

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 2, 2014. It was a week of anticipation and great expectations as we were going to have the SSRR Mainline all to ourselves on Saturday. No trains would be running on top of us giving us lots of time to get good work done. So, let's relieve everyone's anticipation and get this updated started.

Lots of good work was happening in the Shops on Tuesday. Alan Hardy, Heather Kearns, Cliff Hayes, Mike Harris, Harry Voss, Gene Peck and Frank Werry made sure of that. Cliff is building a large ballast hopper for the Team and he's almost done. He does amazing work. On Tuesday, he welded the legs and the clamshell to the base. Gene and Harry were right there assisting on this project. Heather, Mike H., and Frank headed over to Old Sacramento to make necessary repairs to the A-6 Motorcar. It needed to be lifted up with a forklift then cribbed with a track-jack to access a leaky oil fitting. Of course, they fixed the problem without incident and tested the motorcar to make sure no more dripping. Sure enough, their fix passed muster.

Meanwhile, out on the line with the Weed Team on Thursday, Mike Taylor, Dave Megeath, and Heather did their best to chop-away at any green things encroaching on our track. They worked through Miller Park where the foliage is thickest. Santa's Village is tall and needs proper air clearance in order to make its way south to the North Pole. Just a couple more weeks to go before the Village will head south and the Weedies' work will guarantee no impediments overhead.

Out in the Old Sacramento Yard on Thursday, Frank and Heather made multiple yard moves of our equipment everything would be in order for Saturday big tie change-out. Conductor Frank conducted the old-old tamper along with three flatcars over the UP Main so that we could load them with the section-gang machines and other tools. In the Shops, Mike H. took on reconstructing the gearbox of the tie shear. He used precision equipment to make everything fit. Harry got the rail-drill working while Cliff welded braces between the legs of the new ballast hopper while Alan continued painting it. We were pretty well staged for Saturday at this point.

Speaking of Saturday, the day started off extra early with Alan, Heather, and Steve Nemeth arriving before the sun – and the doughnuts – to get everything into position so that the Team could make a quick escape once they all arrived. Harry escorted the doughnuts into the Erecting Shop just in time for Clem Meier, Frank, Mike Miller, Mike H., Michael Florentine, Mike T., Frederick Carr, Pam Tatro, Dave, and Matt Blackburn to arrive. Everyone was anxious to get out on the line to start the big tie-change out operation. The plan was to start at Mile Post 0.95, just south of the ground-throw switch at the Clunie Crossover in the vicinity of the old Santa Fe locomotives, and continue south. With the tamper, two section-gang machines, and the Sacrifer-inserter, along with more tools than you could shake a stick at, the fantastic volunteers of the MOW Team got right to work. This was a very challenging area in which to pull ties. The ties are sitting on hard-packed dirt. There isn't any semblance of ballast under the ties. Pulling them was like trying to remove splintering ties from concrete and our machines are just not up to the task. The section-gang machines would crush the ties upon contact. So we used a system where chains with a metal sheet were wrapped around the opposite end of the tie from the machine's ram then connected to the ram in order to pull the tie out from behind. Unfortunately, the sheet and chains would slice through the tie and turn it into splinters. That coupled with the fact that so many were already plate-cut, led to great frustration and difficulty. In fact, at one point, it took an hour just to remove one tie. Later on, a tie was so embedded in the hard-pan soil that the lift-cylinder on the yellow section-gang machine was bent necessitating its amputation. By the end of the day, we managed to remove only about 25 ties.

Folks, the MOW Team has a real problem accomplishing the work that needs to get done in order to keep this line in service. Frankly, our machinery is totally inadequate for this job. This team is reduced to digging-out ties out by hand which no one in this day and age should have to do. Worst yet, it wears-out the great folks who do this work. We desperately need our tie-shear restored to operation. The tie-shear was built to handle these exact conditions. We desperately need the tie-exchanger we've been trying to acquire. Now, we are in the situation where we have to completely rethink how we're going to go about removing and replacing shattering ties on hard dirt. But, our hearts are pure and our cause is just. We will carry on.

It was a disappointing day. However, everyone within the Museum community should be proud of the incredible dedication and perseverance of this wonderful team of volunteers. Saturday was a real test of our resolve. Yet, the ladies and gentlemen of the MOW Team went above and beyond to accomplish as much as possible despite the challenges. The Museum and Railroad are so fortunate to have such a dedicated team of volunteers who do the heavy labor out on the line. Yes, it was frustrating. But, the way the MOW Team volunteers responded to adversity was inspiring.

For the week ahead, the Weed Team will be working on both Tuesday (south of the I-5 Bridge) and Thursday (Miller Park area). 8:30 a.m. is the call time. The Shops will open for business both day by 5 o'clock p.m. Saturday, we will new ties in the cribs of the ties we dug out last Saturday. We will get this area back in order for normal train operations to continue. Meet for doughnuts starting at 8 o'clock a.m. It's a privilege to work with such an incredible team volunteers. Thank you so much for your dedication.

We'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.





