the spike. Joe and Art guide the hydraulic hoses



Chris C. and Mike H. deploy the regulator's wing to pull rock alongside the track and fill in some of the holes





As the regulator passes, it leaves a nice, smooth layer of rock in its wake



Now Joe has caught the insanity and drives spikes as Jose nips-up the tie





Bill's gone spike-raving mad!



Chris H. drives the last spike. With that, principle construction on the Zoo Line is complete!