

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 31, 2017. Well, 2017 has passed into the history books but, 2018 promises great things for your MOW Team and the Railroad. So, let's get the update up and running before those great things pass us by.

It was a bit of a short week for your MOW Team as there was a dearth of management available due to ancillary Christmas duties, obligations, and commitments on Tuesday. And, as you know, nothing good can happen without copious amounts of management on site. But, by Thursday, Joe Margucci, Kyle Blackburn, Taka Blackburn, Ed Kottal, Mike Harris, Michael Florentine, Weston Snyder, Harry Voss, and Heather Kearns were all itching to escape the warm coziness of their yuletide abodes for the crisp cold of the Erecting Shop. You may recall that the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger had suffered a catastrophic failure of its turntable hydraulic cylinder. Well Thursday, Joe, Ed, Mike H., Harry, and Heather managed to get it removed. After descending into the pit and cribbing it up, Joe, Mike H., and Ed removed the mounting bolts. Mike H. then strung a sling through the heart of the machine and Joe, in the pit, got it hooked up to the cylinder. Harry on the Forklift held it up until the cribbing was removed and it could be lowered to the floor of the pit. The turntable base was removed and it was then lifted out of the pit and placed on a pallet ready to be taken to our hydraulic cylinder repair vendor. They did an excellent and outstanding job! Meanwhile, Kyle, Taka, Mike F. and Weston headed to Switch 13 (ground-throw at Clunie) where the R Street signal-system bond-wire had broken off the frog. Kyle, who is becoming an excellent welder, would reattach it. Team Frog loaded up the truck with all the necessary equipment for re-welding the bond wire. At the switch, with Taka's, Mike F.'s, and Weston's assistance, Kyle sparked-up his arc-welder and began heating the frog its hardened steel melts at a much higher temperature than the braided bond wire. Soon, Kyle had the weld-spot on the frog prepared and began bonding the bond-wire to it. Soon, everything welded back in place and Team Frog loaded up their equipment and headed back to the Shops. Indeed, it was an incredibly successful and productive final evening of MOW fun for 2017.

Despite being New Year's Eve eve, there was plenty of management on hand Saturday to make sure that no one would lack exposure to extreme micro-management. Of course, a big pink box of fresh, sugary fried-dough was waiting as Alan Hardy, Joe, Harry, Bill Hastings, Ed, Steve Nemeth, Bev Ratzlaff, Mike F., Chris Carlson, and Heather wandered into the Shops. It is no secret that the MOW Team is suffering from equipment issues right now. Our work-train is unavailable due to issues with the container. The hopper cars have been used so much lately that the welds are breaking on several of the draw-bar connectors. Both the 125 and tie-shear are sequestered at the Shops. So, for the final MOW day of 2017, the ballast-regulator and tamper would be deployed to the Sutterville/Zoo Line. Chris and Ed would take the regulator south and, using all of its capabilities, spread the rock we've already distributed about the line. They stretched the regulator's wings to pull rock down along the sides of track up onto the shoulders. Next using the plow, they pulled that rock into the center between the rails and then spread it evenly down the line. Finally, they spun-up the regulator's broom to press the rock down between the ties and "dress" the track. All of this took a dozen or more passes by the regulator up and down the line. While Chris and Ed were regulating the line, Harry brought the tamper into action. This would make a great day for training folks on its use because there was so much tamping to do. First up in the training chair was Bev. With Professor Harry overseeing the training, Bev quickly mastered the operation of the machine. On the ground, Steve and Mike F. acted as guides making sure that tines were positioned correctly as to not stab any ties. Meanwhile, Heather, Joe, and Bill traveled to Miller Park where December wind storms had deposited tons of organic debris burying the track. They used the "huff-'n'-puff" machines, brooms, and rakes to clear the line. By lunch time, they had made significant progress in getting the mess removed.

