

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 22, 2013. The great pajama migration south to the North Pole has concluded. Polar Express 2013 was an unmitigated success, thanks especially to the tremendous volunteers of the Sacramento Southern Railroad, amongst whom your MOW Team was well represented. But, despite all the hot chocolate fun going on, your MOW Team had a productive week. So, let's get right to it.

Tuesday was a Shops day for the mighty MOW Weed Team and your MOW Team. Mike Taylor and Weedies, Dave Megeath and Heather Kearns, continued their efforts at rebuilding their DR Weed and Brush Mowers. Meanwhile, Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, Gene Peck, Harry Voss, Chris Carlson, Mike Harris, and Alan Hardy gathered for some pre-Christmas cheer. Cliff and Alan managed to finish building the light-receiver apparatus for the new-old tamper and the crew began painting the machine, as well. Our Road Foreman of the Barbecue, Pat, prepared a magnificent Christmas meal for the Team. Yes, we had our own little celebration of the season in the Shops and exemplified the camaraderie we all enjoy out on the line. Although no hot chocolate was served (plenty of that elsewhere), it was a great and festive evening for all involved!

Thursday, MOW was cancelled because so many of the crew had other commitments, including Polar Express. But Saturday was a very productive day as we continued our efforts on the Great Foot-path Project of 2013 along the 560 track. Harry, Mike H., Heather, Steve Nemeth, John Rexroth, Mile Miller, Michael Florentine, Frank Werry, Mike T., and Chris were all on hand for doughnuts and a day of shifting rock. With Alan in the loader, Mike F., on the Big Green Machine, and Chris in the ol' bucket of bolts regulator, the crew used the rock we had available over in the Rail Yards (as the new rock hadn't shown up yet) to establish a base layer on which the new rock will be laid and leveled. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is requiring us to build foot-paths along the 560 track. Pursuant to CPUC regulations, the existing slope is too steep and needs to be extended by four feet from each side of the track in order to ensure the safety of brakemen walking alongside a moving train. Repositioning this much rock is a time consuming project. Using the equipment that we have, we managed to build the base layer on both side of the along the length of the track between the two approach circuits on both ends. Smaller rock for the foot paths is being delivered on Monday.

While the rock was being shifted over in the Rail Yards, Steve, Mike M., and John headed over to Old Sacramento to service a couple of switches. Switch 2, the House Track Switch, was almost impossible to throw as the switch rod had become buried over time. Mike M., and John dug out the switch rod, cleaned up the flange-ways, and made adjustments to a transit clip, while Steve, as EIC of the grease bucket greased the switch so that now it throws with ease. Then they headed over to Switch 9, the south switch to the center siding at the platform, because of several complaints by brakemen over the past couple of weeks that it was hard to throw. Although the crew could not find any issues with the switch, they did clean it up and grease it. It throws nicely now, as well.

In other news, during Polar Express, your trusty Track Inspectors, Frank, Ed Moriarty, and yours truly, paid particular attention to areas of the track that had suffered some problems in previous years under the stress of those big engines. The track inspectors are pleased to report that, throughout the entire Polar Express operation, not one defect was logged – no broken bolts, no cracked joint-bars, no snapping tie-plates. This is a direct result of the work and planning of the MOW Team over the past year which focused on these problem areas by replacing ties to strengthen the track structure between MP 2.0 and 2.5, up around the Broadway Curve under the Pioneer Bridge, and through Miller Park. The hard work and determination of our all-volunteer crew has really paid off. You all deserve a big round of applause!

With regards to Christmas Week, the MOW Team will NOT be meeting on Tuesday and Thursday. However, on Saturday the crew will meet at the Shops for doughnuts at 8 o'clock a.m. Then, we will head back out along the 560 track to continue building the foot-paths. The new rock is being delivered on Monday. It promises to be another good day.

Merry Christmas to all the members and supporters of the MOW Team. 2013 was a great year. With the promise of new equipment and greater mechanization, 2014 will prove to be even better. Take care and best wishes to all.

We'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Dave and Mike T. work on the DR mower



RFB Pat prepares Christmas dinner for the MOW Christmas celebrations





A happy gathering in the Shops



Alan in the loader filling a ballast hopper





Mike F. on Big Green using the dump-bucket accessory



A bit of a tight squeeze





Mike H. and Alan control the flow of rock from the hopper while Frank controls the speed of the operation from the A-6



The base layer is laid





John and Steve work on Switch 2



Steve, John, and Mike M. show off their success!