

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for December 6, 2015. After a week's hiatus to celebrate Thanksgiving, the MOW Team came roaring back with an action-packed week. So, let's keep the action going and get the updating started.

Mike Taylor was the Weed Team on Tuesday. He spent the day at Hood pruning trees. The volunteers of the mighty Weed Team keep the Hood Line active and maintained so that someday, the dream of trains running trains between Freeport and Hood can be realized. When that day comes (and every day is one day closer), it will be thanks to the years of tireless effort by Mike T. and his Team.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Heather Kearns, Cliff Hayes, Frederick Carr, Alan Hardy, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Frank Werry, and Mike Harris kept the home fires burning – literally. Gene, Fred, Frank, Pat, and Cliff have been working on the clutch replacement on the A-4 motorcar. Unfortunately, it was not possible to replace the clutch without removing the transmission. This 50 year old motorcar was not designed for ease of maintenance. The only way to move the transmission laterally and disconnect it from the engine was to cut the brackets holding it in place. So, with the transmission strapped to the fork-lift, Cliff fired up his mighty torch and cut away. Cliff put on quite a fireworks show. Once the bracket was gone, the transmission was lowered onto a creeper and rolled away. Fred, Frank, and Gene then inspected and dismantled the clutch mechanism. Quartermaster and chief, Heather, was tasked with ordering new parts for the clutch.

Thursday, Frank, Heather, Cliff, Alan, and Fred continued with their good works. The Team is beginning the process of planning for our post-Polar projects, one of which is the replacement of the 75-pound rail between Front Street and the north Switch at Miller Park (14) with 110 pound rail. Alan headed down to Front Street survey the material needs for this project. The Team has stock-piled sufficient rails for the replacement. Now it's a matter of gathering joint-bars and other track materials. With the A-4's transmission removed, Frank took on the mission of cleaning off about 50 years of accumulated oil and grease revealing that it was painted green. Fred got under the motorcar and cleaned all the parts and pieces that will be needed to put the thing back together. Cliff began re-engineering the transmission support brackets. He modified and reinforced the piece that was cut away. Now it will be possible to access the clutch in the future without removing the whole transmission. Good job by all!

Saturday would be a day of many jobs. Fortunately, the Team had excellent and competent management (for a change) as Frank was running the show as EIC. He was joined by Chris Machado, Steve Nemeth, Steve Wilson, Michael Florentine, Fred, Alan, Heather, and Harry Voss. As Polar Express is running, the Team would stay mostly in Old Sacramento. The main project of the day was to replace two rotten ties under the Stub Switch (Switch 3) in Old Sacramento. The Stub Switch lacks the tapered points of a typical switch. Instead, both the rails of the main track move to line with the rails of the diverging tracks – the three tracks into the Central Pacific Passenger Station (CPPS). All these tracks have squared-off ends. Ergo “stub” switch. Steel bands between the connecting rods hold down the stub-end of the switch. But, the ties under them were so bad that the spikes would not hold. So, Alan, Mike F., Chris, Frank, Fred, and both Steves, took on this project. After all the spikes were pulled and plates removed, Mike F., Chris, Frank, and the two Steves dug-out eight-foot long trenches on the ends of the ties where they could be removed and new ties inserted. Mike F. and Chris then were able to slide out the old ties by hand. Harry in the back-hoe brought over two new ties from the pile behind the turntable. Then Chris and Mike F. slid in the new ties. Steve N. positioned the switch plates and he, along with Fred, Mike F., and Chris, spiked everything down. It was a flawless operation and was completed in less than 90 minutes. Then, the Team moved on to replacing several cracked joint-bars on the tracks leading into the CPPS that had been identified by our trusty track inspectors. Alan, Chris, Heather, and Steve W. removed the defective bars. Heather then located a set of replacement bars which, after lunch, she and Steve W. would use to complete this repair. Harry and Fred hiked-up the 150 Track to fire-up many of the machines that hadn't been started in a while. They repositioned several of them. Next Steve N., Steve W., Mike F., and Heather serviced Switches 4, 7, 9, and 10 in Old Sacramento. The two Steves employed track brooms to sweep all the organic debris out the switches while Heather and Mike F. strapped the huff-'n'-puff machines on their backs to blow all the debris clear. Then Steve N. slathered all the switch plates with switch grease as Steve W. exercised the switch machines which “rubbed” all the parts with grease.