Dave tossing organic debris into the chipper



Dave up in the bucket of the man-lift as Mike T. gathers up the falling branches





Cliff welds the leg of the new ballast hopper onto its deck



Heather and Mike H. inspect the defective oil line fitting on the A-6 Motorcar





Mike H. uses a precision instrument to make adjustments to the gearbox of the tie-shear



The Team arrives out on the line and begins deploying equipment





Clem, Mike H., Steve, and Mike F. deploy the orange section-gang machine



Pam and Heather use the hydraulic spike-puller to pull spikes on the ties being removed





Mike F., and Mike M. remove tie-plates, many of which were cut down into the tie making them difficult to remove



Mike H., Mike F., Pam, Mike M., Harry, and Alan try to use the chain method to pull ties





Alan uses an adz to chop away at a plate-cut tie

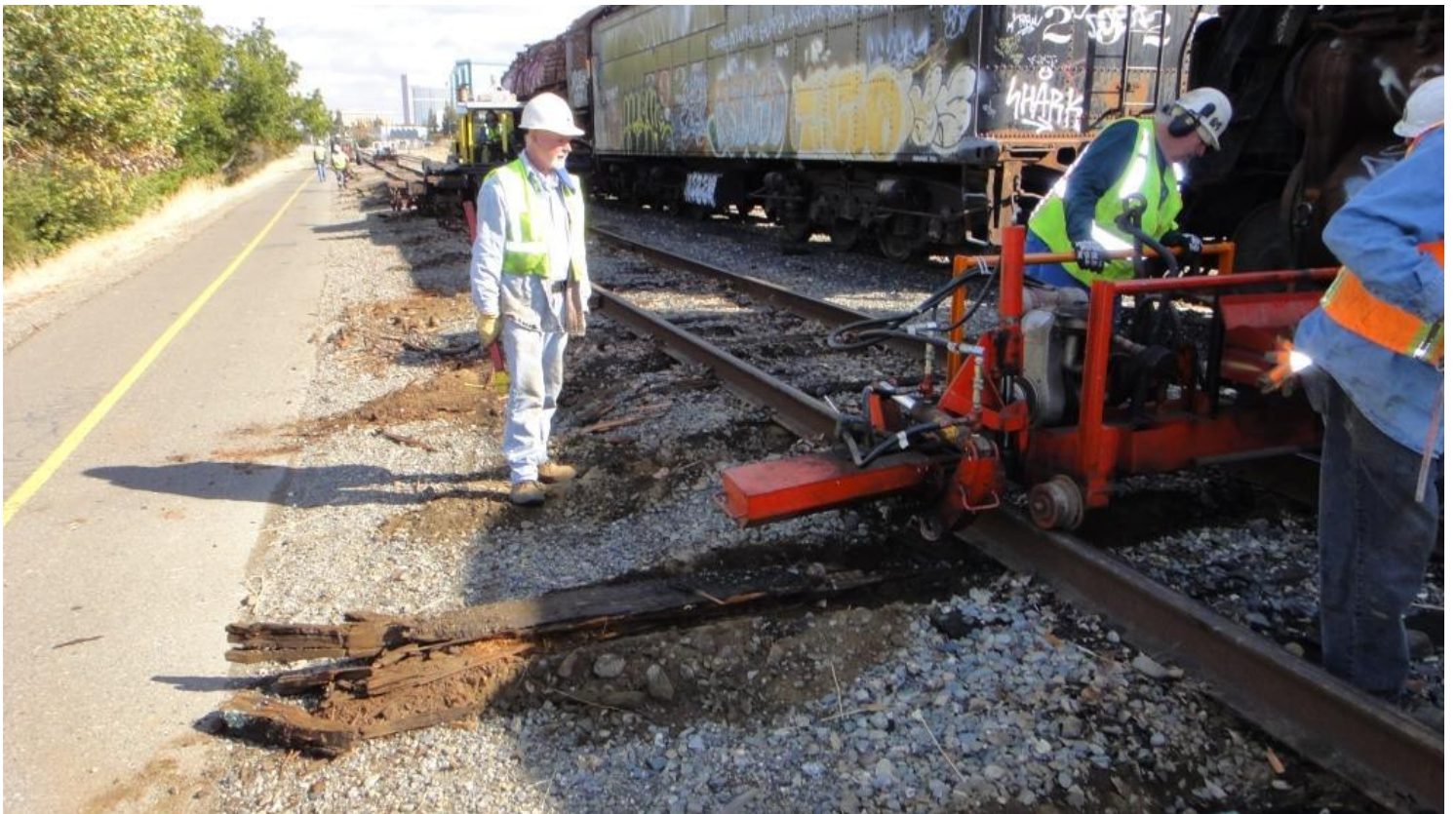


Hurrah! Dave, Steve, Matt, and Clem remove a somewhat intact tie!





Alan comes through with the scarifer-inserter to dig out the crib of a removed tie



Mike M. with adz in hand, surveying the remains of a tie being removed





Catastrophe! The hydraulic cylinder that lifts the ram-arm has bent while trying to grab hard-packed tie



That's it. Time to bring in the Big Green Machine. The ram-arm must be "amputated" and only Big Green can lift it





The view from Big Green as the amputation take place...



Some whole ties but mostly pieces are added to our dead-tie pile at Setzer by Heather, Steve, Dave, and Matt