

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for March 23, 2014. We don't just maintain track. We build it – and we do a darned good at it, if I do say so myself. So, before we are totally consumed by hubris, let's get this update underway.

Tuesday Mike Taylor, Pat Scholzen, Heather Kearns, Mike Harris, Alan Hardy, Frederick Carr, Gene Peck, Harry Voss, and Frank Werry populated the south end of the Boiler Shop. The Mighty MOW Weed Team had intended to spray for weeds in Old Sac but, the mission was aborted because of high winds. So, Mike T. and Heather worked on machine maintenance instead. The man-lift, a key component of the Weed Team's arsenal, has been a bit sickly of late. So, Harry V., Pat, and Gene set off on a mission to diagnose and attempt repairs. Alas, the diagnosis was not good. But, a solution was in hand. Luckily, we happen to have an extra Detroit Diesel that matches the engine in the man-lift. Frank and Alan located and brought it over from the Erecting Shop. We'll scavenge the parts we need from it. But first, any residual oil needed to be drained.

The Team reconvened on Thursday evening. Heather, Frank, Mike H., Harry V., and Alan established a quorum and set off to conduct business. Mike H. and Frank continued taking apart the hydraulic control panel on the Kalamazoo (old regulator/new tug) which can now be removed. As the Kalamazoo is becoming a tug, all the hydraulic lifting systems for the regulator parts are superfluous. Harry V. dusted off the Husqvarna rail-saw, which hasn't seen daylight since we took apart the old Amtrak Depot track as part of the realignment project two years ago. He serviced it and got it started in preparation for its major role in the big Whisker Track build project.

A double-ration of doughnuts greeted the Saturday crew. Harry Gobler, Alan, Harry V., Steve Nemeth, DJ Chapman, Dave Megeath, Kent Ransom, Frank, Michael Florentine, Chris Carlson, Pam Tatro, and Fred fueled-up for the Big Whisker Track Build of 2014. The once and future steam locomotive will be fired-up every operating day on this track. Steve took the Big Green Machine over to the work site while we loaded up our trusty Chevy Truck with the tool-caddy and rail-saw. Using Big Green, Steve grabbed the rails for the final panel of track to be built. We needed to cut about six feet off each rail to fit in the designated area. This was a great opportunity to use the Husqvarna rail saw. Not only is it good to use these machines periodically but, also, it allows us to hone our skills and keep us in practice – and it took a little practice to re-familiarize ourselves with it. DJ took the first shift on the rail-saw. Within seconds of the blade's contact with the rail, we were reminded how it throws sparks back at the operator – one of those, “oh yeah” moments. Quickly, we called for a shovel to use as a shield. Meanwhile, Frank, Dave, Kent, Harry G. and Pam dug-out more of the east bank of the pit in order for the make the proper curve. Our Road Foreman of Civil Engineering, Harry G., guided Pam, Dave, Kent, and Fred in the laying of the ties for the final section of track into the curve. With ties in place, the Team bolted the newly cut rails to the existing sections of track. With the rails down, Frank, Harry G., Kent, Pam, and DJ used precise measurement to line and square the ties. Then spikes were set, locking the rail down to the ties. Using track jacks against the west bank of the pit, Chris and Mike F. began curving the track while Harry V. used the back-hoe to curve the east rail. The team then gauged the track with incredible precision. Steve, whose skill with the spike-maul has been featured on national television, drove in the final spikes at the joints by hand. By the end of the day, we had the entire length of the Whisker Track assembled and properly curved. We partially ballasted the west side to help hold the curve. Amazingly, the curve was nearly perfect – within three-eighths of an inch of the specifications. I'd say that is a testament to the skills and abilities of our dedicated volunteers. Clearly, we know what we're doing. Oh, come on. A little hubris never hurt anyone (besides old King Oedipus, I suppose...).

The final task of the day was move the man-lift over to the shops. With Engineer Dave at the controls, Conductor Frank negotiated a speedy green light from the dispatcher in Omaha. Meanwhile, back at the Shops, the *Sea Tiger* (pink-regulator) and A-6 motor car were rolled out onto the transfer table in order to make room for the man-lift in the front of the repair bay for the man-lift. This coming Tuesday, work on the man-lift will be top priority.