Following lunch, regulating and tamping continued down on the Zoo Line while organic debris removal persisted through Miller Park where Bev joined Heather and Joe on their noble quest. Down on the Sutterville/Zoo Line, training in the tamper continued with Bill taking control of the machine. Again, Harry on the role of trainer as Steve and Mike F. spotted from the ground. Of course it wouldn't be a MOW day without a mechanical malfunction. This time, the tamper was the victim. One of the vibrating motors on the work-head developed a significant hydraulic leak. It was so bad that we had to stop tamping. Despite the Team's best efforts at triage, the hydraulic seals on the vibrator appeared too far shot to continue. So, as Ed and Chris had completed their regulating duties, the Team packed-up and brought the tamper and regulator back to Old Sacramento. The Sutterville/Zoo Line is looking incredible – like newly restored track should look. Heading back into town, Harry, Steve, Mike F., Bill, Chris, and Ed passed Heather, Joe, and Bev who were still engaged in organic debris removal, and were amazed at the incredible job they had done making the track visible again. They achieved an amazing transformation.

With some time remaining in the day, Mike F., Bill, and Steve investigated a problem at Switch No. 6 (north Center-Siding/Platform Track) discovered by our trusty track inspectors. It suddenly seems slightly catawampus. After in-depth analysis, they concluded that, during the Platform Track raise and rebuilding of the J Street crossing, the switch may have been tweaked to the point where things don't quite match up like they should. Not to the point of defect but, enough to make it very difficult to throw. The Team will keep an eye on it and come up with a solution. With that, the Team put away all its toys and headed back to the Shops where they closed out 2017 very pleased with all their great accomplishments – especially the tremendous effort on the Sutterville/Zoo Line which essentially is done at this point.

It's full speed ahead for the first week of 2018 where the MOW Team will meet at its usual times on Tuesday and Thursday at or before 5 o'clock. Saturday, the Team will commence operations at 8 o'clock a.m. sharp. It has been a good year for the Team and next year promises to be even better. To all the incredible folks who dedicate their volunteer efforts with Maintenance of Way, thank you very much for all you do in building a better railroad.

Happy New Year and see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard



Mike H. threads a strap through the center of the 125 to support the turntable hydraulic cylinder as it is detached



