

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 29, 2013 – the last MOW Team update of the year. Polar Express 2013 is now part of the Museum's history and Maintenance of Way is back at work. So, before a ballast hopper rolls away from us here, let's get this update rolling.

Last Tuesday and Thursday MOW evening sessions were cancelled in recognition of the Christmas holidays. Saturday, however, we were ready to start burning off Christmas calories – after the obligatory doughnuts, of course – with some heavy, intense manual labor of digging, shoveling, and shifting ballast. The four Mikes – Florentine, Harris, Miller, and Taylor – were joined by Alan Hardy, Chris Carlson, Frederick Carr, Taka Blackburn, Frank Werry, Dave Megeath, John Rexroth, Pam Tatro, and Heather Kearns. On the docket for the day was the continuing effort to build foot-paths along the 560 Track over in the Rail Yards pursuant to a California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) directive. On Monday, the ballast rock for which we had been waiting finally arrived. So, we were set to go, ready to get this project done!

Conductor Frank conducted the A-6 motorcar over the UP Main first thing in the morning. Mike M., Fred, Taka, and Frank began the difficult duty of digging away at the rock around the Interchange Switch to bring it to the right level in order to add the small rock which suitable for walking. Mike F. on Big Green positioned the hopper cars on the track. Mike H. in the loader began loading the hoppers. Chris in the *ol' bucket o' bolts* regulator (which needed several severe thrashings again this week to get it to run) managed to cajole the dying beast out onto the line. It was mechanized choreography as the big machines danced around each other while scooping up rock and loading it in the hoppers. Alan led several volunteers in operating the hoppers and dumping their contents along the south side of the line. Frank, Pam, and Taka switched gears and did some weed work. They pulled all the thistle plants infesting the area around the signal mast near the double diamonds. Now, that was nasty, dirty work.

In the afternoon, we continued these efforts – filling the hoppers, dumping their contents alongside the track, and hand-sculpting the rock in areas inaccessible by the regulator. Also, the regulator suffered another catastrophic breakdown which meant more hand-digging of rock. This was one of the most labor intensive days we've had out on the line in a while. In fact, we were reminiscing about those innocent days not too long ago when all we were doing was digging out splintering and crushed ties by hand. How simple that seemed in comparison. But, our efforts are paying off. The south side of Track 560 is pretty well complete and is looking great. Our focus switches to the north side next Saturday.

The afternoon concluded in the Shops where Heather, Mike H., and Fred removed the starter motor of the A-6, diagnosed the problem, and determined the solution. Alan and Chris tortured the *ol' bucket o' bolts*, once again, to bring it back to life. Frank led a team down to Baths to correct a track defect – the one and only found during Polar – a broken bolt in a joint about half-way through the curve. The defect has been corrected.

Meanwhile, down near Sutterville Road, Mike T. and Dave decided they couldn't stay away from tormenting trees any longer and sparked the Mighty MOW Weed Team into action. They tackled the invasive bits of live oaks, dead oaks, and oaks of a different color. Almost singlehandedly, Mike and Dave have cleared the Sutterville line of any potential vegetation defects – and believe me, there were plenty. Kudos to the Weedies!

This week, we will *not* be meeting on Tuesday, which is New Years Eve. However, vacation is over, folks. Thursday, the MOW Team will be up and running, working on projects such as the A-6 starter problem, and prepping for Saturday's continuation of the Great Foot-path Endeavor of 2013/4. Meet at the Shops around 5 o'clock. Saturday, work continues out on the 560 Track. So, if you have some extra new years calories to burn off (after doughnuts, of course) and don't want to sit in a dark theater for hours on end, come on over to the Shops at 8 a.m. for a day of MOW Team excitement. Again, thank you to all our incredible volunteers who work so hard out on our line. Always remember, no track, no train.