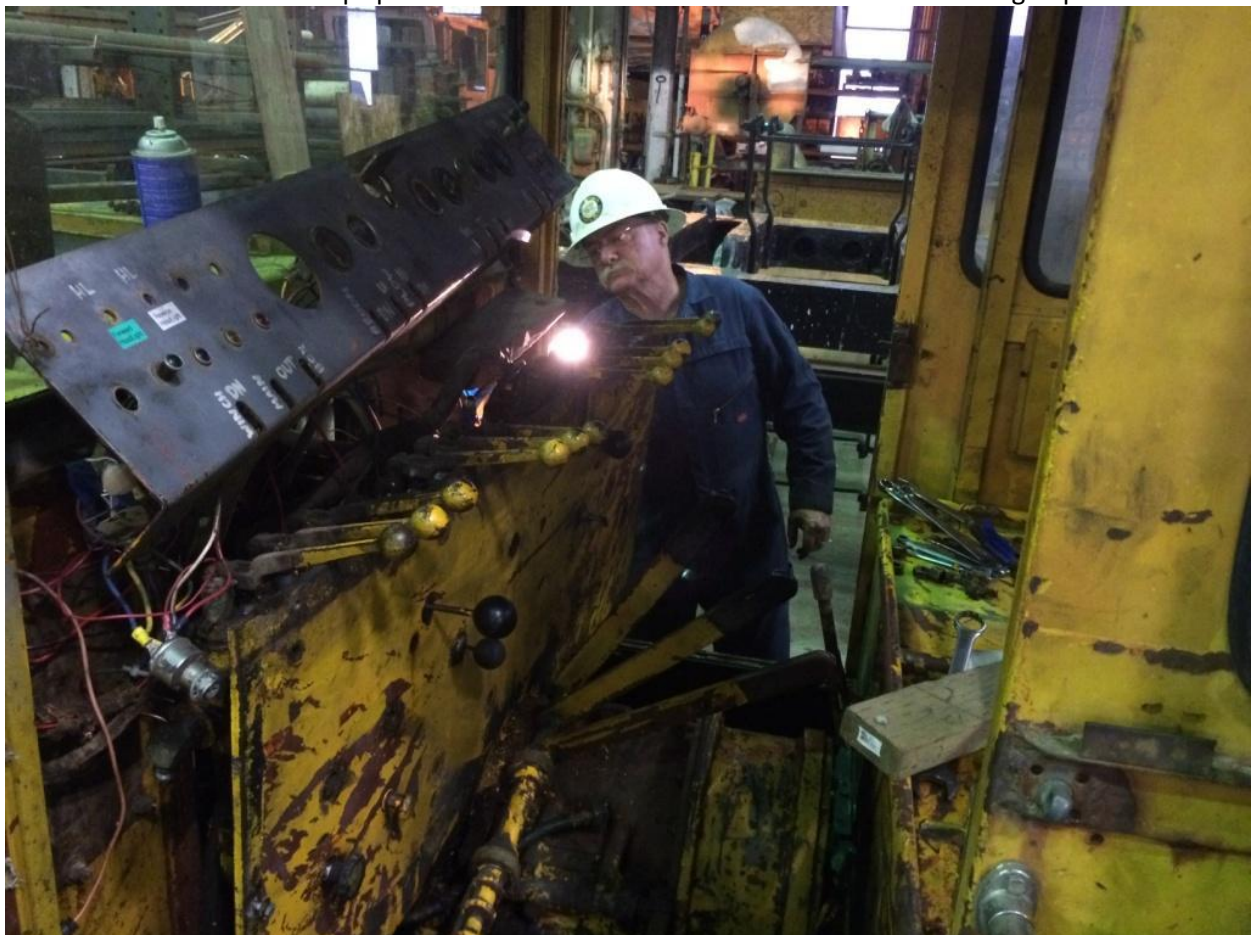
Speaking of Tuesday, the crew will meet, come rain or shine, in the afternoon and evening. Thursday, we'll gather at 5 o'clock p.m. Saturday, the expectation of doughnuts will be fulfilled at 8 o'clock a.m. sharp. We'll finish the Whisker Track project by jacking and ballasting the track. Projects like this are special for your MOW Team. They are historic in nature as generations of railroaders will make use of our handy work. Any wonder why we're proud of what we do?