Joe, down in the pit, guides the cylinder as it is removed



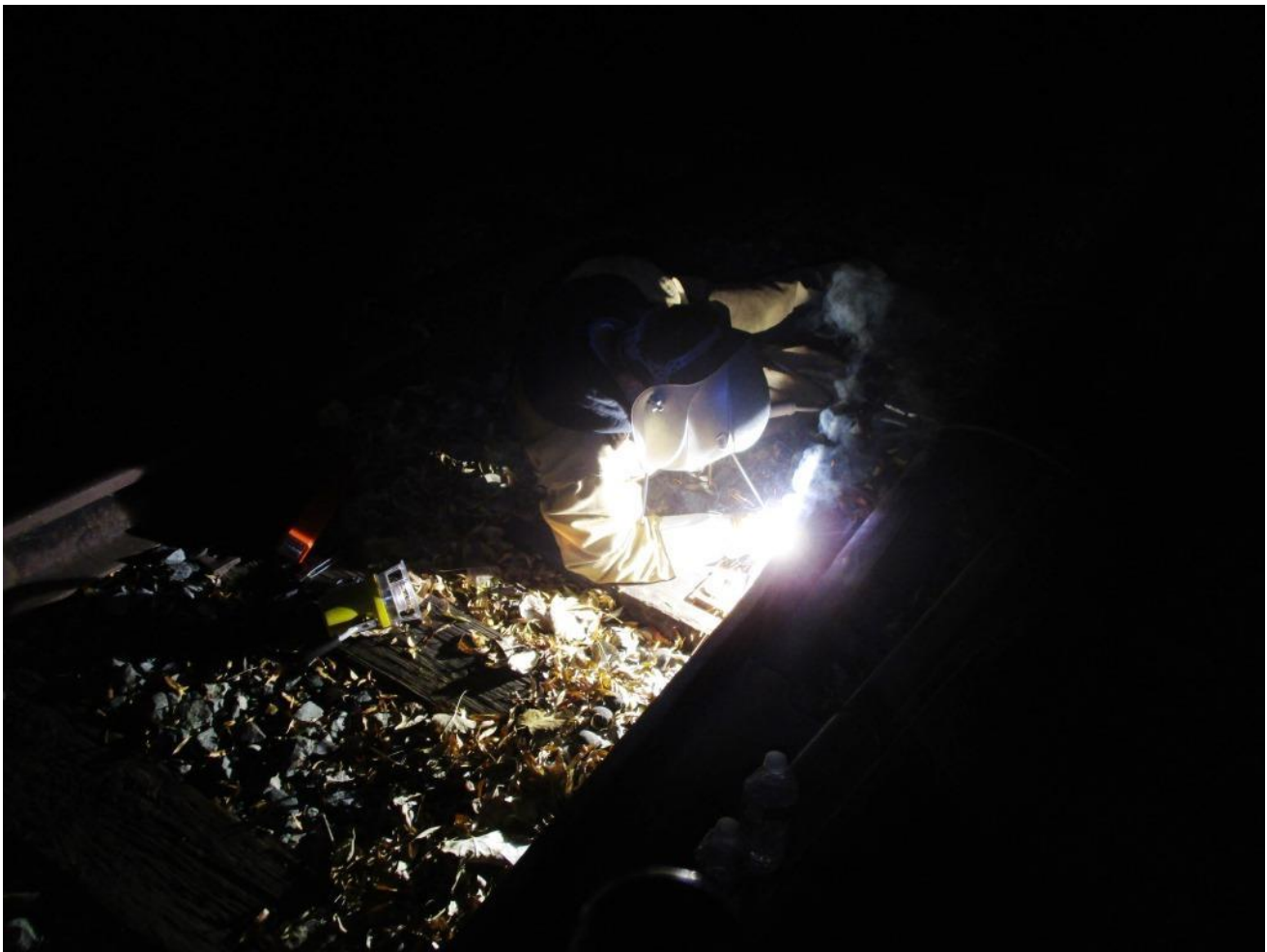


At Switch 13, Mike F. and Taka assist Kyle as he prepares the frog for welding



Weston sets up the light-plant





Kyle welds the bond-wire onto the frog



On Saturday, first things first. The regulator was thirsty for some red-diesel





Bill switches-out the hopper-cars with the Kalamazoo tug



Down on the Sutterville/Zoo Line, Chris and Ed deploy the regulator's wing to pull rock up from the sides of the track onto the shoulder





Chris keeps an eye on the redistribution of rock as Ed pilots the regulator up the hill



Now heading down the hill, the wing cuts down the windrows along the side of the track