In the meantime, Alan and Chris moseyed down to the vicinity of Mile Post 2.75 on the Mainline to replace a broken bolt in a joint that was discovered by our trusty track inspectors. The track inspector had been unable to replace the bolt at the time of discovery because none of the bolt holes matched up due thermal contraction issues. Last week, when it was so cold, inspections were done prior to Polar early in the morning and a drift-pin was not sufficient to bring everything back into alignment. But, by Saturday afternoon, the rails had warmed sufficiently to expand to the point where the drift-pin was able to line up all the bolt holes. Chris then installed the new bolt thus correcting the defect. Wow! What an incredible day of great accomplishment.

In the week ahead, on Tuesday, the Weed Team will be taking the chipper out on the line for its initial run after having the new blades installed. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. The Tuesday and Thursday evening crews will meet as usual starting at or before 5 o'clock. On Saturday, doughnuts are promised at 8 o'clock a.m. Thanks very much to Frank for his outstanding efforts as EIC, taking photos, and the narrative of the day's events. Also, many thanks to Heather and Alan for their photographic contributions of the triumphant day. Of course, thanks most of all to the dedicated volunteers of the MOW Team. Your work is greatly appreciated.

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris Carlson, and Richard.



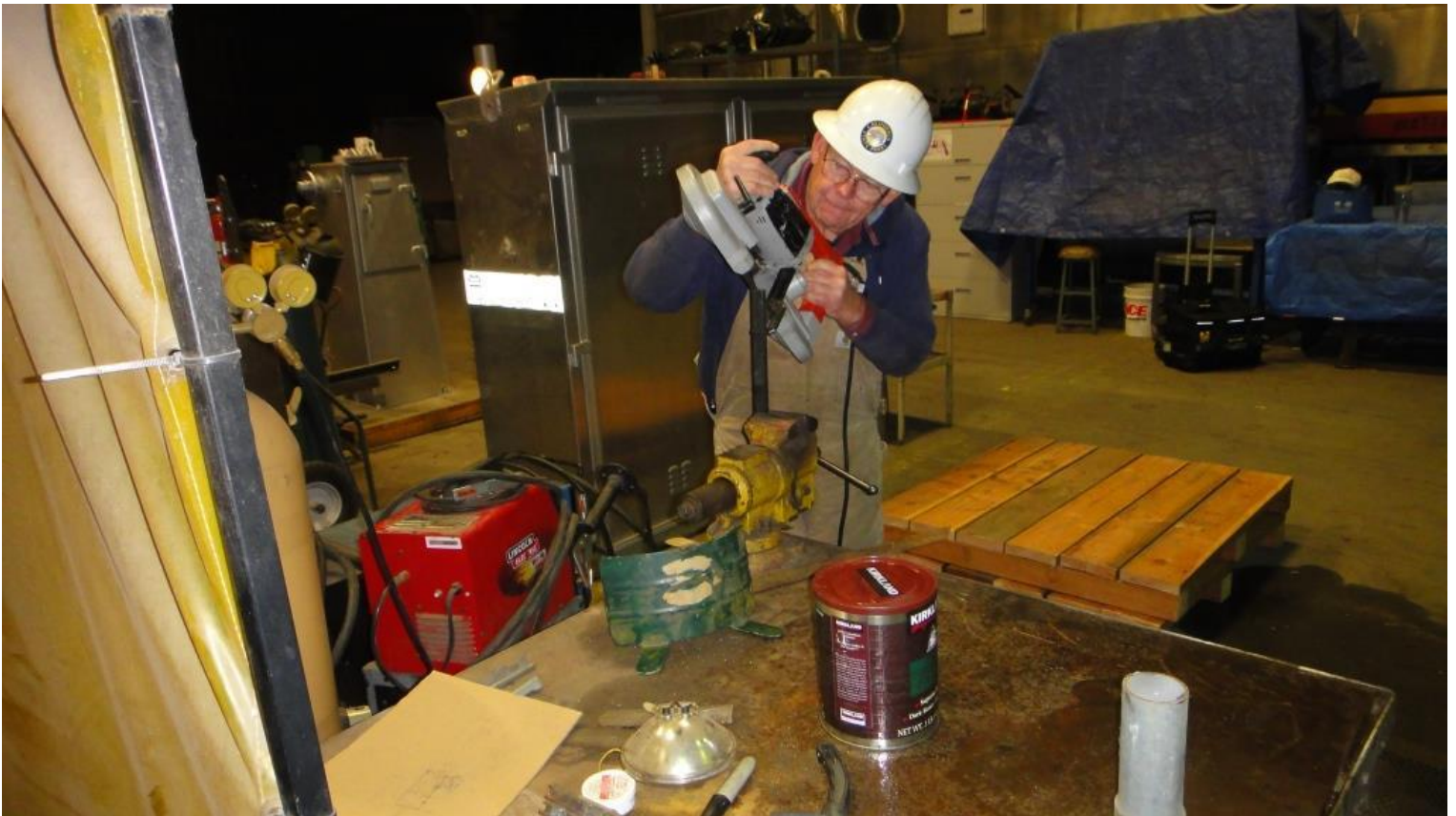
Cliff cuts the bracket holing the transmission in place on the A-4