See you out on the line,

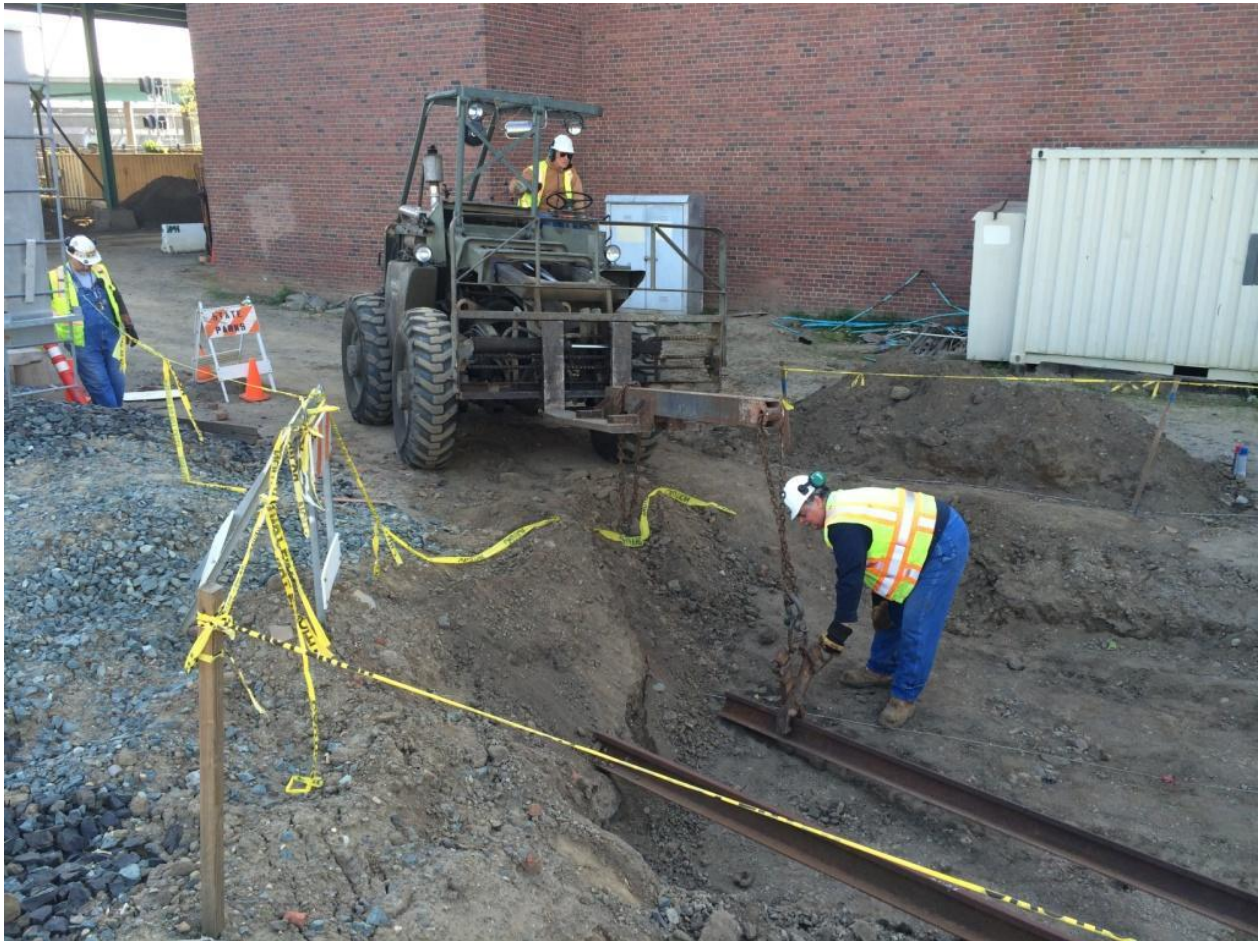
Alan, Chris, and Richard



Alan makes sure that not one drop spills from the Detroit Diesel from which we've scavenged parts for the man-lift



Mike H. has dismantled the hydraulic control panel in the Kalamazoo which can now be removed



Chris sets the rail-tongs on the stick of rail that Steve in Big Green will move into position



“Drill, Ye Tarriers, Drill” Frank, Dave, Kent, Harry G. and Pam make the final cut in the bank for the proper curve



DJ fires up the rail-saw – literally...



