

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for February 28, 2016. T'was a momentous week for your Teams of the SSRR Track Programs which were united and working in collaboration to build a better railroad. So, let's keep that momentum rolling by starting this update right now.

With warmer weather and intermittent rains, the Mighty Weed Team's nasty green nemesis is on the attack. So, on Tuesday and Thursday, the Weedies deployed their anti-green arsenal to push-back against the growing threat. Tuesday, Mike Taylor, Jeff Allen, Joe Galipeau, Steve Wilson, and Heather Kearns, liquidated weed species from Old Sacramento to Clunie. They mixed their magical blue-brew for the spray-rig to scatter upon the leafy antagonists. It was double, double toil and trouble for all things green in their way. Thursday, Mike T., Heather, Steve, and Dave Megeath headed to Hood. It was a marathon adventure of singular note. With government permits in hand and fees paid, Steve and Mike T. filled the Weed Team's water tank from a nearby hydrant. After applying two tanks-full of blue-brew, totaling 400 gallons, the Weedies still had three-quarters of a mile yet to spray. So back to Hood, shuttle more water from the hydrant at the fire station, to mix 100 gallons more and finish the project. Folks, the Team sprayed 5.3 miles of the Hood Line. Once back to Hood the spray rig needed to be cleaned and equipment put away. It proved to be a very long day. Despite their hectic day, the Weedies did pause for a moment to stand amongst the daffodils. With that, Mike T. declared victory as the entire Hood Line now has been sprayed for the year.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops on Tuesday, Mike Harris., Frank Werry, Harry Voss, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, and Frederick Carr kept the Erecting Shop warm with their spirits (despite no propane for the MOW Lounge heater). Fred began wiring the A-4 motorcar's axels to "shunt" the track and trigger the signal systems at grade crossing. Gene reviewed the specs on a couple of rebuilt Detroit Diesel engines that may become available to determine whether we could use them or not. Mike H., Frank, Harry, and Heather headed over to Old Sacramento to bring the scarifier over to the Shops. The governor on the scarifier's air-compressor was malfunctioning. Frank was conductor and Heather piloted the scarifier. Harry and Mike H. would tow it with the Kalamazoo tug (because the tug triggers the interlocking signals for crossing the UP Main). It was quite a good evening of old fashion nighttime railroading, indeed.

Thursday, the Signals Department was out in force to weld bond-wires on the new rails in order to reactivate the Front Street Grade Crossing Warning System between Switch 14 (North Miller Park Switch) and Front Street. Signal Department Manager Dale Parker, EIC Al Utzig, Dale Wells, Carl Clayworth, Jim Atkins, Jim Lower, Michael Gaulke, Joe Galipeau, Dan Paige, Dennis Gallagher, Jeff Allen, and Jim Coviello harnessed the heat of a volcano to bond the bond-wires to the track. They used the "Cadwell process" or "exothermic welding" to weld the bond-wires to the rails. There's a lot of chemistry involved in this process where "thermite" is used as a catalyst to create heat through a chemical reaction producing molten metal to permanently join the conductors. In any event, it was quite a show with lots of flashes and puffs of smoke. Team Signals spent the entire day out there setting their welder molds and igniting thermite to restore the system to service. By day's end, the Front Street system was reenergized. Signal Department volunteers have been the keystone of the whole rail replacement project. Without them and their technical expertise, we could not have accomplished this major improvement project for our railroad. The entire railroad community owes its gratitude to this valiant band of volunteers. After all, no signals, no trains.

Thursday, more nighttime railroading was the order of business. While Fred and Cliff Hayes worked on Shops projects, Mike H. and Frank headed to Old Sac. in order to bring the Interpretive Handcar Program's motorcar over the Shops to replace its starter. Conductor Frank once again headlined the show as Mike in the Kalamazoo pulled the motorcar over the UP Main. In record time, the motor was in the Shops and Kalamazoo back in Old Sac. Job well done!

