

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 13, 2015. As the weather was cold, action in the Shops was really heating up this week. So, let's not cool it down by delaying this update any further.

Mike Taylor and Heather Kearns made for a Weed Team of two on Tuesday. Down to Hood they went and pruned dozens of trees and bushes that were encroaching on the Hood Mainline. Mike T. still contends that the gas-powered chainsaw on a stick is the niftiest new tool in the Weed Team's arsenal. It's so much fun that he and "Ginsu" Dave Megeath repeated Tuesday's adventure on Saturday where they took on about 30 trees. Mike T. reports that with all the tress losing their leaves down there, the views from the line are becoming quite striking. All in all, a good week for the Weed Team who endeavor to keep the Hood dream alive.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, Frank Werry, Alan Hardy, Mike Harris, Heather, and Harry Voss were plugging away at all sorts of projects. Pat prepared a batch of his super yummy chili which everyone enjoyed immensely. With the assistance of Cliff, Gene, and Frank, Fred managed to get the clutch installed on the A-4 motorcar. The next step is to service the transmission and replace the gear-oil before reinstalling it. Gene, Pat, Mike H., Harry, and Alan undertook a general assessment and survey of the rail-mounted machines to determine, in an organized fashion, what work needs to be done to bring them up to full capacity. This is something we've been striving to do for a while in order to have all machines fully functional going into the new year.

Thursday, Fred, Cliff, Heather, Frank, John Chandler, Mike H., and Alan joined the fun. Cliff and Fred continued on the A-4 transmission rebuild. Mike H. assessed some issues with the tie-shear along with Cliff and Frank. Most importantly, much of the evening was spent staging for our planned Saturday operation. Heather and Frank managed to get the MOW Truck loaded with all the equipment we'd need.

Speaking of Saturday, doughnuts were on-site bright and early and available for immediate consumption when Clem Meier, Steve Nemeth, Steve Wilson, Chris Machado, Heather, and Alan all arrived. We had a number of tasks before us. First, the Team would head to Clunie where the crossover switch on the Siding (12) to deal with a standing defect identified by our trusty track inspectors. The west-point was not firmly seated against the stock-rail. The stand needed adjusting in order to force the point up against the rail. A spike was placed in the switch-handle notch and a "cheater" applied to the handle, itself. Chris and the two Steves grabbed ahold of the cheater and pulled like the dickens in order to twist the stand. This effort was repeated a couple times until the point was snug against the stock-rail. Clem got out the grease bucket and began applying grease to this very dry switch. Then the Team removed an extraneous component on the switch-point that is used only on electronically operated switches. Heather and Chris broke-out the necessary wrenches and, after a few squirts of Kroil, were able to remove the bolts and the extraneous piece. The rest of the switch was serviced and tested. The defect was declared corrected.

Near Baths, a couple dozen dead ties lay strewn about the east side of the track. They were the remains of our tie changing operation earlier this year and never got picked up. Using tie-tongs and gloved hands, Heather, Steve W., Steve N., and Clem brought the ties up onto the rails. Alan drove the flatbed truck onto which they would be loaded while Chris got up onto the bed and pulled the ties aboard. After they were all loaded, Alan took them down to Setzer where these ties joined the ever-growing pile.

Next up was a return to Old Sacramento and the replacement of another two cracked joint-bars on the tracks leading into the Central Pacific Passenger Station (CPPS). It was still quite cool outside and the thermal contraction of the rails added to the challenge. Nothing would line-up properly. Because setting a fire on the rails in order to expand them was not an option, once Chris, Steve W., Steve N., Clem, and Alan removed the bolts and pried out the cracked-bars, drift-pins, lining bars, and sledgehammers, were used to coax everything into position. The CPPS tracks feature redwood ties. Several spikes that had interfered with the bolt removal were pulled. Many had rotted down to just nibs – the effects of having been driven into redwood for 40 years. New bolts were installed, tightened-down, and the defect deemed repaired. All the while, Heather, with the huff-'n'-puff machine, blew out all the organic debris that accumulates between the rails and switches in Old Sacramento. Steve N. worked with her collecting leaves in large bags for disposal. Alan then brought in the tamper to tamp around the new ties that had been inserted under the Stub Switch last week. This was a very delicate operation, indeed, as there are so many switch components through which the vibrating tines had to be maneuvered. With Steve W. in the cab acting as a second pair of eyes, and Steve N. on the ground providing guidance to make sure that, as the eight tines per work-head descended into the ground, none would impact or catch-on with any switch components such as transit-clips. Alan did an outstanding job and was fortunate to have such good guides keeping keen eyes on things. Once the tamper pulled away, Steve W. got out a shovel and mattocks to fill in the gaps and even-out the ground around the switch that was disturbed by the tamper. With that, the Team packed up and headed back to the Shops – Alan in the tamper over the UP Main, and the rest of the crew in trucks. Tools and equipment were removed from the truck and put away. The tamper returned to Bay 5 in the Erecting Shop. Many good projects brought to successful conclusion made Saturday a good day.

For the week ahead, the Shops crews will be gathering as usual on Tuesday and Thursday at or before 5 o'clock p.m. The Weed Team is planning another sojourn to Hood on Thursday. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, expect doughnuts at 8 o'clock a.m. sharp. As always, thanks to a great crew for a job well done!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris Carlson, and Richard.



Mike T. uses the gas-powered chainsaw on a stick at Hood



Then uses it to slice the debris down to size



Fred (under the A-4) and Cliff get the new clutch installed



Careful down there, Fred!



Alan guides Steve W., Chris, and Steve N. as they twist the switch stand into a new shape



Heather and Chris remove the extraneous component from the switch point (with a little squirt of Kroil to loosen things up)



How many Maintenance of Way volunteers does it take to loosen a nut?



Chris watches as Clem greases the switch plates



Steve N. pulls a dead tie on to the rails staging it for pick-up



Heather spots a tie for disposal



Alan drives the flatbed down the bike path stopping at each dead tie as Steve N. and Steve W. lift the ties which Chris pulls aboard



At Setzer, Clem tosses a piece of tie onto the pile



Then Alan dumps the rest



Chris and Steve N. work in tandem to remove bolts around a cracked joint-bar





Steve W. holds the road-master on the spike-head while Chris uses the claw-bar to pull it



Chris pounds a drift-pin through the bolt-hole



Alan uses his favorite tool, the adz, to chip-away at the tie where the base of the rail has cut into it over the years



Steve N. shows what happens to spikes that are driven into redwood. They rot...



Steve N. guides the tamper around all the switch components



Now that's precision tamping



Steve N. and Heather bag-up organic debris



Steve W. fills in the created by the tamper