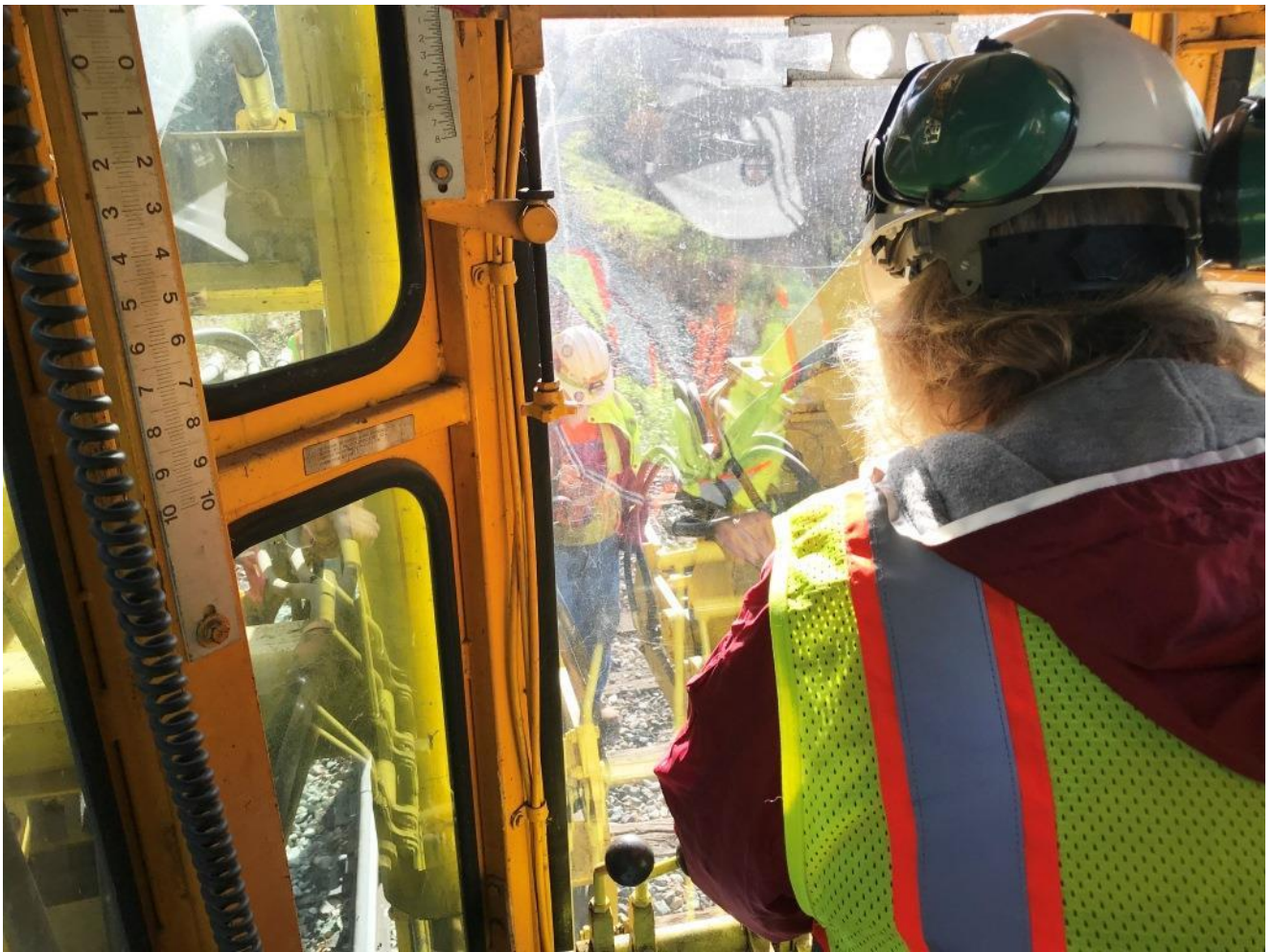


With the regulator headed up the hill (reverse), the plows pull rock from the sides of the track to the center



Harry in the cab with Bev provides training as Mike F. guides the operation from the ground





Mike guides from the ground as Bev operates the tamper



Harry trained Bev on the use of the tamper so well that he saw no need to stay in the cab





With solo Bev behind the controls, Steve guides the placement of the tines from the ground