Saturday, the MOW Team suspended operations in the morning to attend the memorial service and celebrate the life of our dear friend Myrletta Downes. Following the service, in the post doughnut hour, Alan, Heather, Steve Nemeth, Jose Gomez, Frank, Harry, and a quorum of Mikes – Florentine, Miller, and Taylor, gathered for some good old fashion track work. The Team headed back to Front Street to correct a little problem with the new track. Somehow, last week, as everything got spiked down, we lost gauge resulting in a slightly narrow area to the north of Switch 14. Also, the Team would remove the old 75-pound rail which had been shoved aside the track. Mike F. piloted Big Green while Frank, Mike M., and Steve got the MOW Team's work train set to go. At Front Street, Dale Parker from Signal Department Central Command arrived on scene to remove the Front Street crossing system from service (as we'd have track machines parked within the circuit). Mike T. started pulling spikes in the narrow area. Heather and Jose began taking apart the joints on the 75-pound rail. Steve and Mike M. brought in track jacks to lay horizontally against each other between the rails. They cranked the jacks and the rails moved apart. Mike T. used the gauger to verify the track was back in gauge. Then Steve and Mike M. plugged the old spike holes before setting new spike. Mike F. demonstrated "one-handed" spike-setting. Even though we had the air-compressor and pneumatic spike-drivers on site, it wouldn't be a day of spiking track without Steve demonstrating his world-famous as-seen-on-TV (History Channel) "windmill spiking technique." Not wanting to be outdone, Mike F. then took his turn at hand-driving spikes – so much for mechanization. Then we moved further north to again spread the rails apart. This time, the ties were less willing to give up their spikes. Mike T. brought in the "road-master" – a tool designed to give better leverage when using a claw-bar to pull spikes – which allowed Mike M. pull the spike out using the head of the rail as a base. The holes were plugged, the track gauged, and this time, Frank brought in the pneumatic spiker drive the remaining spikes. Meanwhile, Heather, a loyal Weedie, was standing amongst the weeds unbolting the 75-pound rail. Mike F. on Big Green came in with the "stinger" attachment to lift the individual rails which Alan, Steve, and Mike M. guided to the rail pile. Mike F. did a tremendous job weaving the Green Machine around obstacles in a confined space with a half-ton 34-foot-long stick of rail suspended from the forks. Steve and Mike M. were masterful in guiding the sticks of swinging rail. Jose then joined the fun by guiding the rails from the east side of the track to the rail-pile. All the while, Harry as acting quartermaster, gathered tools and equipment from the truck and tool caddie as the Team needed them. With the track re-gauged and old rails stacked neatly away, the Team accomplished its goals for the afternoon. As Dale returned the Front Street signal to service, we all packed up headed back to the Shops. It had been a good day of great achievement as the MOW Team continues its journey of building a better railroad.

Please take note that we have rescheduled the second session of **Part 214 "Roadway Worker Safety Training"** for **Saturday, April 9th at 9 o'clock a.m. in the CSRM East Theater**. If you did not attend the previous session, you must attend this session in order to stay "legal." This coming Tuesday and Thursday, the MOW Team Shops' crews will meet at or before 5 o'clock in the Erecting Shop. Depending on the weather, the Weed Team will make more of its "blue-brew" and deluge the nasty weeds along the SSRR Mainline either Thursday or Friday. Updates to follow. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. On Saturday, The MOW Team will be putting on a demonstration of its greatness for the new Docent Class. Lots of machines will be out on the line. Also, we'll be inserting more ties at the Front Street project. You know the routine: doughnuts at 8 o'clock a.m. You won't want to miss the excitement! Many thanks to all!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Mike H. and Harry in the Kalamazoo tug pulling the scarifier stand ready for the green light to cross the UP Main



Fred wiring-up the A-4 motorcar so that it will "shunt" the track and trigger the grade-crossing systems



Hermetically sealed, Mike T. and Joe launch counter-measures against the weedy foe at Clunie



With permits in hand and fees paid, Mike T. and Steve fill the Weed Team's water supply tank for spraying the Hood Line



With the spray-rig deployed, Mike T. and Dave repel the green invasion on the Hood Line



"I wandered lonely as a cloud That floats on high o'er vales and hills, When all at once I saw a crowd, A host, of golden daffodils; Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze...And then my heart with pleasure fills, And dances with the daffodils."



Green means GO! More nighttime railroading as the Interpretive Handcar Program's motorcar is pulled back to the Shops



Mike G. digs through the rock to expose the signal wire as Al takes it in hand



Mike G., Al, and Jim stretch the signal wire to connect to both rails



"Locked and loaded!" Joe "Two-Drops" prepares to ignite the thermite catalyst in the Cadwell mold



Exothermic welding produces the heat equivalent of lava from a volcano. Wisely, Joe steps away...



Heather and Jose team-up to take apart a joint on the old 75-pound rail



Steve and Mike M. plug old spike-holes in the tie



Steve cranks on the track-jack spreading the rails as Alan and the three Mikes keep a close eye on the gauge measurement



Then, Mike F. employs the one-handed method for setting spikes



Bent spike? No problem. Mike M. uses the handle end of a claw-bar to bend the spike back away from the web of the rail



Now Steve demonstrates his world famous as-seen-on-TV windmill spike-driving technique as Mike M. and Alan watch in amazement



Meanwhile, Heather, working in her natural habitat amongst the weeds, takes apart a rather stubborn joint on the old 75-pound rail



Mike M. and Mike T. employ the “road-master” tool to help provide better leverage for pulling a rather stubborn spike



Jose and Mike M. team-up to pull the remaining spikes in the narrow area



Once the track was gauged correctly, Frank decides that power tools are more efficient and drives spikes with the pneumatic spike-driver



Mike F. uses the whacker-tool to loosen a joint-bar on the old 75-pound rail by giving it a whack



Once loose, Mike T. pries the joint-bars off with a lining bar



Stage 2 of the operation begins with Mike F. in Big Green removing a stick of the old 75-pound rail with Alan as his guide from the ground



Mike M. and Steve guide a half-ton stick of rail hanging from a chain off the stinger of Big Green



Jose signals to Mike G. on Big Green to lift the next stick of rail



Frank, Mike M., and Heather revel in their accomplishments



Steve stands beside the neatly stacked old 75-pound rail



Heather and Jose secure the rail-tongs on the stinger for travel back to the Shops



With the MOW Team's departure from the scene, Dale returns the Front Street Grade Crossing Warning System to service