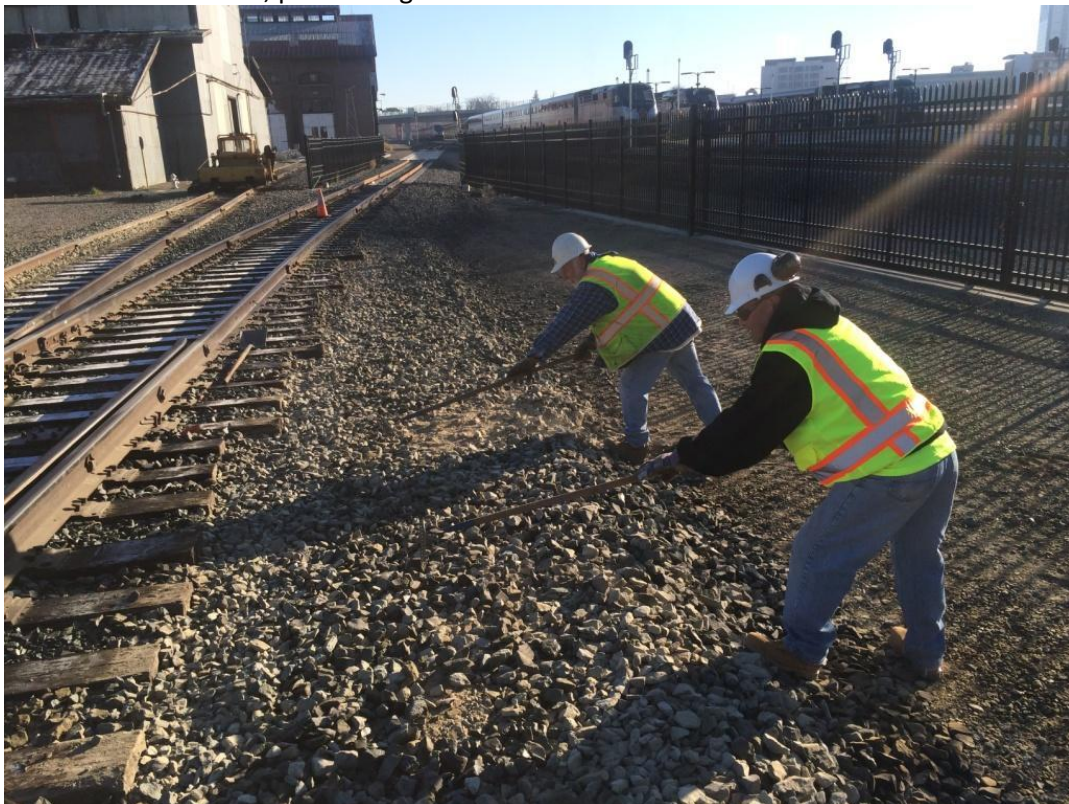
Happy New Year to one and all and we'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.

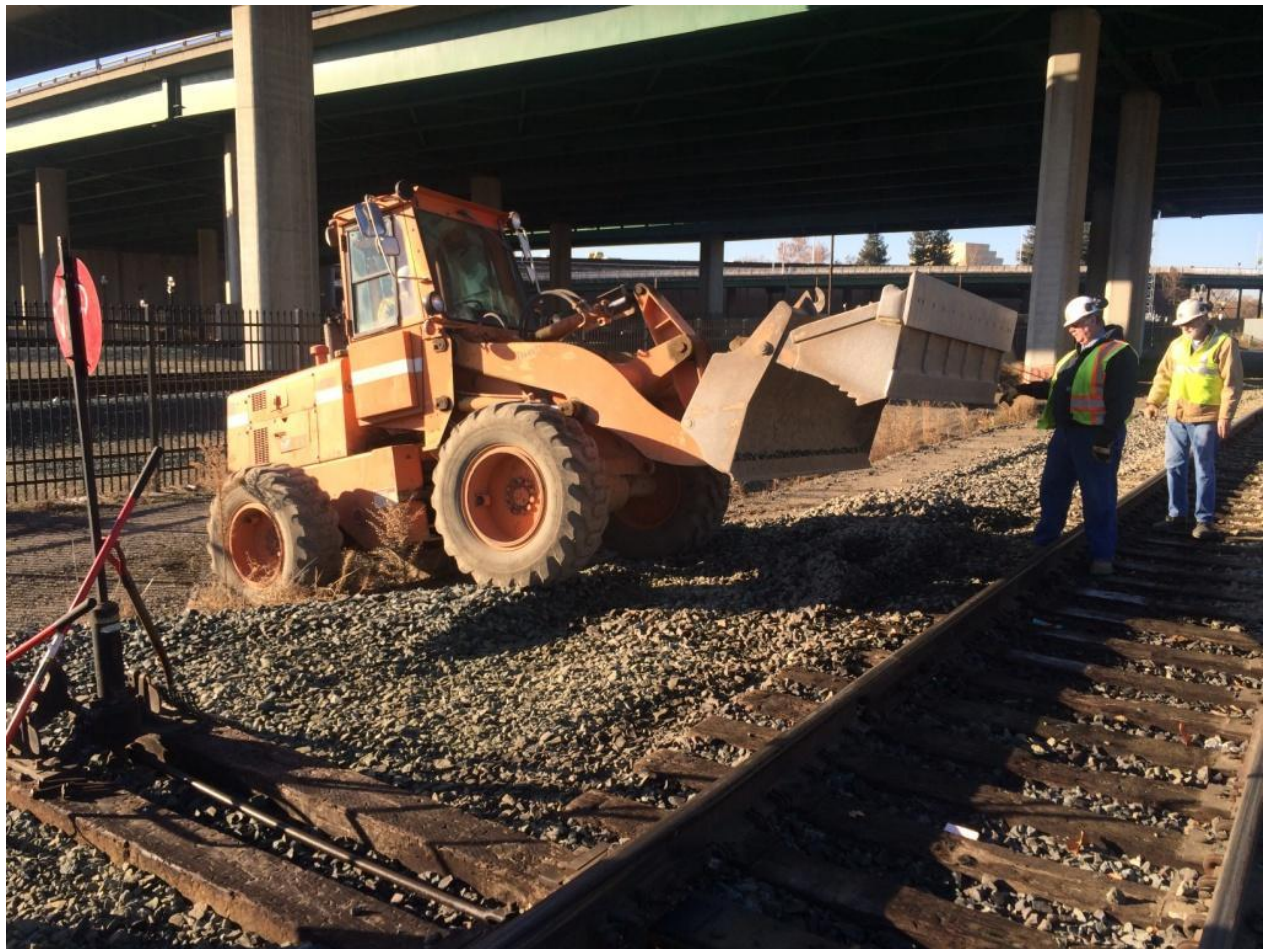
P.S. You want pictures? You've got 'em! Take a look at the attachment!