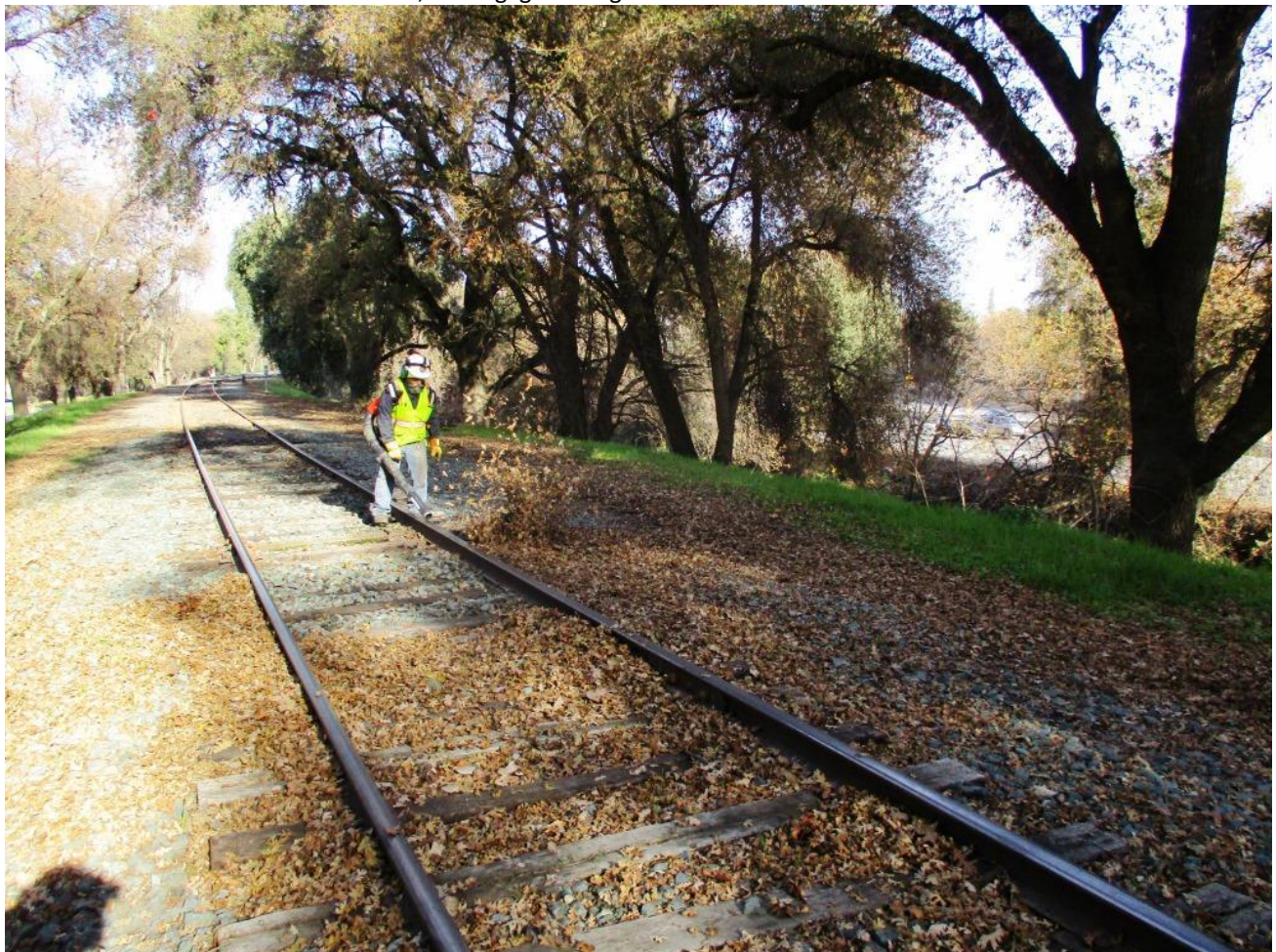


Now Steve takes the helm of the tamper as Bev guides from the ground





Meanwhile, Bill engages in organic debris removal at Miller Park



Joe uses the "huff-'n'-puff" machine to blow leaves away from the track





After lunch, Bill takes a turn on the tamper as Mike F. guides from the ground...



...While Bev take on organic debris removal duties





Joe crosses over to the north side of Front Street



Heading north with the tamper, the Team passes through Bev, Heather, and Joe's work-limits





Back in Old Sac., Bill, Steve, and Mike F. assess the problems with Switch 6



The profuse amount of sand on the switch was ruled out as the cause of its problems





The Suttersville/Zoo track is looking pretty darned good