Ah, that's what we forgot: the "shovel shield." All's well...



Harry G. and Pam set out the ties for the final panel of track



With the final two rails in place, Fred, Steve, Kent, and Mike F. bolt the joints



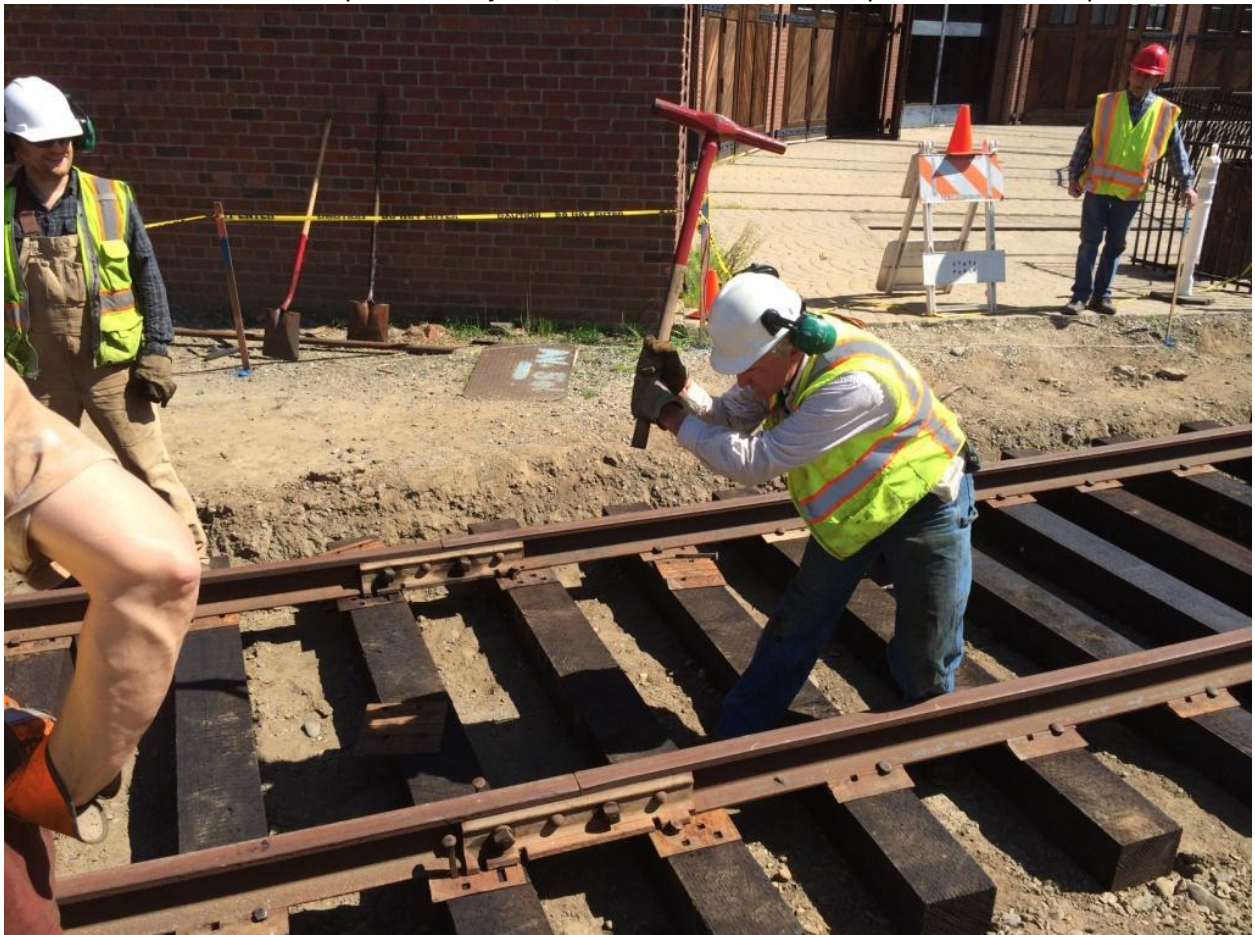
Now Mike F. and Chris put the curve in the track