Alan, pummeling the life out of the ol' bucket o' bolts...



Mike M. and Taka grooming rock



Where regulators fear to tread: Chris directing Mike H. in scraping the high-points down



Alan and Mike H. dumping the contents of the hoppers in a well regulated manner



Geological stratification of ballast rock along the 560 track



Taka and Mike F. show Mike H. in the loader where to fill-in the ditches near the signal mast



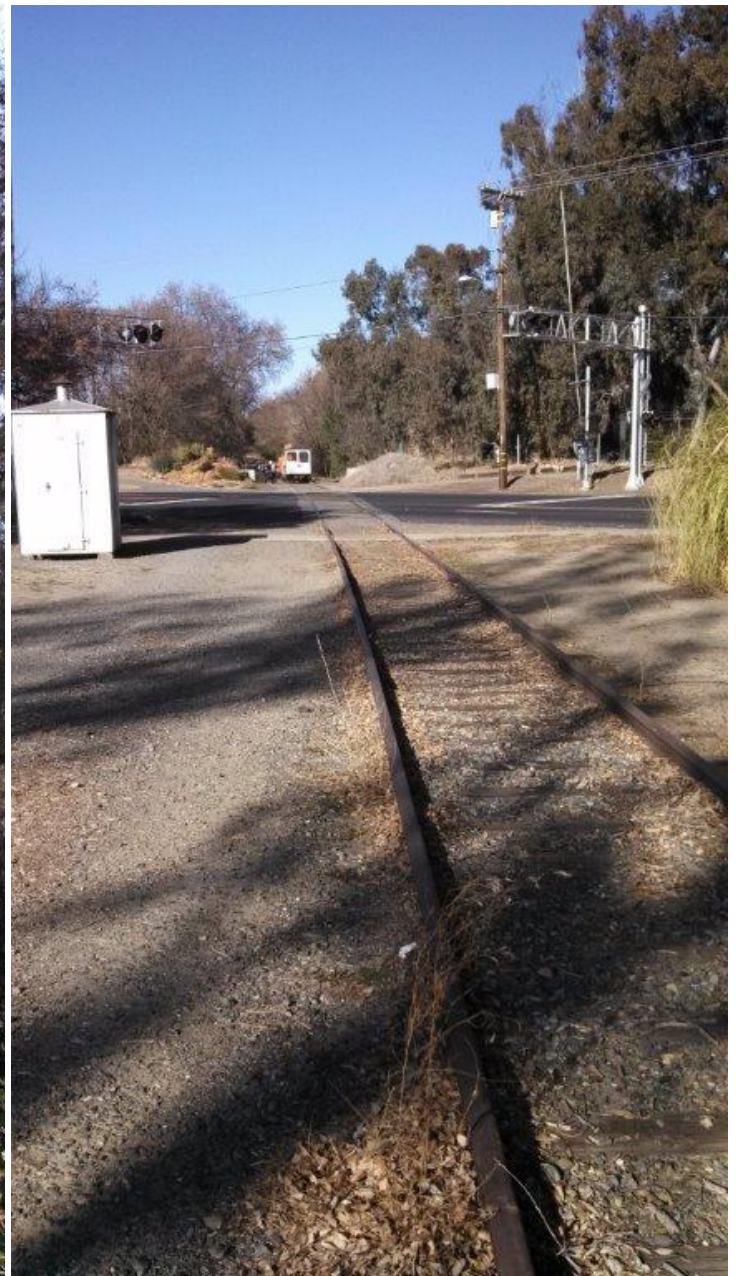
Taka and Pam and the pile of thistle things that they pulled from ground



Dancing with the machines!



Mike T. out amongst the trees



Where our track intersects with Sutterville Road