Once the bracket was removed, Cliff modified it for the re-installation of the transmission



With the transmission removed, Frank cleans off 50 years of accumulated gunk revealing that it is green!



Cliff engineers a reinforcing bracket to support the transmission



Work begins at Switch 3, the Stub-switch. The two Steves are digging out the crib and trench while Heather hurricanes away dead leaves



Steve W., Chris, Mike F., Steve N., and Frank continue digging out the tie cribs at Switch 3



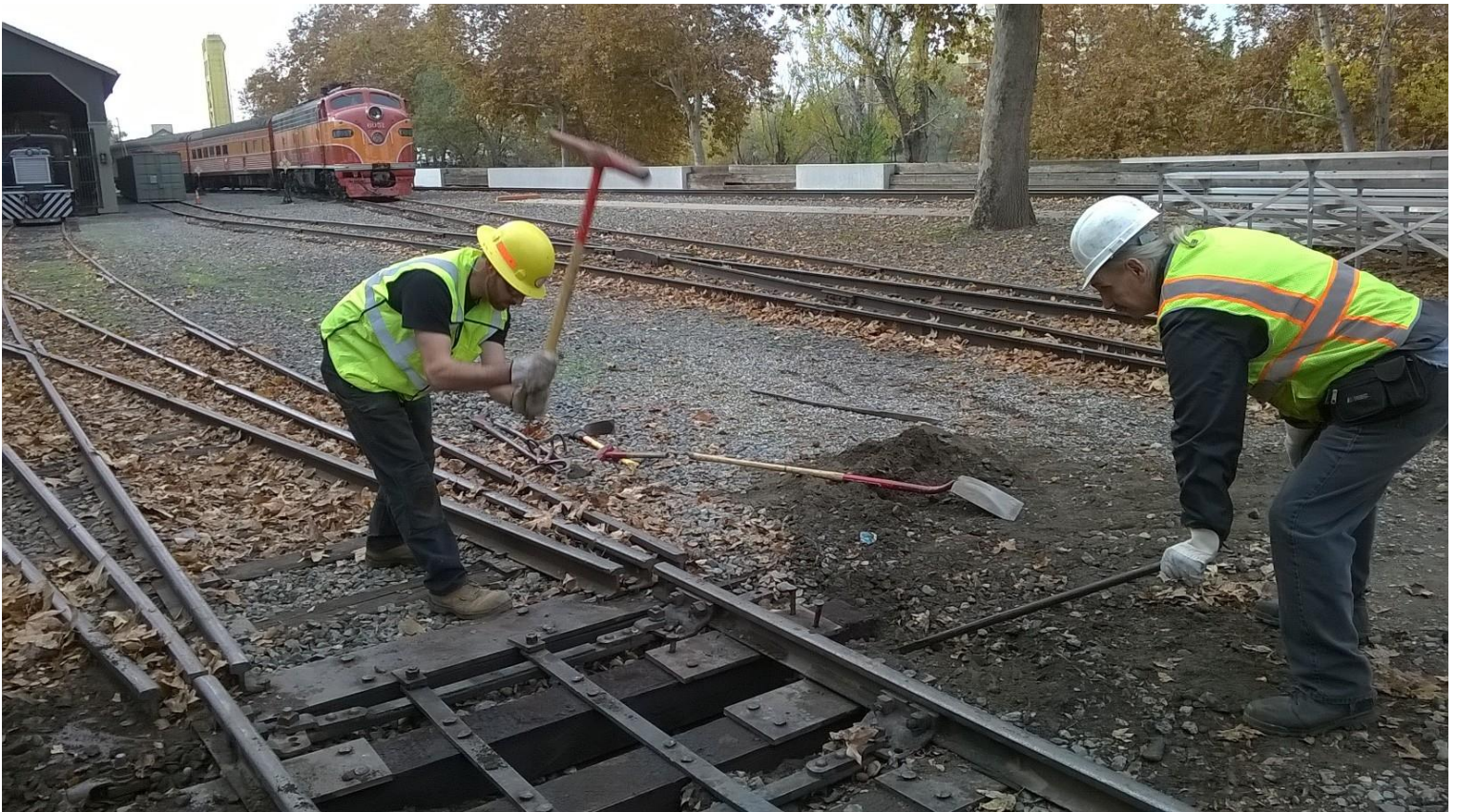
Mike F. and Chris pull the old rotten tie out



