

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 14, 2014. “Storm-ageddon” besieged the railroad this week and your MOW Team was there to guarantee that Polar Express could proceed without incident south to the North Pole. So, before any rain falls on this parade, let’s get this update started.

The mighty Weed Team met on Tuesday. Mike Taylor and Dave Megeath headed down to Hood where they continued the never-ending battle to tame the wilderness – well, at least within the right-of-way. They cut, they sawed, and they hacked away at the thicket, bringing that area of the right of way into compliance with Part 213.37. Another excellent outing by the most outstanding Nuisance Weed Team! Their tireless efforts keep the dream of one day running trains at Hood alive!

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, it was a dark and stormy night. Well, not quite yet and certainly not inside the Erecting Shop where Manager of Track Programs Emeritus and Gentleman Farmer, John Chandler, stopped by and surprised Alan Hardy, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Heather Kearns, Frederick Carr, Scott Morrison, Gene Peck, Mike Harris, and Harry Voss with all the fixin’s for yummy barbecue. Our Designated Supervisor of Barbecue Engineers (DSBE), Pat, sparked-up the MOW Team’s barbecue and brought forth a wonderful array of barbecue goodness. Many thanks to John and Pat for providing the MOW Team with such a fine treat. Also on Tuesday, Scott and Alan began rebuilding the rail-lifter which, not surprisingly, lifts the rail for the insertion of tie plate when changing ties. Fred built a mount for magnets to be used in the hydraulic tank of the Kalamazoo for the purpose of attracting any wayward bits of metal that may be floating through the system. Heather did a fuel run and filled 11 jerry-cans. Then, she resupplied the motorcar over in the container. It was an excellent evening of accomplishment and barbecue cheer.

Because of the forecasted severity of “Storm-osaurus” on Thursday, the decision was made to close down the Shops. High winds and rain make for uncomfortable conditions in the buildings. However, it was “full diesel ahead” for Polar Express in the evening. Prior to the first train of the day, Alan headed out on the line to make sure there were no downed branches, trees, or other impediments that could interfere with the Polar Express’s progress south to the North Pole. Fortunately, the predicted raging tempest did not materialize over Miller Park thus leaving the line free of obstructions.

Saturday morning was the *Allegretto* from the *Pastoral* as the clouds parted and rays of glorious sunshine greeted the MOW Team – well, sunshine and doughnuts. Alan, Clem Meier, Harry, Frank Werry, Michael Florentine, Chris Carlson, and Heather were anxious to head out onto the line to accomplish great things. The plan for the day was to improve the footings around all the switch stands along the line for safer operation by brakemen. Doing such was suggested by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) inspector the last time he inspected our line. Harry hopped on the back-hoe and loaded the one-ton truck with the dump-bed full of small rock. Down at Baths – er, the North Pole – Clem skillfully operated the dump-bed lift controls to transfer rock back into the bucket of the back-hoe which Harry then distributed it around the south switch. Heather, Frank, Mike F., and Chris shoveled and raked it about to form a smooth flat surface around the entire head-block. The Team then moved on to the north switches at Baths. With that, we exhausted our first load of small rock. However, it was at this point that the MOW Team invaded Santa’s Village and liberated the enslaved elves from Santa’s iron grip. Santa offered no resistance and the elves celebrated their freedom by snapping a photo of victorious MOW Team occupying the Village (see attachment).

In the afternoon, phase two of the operation commenced with Chris on the Big Green Machine using the bucket attachment to load the truck with more rock. The Team headed down to Miller Park to build the new footings around all three switches down there. Now, the ground around the six most used switches off of the SSRR Mainline is smooth and level. This should make it nicer for brakeman when operating these switches and satisfy the CPUC inspector the next time he visits our railroad. We’ll continue this project in the near future by laying more small rock around the remaining switches at Clunie and in the Old Sacramento yard.

One final project of the day was to collect and remove the large pile of wood that had been left by the Weed Team following their recent tree trimming activities. The Team packed it into the bucket of the back-hoe. Harry then took it down the hill in two loads and deposited it into the bed of the truck. It was time to call it a day. With our projects completed and stable elf self-rule government installed at the Village, the Team headed back to the Shops quite pleased with all that was accomplished.

For the week ahead, although a little rain is likely, no “Storm-zilla” is predicted. So, the Team will occupy the Erecting Shop on Tuesday starting a little before 5 o’clock p.m. The same goes for Thursday. Saturday looks to be sunny and bright. The pink box will swing open at promptly 8 o’clock a.m. Best wishes for a happy week to all our incredible volunteers and supporters!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



DSBE Pat tending to his charge



Alan, Fred, and Scott bring the rail-lifter to life



Fred constructing the magnetic filter system for the Kalamazoo



Clem tests the handle of the shovel. Harry, in the back-hoe, inspects Clem's work...



At Switch 20 (South Baths), Frank, Mike F., Chris, and Heather spread small rock around the head-block



Now, that's what I call "fouling" the track. Harry delivers rock for Chris, Mike F., Frank, and Heather to spread about. Now, don't get all hot and bothered. Red flags were displayed both to the north and south...



At Switch 17 (north Baths) new footing was installed.



Clem operates the truck's dump-be lift control as Mike F., Frank, and Chris shovel rock into the bucket of the back-hoe



Chris operating Big Green, scoops up more rock for round two of Operation Fair Footing...



The rock is dumped into the bed of Truck 14



At Switch 16 (south Miller Park) Heather, Chris, Mike F., and Alan create smooth footing around the switch stand



Beavers and squirrels have been hard at work on the SSRR Mainline forcing your MOW Team carry off the remains...



Harry, operating the back-hoe, loads the logs into the back of Truck 14



Your MOW Team occupying Santa's Village at the North Pole. From left: Alan, Mike F., Heather, Clem, Harry, Chris, and Doc