Mike F., Dave, DJ, and Frank start spiking the east rail off of which we'll gauge the track



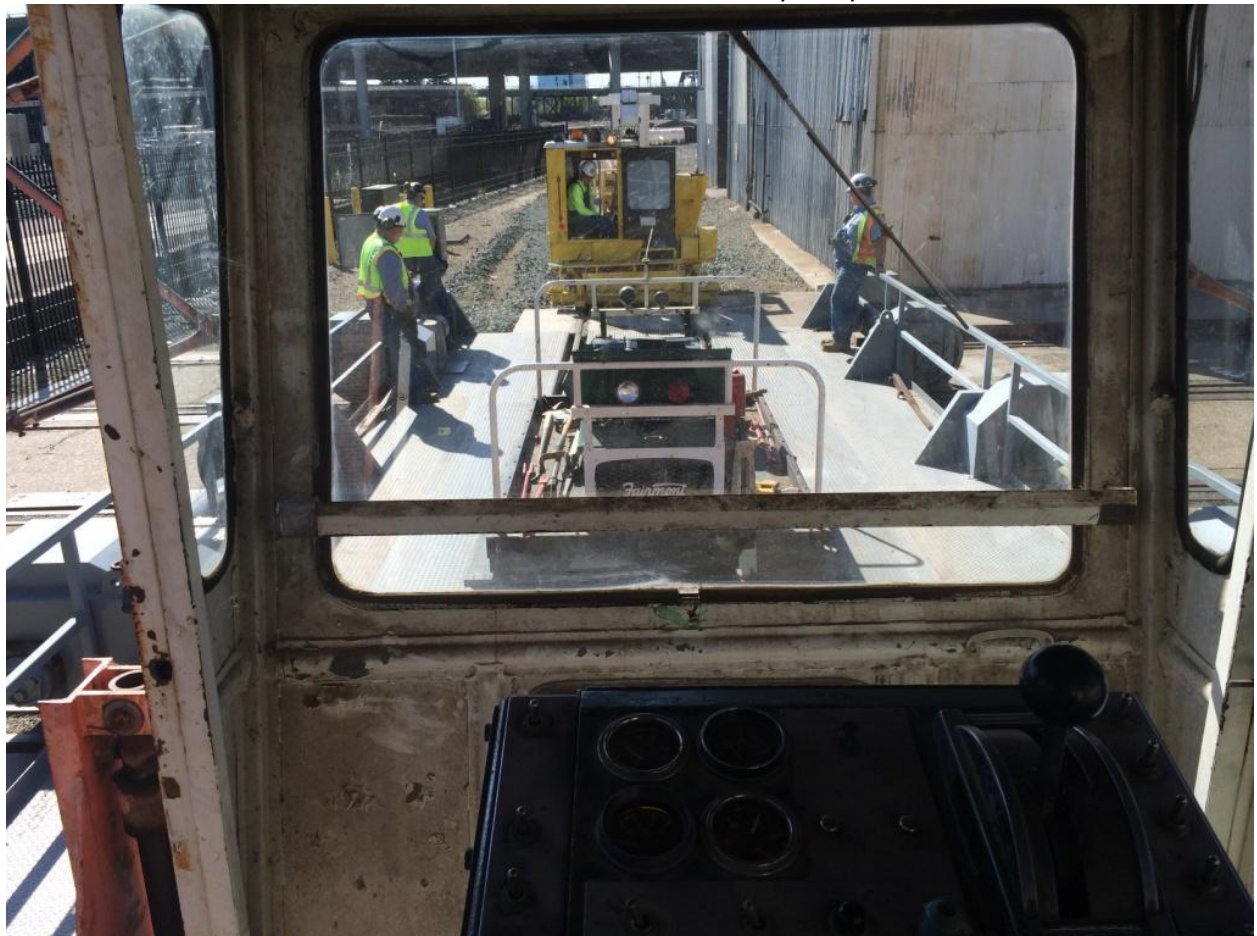
Steve and Kent set the spikes at the joints, which had to be driven by hand, while DJ nips the tie



Steve's spiking technique has been featured on national television. Here, he shows us a thing or two.



And there it is. Your new Whisker Track. Made in USA by 100 percent volunteer labor!



One last task: Engineer Dave and Conductor Frank brought the man-lift over to the Shops for vital repairs.