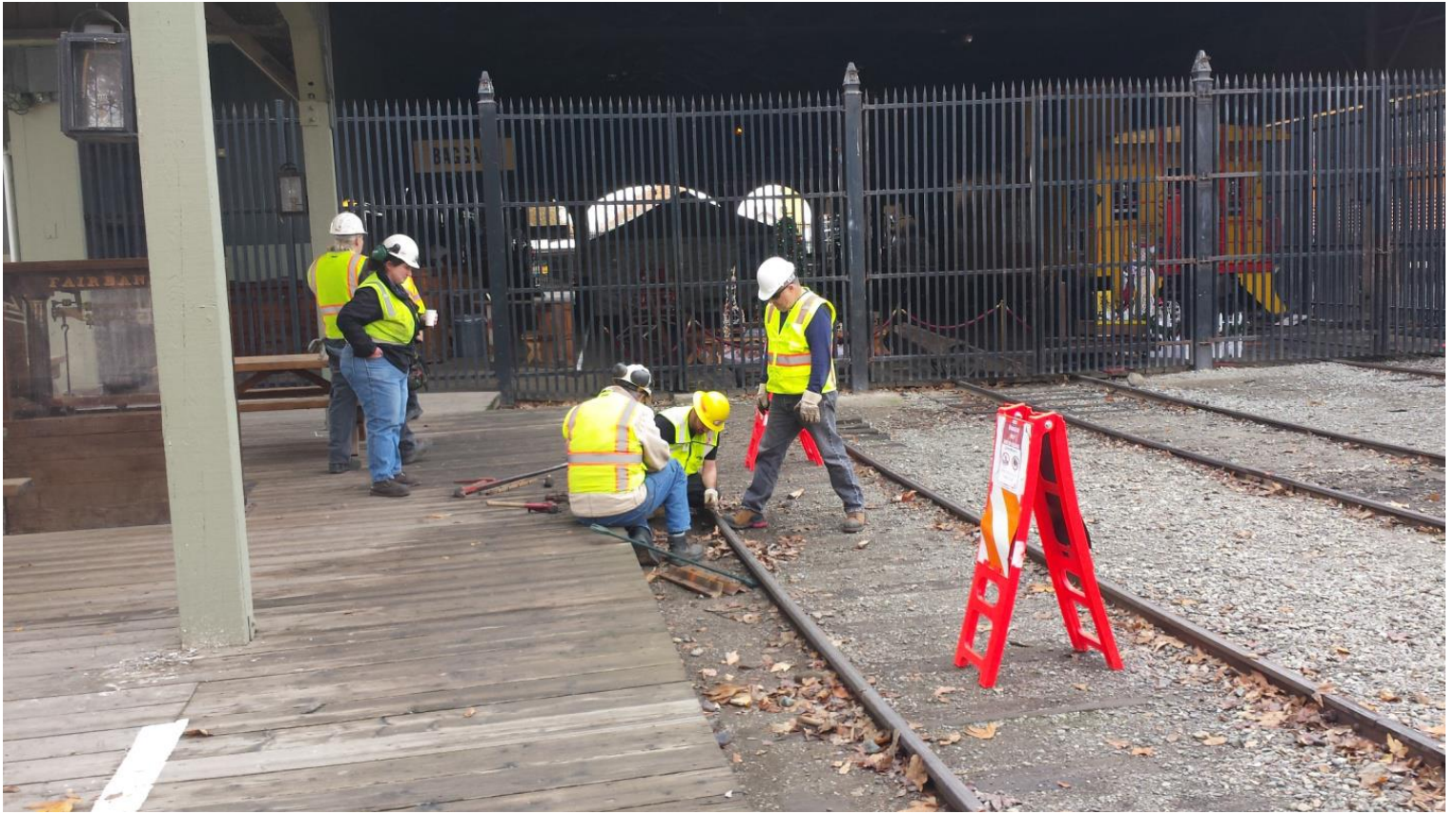
Chris pulls the new tie into place



Mike F. sets spikes in the bands that hold the stubs down and maintain position



Fred nips-up the tie while Chris spikes it down



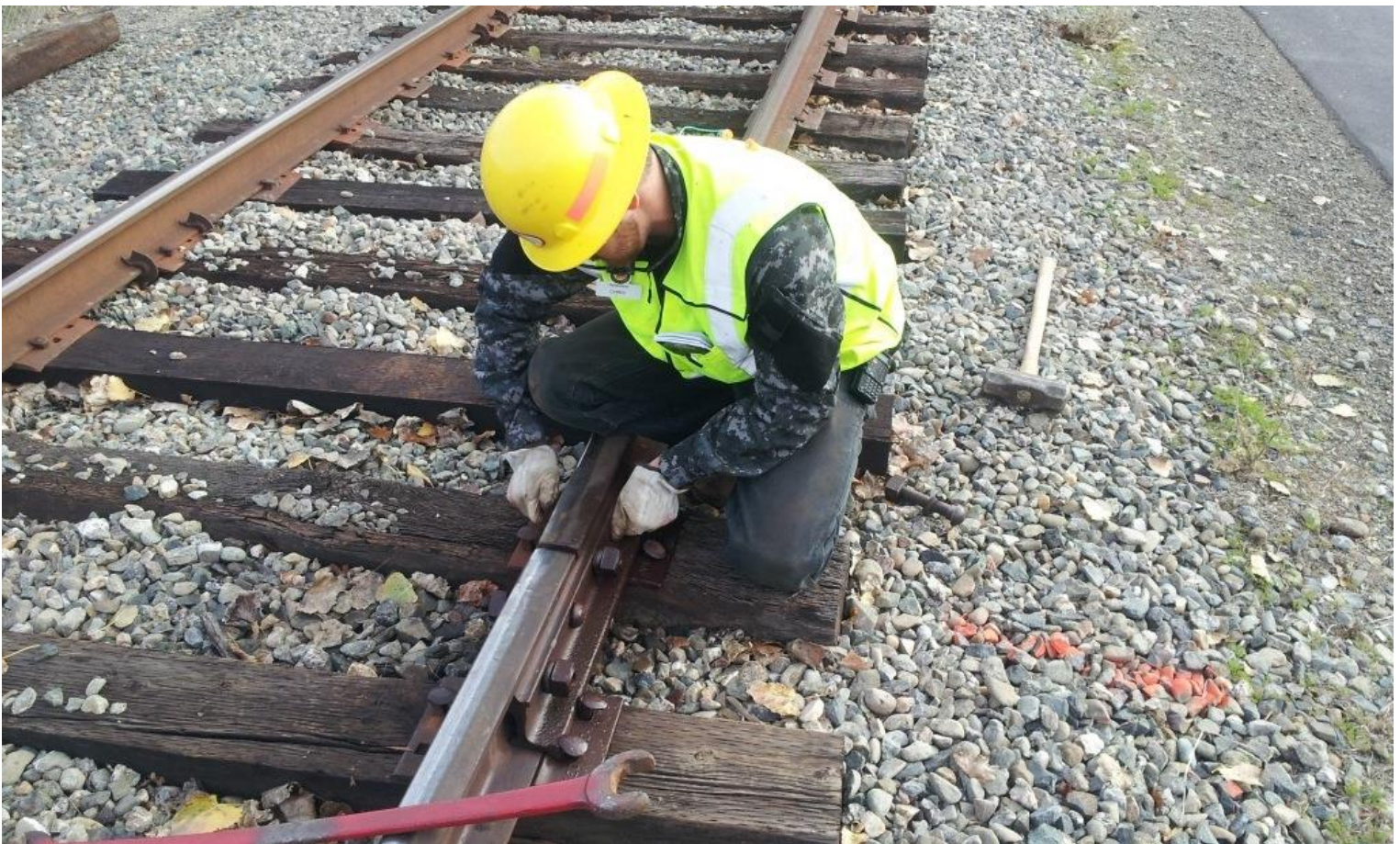
Meanwhile, the crew takes on the replacement of several cracked joint-bars on the CPPS tracks



Servicing switches: Steve N. greases the switch-plates while Steve W. prepares to rotate the switch to "rub-in" in the grease



Steve N. looks on while Mike F. uses the huff-'n'-puff machine to eradicate pesky organic debris from Switch 9



Chris gets the new bolt installed at Mile Post 2.75 plus 120 feet thus correcting the defect