

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 22, 2015. It's hot-chocolate season on the SSRR as Polar Express starts this Friday. But that's this coming week. It's time to take a look back at the MOW Team's endeavors for this past week. So, let's get started.

Team Tuesday consisted of Pat Scholzen, Frederick Carr, Cliff Hayes, Frank Werry, Mike Harris, and Alan Hardy. While Alan was in MOW-budget meetings with Museum management, Fred, Pat, and Frank got busy on disassembling the power-train of the A-4 motorcar in order to replace the clutch. Fred climbed under it while Frank and Pat worked with him from above. Mike H. took on a pesky leak in one of the Canon BEB-17 ballast regulator's hydraulic filters. Of course, he managed to get it put-right. Cliff used his metallurgic mastery weld a wrought-iron post to a steel base which will be used to mount signal lights. Welding these different alloys together is not easy and takes an expert's touch. Cliff is such an expert. The evening concluded with a visit from CSRM Director, Paul Hammond. Paul is a frequent visitor to the north end of the Erecting Shop and strong advocate for your MOW Team. We greatly appreciate his support!

The Weed Team met in the Boiler Shop on Thursday in order to install the new blades in the chipper. Mike Taylor and Dave Megeath spent the day on this rather involved project. Like most MOW machines, the chipper was not built with ease of maintenance in mind. But, Mike T. and Dave persevered and managed to get the machine put back together. Then, it was hooked-up to the A-5 motorcar for its journey back to Old Sacramento. Conductor Frank undertook the necessary discussions with the Union Pacific Dispatch Center in Omaha and, in no time, Mike T. in the A-5 was pulling the chipper over the UP Main. Next, the Team needed to get the ballast hopper with the busted coupler back to the Shops where Cliff could make the necessary repairs. Mike H. joined Mike T. and Frank in Old Sac. to pilot the Kalamazoo tug. It was an exciting evening of nighttime switching which required a rather complicated series of moves to get the busted hopper in the right position for its trip east. Over in the old SP Yards, Alan took the hopper north on the transfer table so that Cliff could do a proper job of welding the coupler back on. All the while, Fred was busy as a bee working on the A-4's clutch. What exciting evening of MOW fun!

It's always a great day when the MOW Team can welcome a new member. Saturday, we welcomed TWO new members: Chris Nielsen and Steve Wilson. Plus, we welcomed Chris Machado back to the Team. It was great to see him again. Luckily, there were plenty of doughnuts on hand. Joining them were MOW Team veterans Steve Nemeth, Heather Kearns, Clem Meier, John Rexroth, Frank, and Alan. So we had two Steves, two Chrises – but no Mikes. After a proper job briefing, the Team set out for Miller Park where the ballast work would continue. Steve N. climbed up in the front-end loader and Frank in the back-hoe. Heather took out the Kalamazoo pulling all the ballast hoppers. Alan fired up the tamper which was followed down the line by the ballast regulator. At Setzer, Frank and Steve N. filled the hoppers with rock. Up on the Main, the regulator began plowing and pulling rock to make a nice level surface. Steve W. and Chris N. were riding in the cab to experience this big machine in action. Meanwhile, Team Tug pulled the hoppers up the hill. Clem and Chris M. disgorged the rock between the rails filling in holes and low spots. The regulator came through and evenly spread all the new rock with the plow and wings. Alan and Chris M. made some adjustments to the wings that allowed them to perform several different functions then deployed them to cut-down wind-rows and mounds along the outside of the rails. It was a machine-heavy and productive morning, indeed.

Then, we had a nice surprise. The lovely and talented Judy Hardy, First Lady of the MOW Team, treated the Team to a pizza lunch at the job-site. It was such a pleasure having Judy join us which made the day extra special. Thanks very much, Judy, for the tasty lunchtime treats!

Soon, it was back to work where the ballasting continued "dressing the track." It was trial-by-fire for Chris N. who was put behind the controls of the regulator. Under Alan's watchful eye, Chris N. did a great job running the machine back-and-forth up and down the line plowing and pulling rock. With ballasting operations completed, Heather, Steve N., Clem, and John did a run-around with the Kalamazoo so that it would be pulling the ballast cars rather than shoving them back to Old Sac. Then, the Team got to work servicing switches. It's a MOW Team tradition to introduce the "new-guys" to switch-grease. Chris N. and Steve W. stepped right up grabbed the grease brush and slathered grease onto the proper parts of the north and south switches at Miller Park (14 & 16) and the north switches at Baths (17 & 18). Heather deployed the huff-and-puff machine. She and John traded off using it to send organic debris flying away from the switches. Alan in the tamper, tamped the line from Front Street to the Setzer Lead compacting all that rock under the ties. This ballasting work, combined with the massive tie replacement we did on Miller Park Main over the summer, has turned this section of track from one of the worst on the entire line into the best. It's been an amazing transformation. Now it was time to return to town where we faced one more task. With the Polar Express consist about to block part of the Old Sac. Yard for a month, the Team needed to get the man-lift and chipper off of the North Turntable Lead. Otherwise, the turntable would be totally inaccessible. It took a bit of time and effort and, again, a somewhat complicated switching plan but, we got it done. Conductor Heather then conducted the tamper and regulator back over the UP Main and everything got put away before darkness descended on the Team. Yes, despite a few complications, it was a day of good accomplishment.

Now, for this upcoming week. The MOW Team is doing something rather rare. **We're taking the week off.** It's Thanksgiving week and **MOW operations are cancelled for Tuesday and Saturday.** With Thanksgiving travel and family commitments, those with keys to the buildings are unable to be at the Shops on Tuesday. Also, many MOW Team members are working Polar Express on Saturday. But, normal operations will resume next week. In the meantime, have a wonderful Thanksgiving and, as always, thank you to our dedicated Team and supporters!

Happy Thanksgiving and see you out on the line – next week,

Alan, Chris Carlson, and Richard.



Frank, Pat, and Fred (under the machine) take apart the A-4 motorcar's transmission to replace the clutch



There's Fred, playing under the machine again...



Cliff welds the signal post to the stand



Mike H. takes on the ballast regulator's leaky hydraulic filter



Mike T. waiting for the signal indication to take the chipper back to Old Sacramento



Cliff welds the draw-bar coupler back onto the ballast hopper car



Frank in the back-hoe and Steve N. in the front-end loader fill the hoppers with rock



Clem and Chris M. disgorge the ballast rock between the rails filling in holes and low spots



Chris M. and Alan work on making adjustments on the ballast regulator's wing to pull rock in towards the rail



Chris M. is able to release the pin holding the door in place



The lovely and talented Judy treated the MOW Team to a pizza lunch and homemade brownies for desert. What a clever use of flat-cars...



The Team gathers around Alan as he tells stories from the "ol' days" of MOW...



It's back to work and Chris N. takes a stab at operating the ballast regulator



What happened to the track?





Team Tug prepare to run-around the ballast hoppers in preparation for pulling them back to town



Steve N. and Clem push the ballast cars onto the Setzer Lead from the Miller Park Siding during the run-around



Initiation of the new guys! Chris N. gets his hands on the switch-grease bucket as Clem supervises



Team veteran Steve N. takes the grease brush as rookie Chris N. scrape old grease off switch-plates. John provides the color commentary



John watches as Heather operates the new "huff-'n'-puff" machine



A day with no Mikes. Instead, there were two Steves and two Chrises: Steve Wilson, Steve Nemeth, Chris Nielsen, and Chris Machado